

Why is caring for the environment a fundamental part of our Christian life and belief?

Here are some reasons to think about. This isn't at all comprehensive.

- God made it all and values it

Gen 1. 1-2, 31 for example:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ... and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters"

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."

- It all belongs to Him

Ps 24.1 for example:

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;"

- God gave us all we need to live well within the creation

Gen 1.29 for example:

"Then God said, '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..'"

- God made it humanity's task to look after it

Gen 1.28, 2.15:

Humanity was to 'have dominion' over creation. How should we do that? There is a suggestion that the word used in Gen 1.26, 28 is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to mean "shepherd", eg Ezek 34.4

"God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it"

- We in the west are the rich ones

Luke 16.19-31 for example: The story of Lazarus and the rich man.

- We have orders of magnitude more resources available to us than those in some other parts of the world.
- We are powerful and able to mitigate against any harmful effects to ourselves caused by environmental degradation, unlike others in less wealthy powerful parts of the world.
- There is a lot going on in other parts of the world of which we are largely unaware and which affects others and not us.
- We know humanity's well-being is tied to our environment, e.g. the more it is broken, the more the poor suffer. Caring for the environment is actually part of loving our neighbours.

- He wants us to do this even though we as individuals are small and insignificant players

1 Cor 15.58 *"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain."*

Gal 6.9 *"Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart."*

Eccl 11.1 *"Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days."*

The pessimistic thinking is that anything we, individually or as a church, can do won't make any difference - it's too big a problem.

- We don't know that it won't make a difference on the big stage - the same arguments were made in the '80s about Fairtrade and it's now well known and mainstream to find Fairtrade products on sale.
- Even if it doesn't appear to make a difference, He asks us to do the right thing regardless, and He promises that it won't be in vain - even if we ourselves never get to see the result

- God's plans for salvation involve all He has made

Colossians 1: 19-20 for example:

"For in [Jesus] all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

Some dangers

- Take care to not be influenced by "new age" thinking - this isn't mysticism, it's very down to earth (literally).
- Our motivation isn't to "save the planet", it is to live for Jesus.
- Environmentalism is trendy and popular. We aren't called to be either.

- Environmentalism is shot-through with worldly thinking. We too easily adopt some of it without Biblical mandate.
- Detailed issues become hot news from time to time (plastics in the ocean, climate change, ozone layer, air pollution, food waste, save the whales, soil erosion, use of pesticides, demise of bees ...). All are matters for concern, but we need to be careful not to lose the bigger picture as we get swept up by the latest media storm, then forget about it once the world's attention moves onto the next thing.
- Be careful to be clear that it's not that created things *are* God - eg "God is in the trees". It's important not to confuse the possibility of experiencing His presence when out in a beautiful natural place with worshipping nature itself, or thinking that God and that beautiful place are the same thing.
- It's not about making people feel guilty. We are all guilty in this area as in many other areas of life - but we are forgiven people, not under law but under God's grace. It's about how we live as redeemed people (Phil 2.12-13). We are broken people. We inevitably destroy God's creation by our actions, even when we try not to. We need His grace, and creation needs his healing.
- We don't expect to solve the problem, any more than we expect to be able to abolish all diseases, or get to a place where no one is in poverty, but, just as in those areas of life, that doesn't mean we shouldn't care and do our best to help - Rom 8.18-22. One day everything will be set free. Like the poor being always with us, the environment is always being broken. And yet in neither case are we excused from responding. Nor are we to be distracted.