

You can't deny God cares about His creation  
24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2019                      Matt Morrison

Have you ever created anything? I remember in year 10 at school in food tech, I created a Gingerbread House. Now this gingerbread house wasn't just one of the types which you simply just glue together with icing. No, we made them from scratch, it took ages, well it felt like ages for a boy in year 10. It probably was only a few periods.

This gingerbread house was amazing, It was structural sound, It looked great, the bread was that prefect brown colour, not too dark not too light, just right, the type that goldilocks would have chosen. The icing was not too thick and not too runny. The lollies were placed in an orderly fashion, I had freckles for the roof tiles perfectly aligned so that the whole roof was covered, I had white icing coming off the roof to look like icicles. There was even a white fence around the house. It was prefect.

That was until it was left with someone else to care for it, being my teacher. My prefect gingerbread house didn't even last an afternoon before it was destroyed by my teacher. Needless to say, I was devastated. My creation had been destroyed.

Why was I so devastated? It was only going to be taken home and destroyed by me. This raises an interesting question, why do we care about the things we create or own more than the things other people create or own? When you see a story on the news about other people's houses getting destroyed by fire or by really bad Airbnb guest. They don't impact us as much as if it was your own house which has been destroyed. There is something about us being humans that we feel more attached to the things we create, the things we own.

Well the same can be said about God and His creation. When you read about God's relationship with his creation in the Bible you can't deny the fact that God deeply cares for his creation. For example, have a look at Genesis chapter 1 and see how God relates to His creation. The refrain which runs throughout the whole of Genesis 1 is, God said let there be xyz, and its followed by and God saw that it was good. In verse 31 of the chapter we read at the end of God's creating. "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day." See God has shaped everything that is in the whole universe. He has told every grain of sand where it should go.

And in Genesis 1 we see that God is pleased with His creation. Just like I was pleased with my gingerbread house. But see God's creation is much more important and much more beautiful than my prefect gingerbread house. And God cares much more about His creation than I did about my gingerbread house.

And in Genesis chapter 1 we also learn something else about God and His creation, God has assigned a carer for His creation

**Gen. 1:26** Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

And then God goes on in verse 29 to say

“I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.”

See God has placed man on the earth to rule over it and care for the earth. But we know from reading a little further along in the Book of Genesis that man failed at ruling over creation. And we see from our Romans reading the consequence of this failing. God's creation has been subjected to frustration, God has cursed the ground because of Adam's sin. But God's creation just like us has a hope of being redeemed from its bondage to decay. God's creation is groaning for its rebirth. It's groaning for the day when it will be restored to its original glory, where man will take their place as wise stewards of the land.

Creation too, longs for the day when the new heavens and new earth will exist when the curse of sin has been completely removed. See after the fall, creation along with man have been out of joint with God. The earth has produced thorns and thistles and humans have continued to abuse their environment. The nation of Israel did not obey God's commands, especially when it came to the commands about the land, they did not give the land its sabbath year rest. They did not return land to its original owners in the year of Jubilee. And this was one of the reasons why God took the Israelites into exile.

And we humans today still continue to abuse our environment. All you need to do is turn on the tv and see the extent of our abuse. We mine to the extent that it pollutes everything around the mine including the water. We chop down forest so we can build farms. We farm where we really should not be farming, diverting water away from river systems which has drastic impact on the river system 1000s of kilometres away. We pollute the atmosphere with toxic gases so much so that we now have a hole in the ozone layer.

In my short lifetime of 38 years, humans have managed to destroy half of the world's wildlife, wipe out 1b hectares of forestry (this is the size of Europe), killed off more than half of the coral in the Great Barrier Reef.

Now despite all of this devastating destruction, we can still not say that God doesn't care about his creation.

Despite our poor stewardship of the planet, God still cares for it. God still loves his creation even though he placed a curse on the land as a result of Adam's sin. God still sends rain to our planet, despite the world's continual denial of His existence. God still raises the sun every morning, God still holds the earth in its perfect orbit and God still has a plan to restore his creation.

And when you look at the cost of the restoration of both the humanity and creation, you begin to realise how much God cares for his creation. God sent his own son Jesus to remove the curse of sin from man, to restore humanity to its correct place before the fall and this restoration also include God's creation. When you look at the picture of the new creation in the book of Revelation you see a restored creation. We see a return to the restored garden of Eden.

**Rev. 22:1** Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup> No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. <sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

Humanity and creation will be restored, we will dwell in this restored creation and God will dwell with us face to face. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. This restoration has come at the great cost of Jesus' death and resurrection.

But we should not expect to see this full restoration until the day that Jesus returns. Until this day the earth just like humanity are under the curse of sin. Yes, sin has been defeated by Jesus' death on the cross, but sin still has an impact not only on our lives but also on the life of the planet. Creation just like us is groaning out to God, waiting for our full redemption. Just like my gingerbread house was groaning out as it laid in pieces, waiting to be restored. My gingerbread house could do nothing on its own to restore itself to its former glory, it needed to be redeemed. And my teacher feeling bad about destroying my house redeemed my gingerbread house by giving me her house.

But what does this all mean for us? Does this mean that we, like the Israelites are commanded to give our land a year of rest every 7 years? Are we to hand back our land that we own to its original owners after 50 years? How should we as Christians care for our environment that we live in?

To answer this question, we need to turn to our first Bible reading for today. One which at first may seem a little odd for talking about caring for our environment. In this reading we see a teacher of the law confronting Jesus and he asks him which of the commandments is most important, Jesus answers him by saying

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

And it is in both of these commandments where our answer lies. If we, as Christians, are to take the first of these two commandments seriously, we need to care for God's creation. How can we say that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, that is our whole being and then we have no respect or regard for God's creation which God himself cares about. If a person was to say that they loved their parents completely but then trashes their parents' house we would be left having second thoughts about if they did truly love their parents wouldn't we.

So why is this any different when it comes to God. If we say that we love God completely but then don't care for his creation, doesn't this raise questions for us as well.

Likewise, the second of these two commands that Jesus highlights as the most important also sheds some light onto how we as Christians should care for our environment. Love your neighbour as yourself. If we as Christians agree with Jesus here that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves, we need to take seriously how we use our joint resources and also the impact that our decisions have on other people.

Is it loving to our very close island neighbours to continue do things which are proven to increase climate change? Is it loving to them for us to continue in our ways which will see large percentages of their land under water in the coming years? See we need to take into account the consequences of our actions not just on ourselves but also our neighbours.

We are very good at doing the loving ourselves part, but this is not what Jesus is commanding here. We also need to remember who our neighbours are, they are not just those who we live next door to, no all people are our neighbours, we need to love all people as we do ourselves.

Now please don't mistake what I am saying here. I am not saying that we need to do these things to somehow earn our way into heaven, or even to earn some merit with God. No the only way we every receive salvation is by the grace of God, shown by Jesus taking the punishment that we all rightfully deserved. What I am saying is that because of the love that has been shown to us by God we ought to respond by loving God and His creation in return. We ought to respond by at least trying to live up to our original role of wise stewards over God's creation.

And the only way that we can do this is with God's help, so lets pray now and ask for God's help.

Dear Heavenly Father,

We give you great thanks for your amazing creation, we thank you that you still care for your creation and that you have a plan to restore creation.

We give you thanks that you include us in your plans for your creation and that you have given us a role of being wise stewards. We now pray that you would equip us to be intelligent and prudent in our stewardship and that your Holy Spirit would be guiding us in everything that we do.

We pray this in your sons name, Amen