

Meditation For April 11

You have likely guessed from a few of my previous meditations that the environment, particularly as it pertains to the Bruce Peninsula is one of my great concerns. This period of Covid-19 has brought about new concerns for me, especially as we are seeing high levels of unusual development that has brought destruction onto ecologically-sensitive shoreline habitat. The west coast of the Peninsula includes long stretches of fens and other coastal wetlands that help to naturally filter pollutants from a troubled Lake Huron. Our greatest environmental problem however is Climate Change and the widespread environmental consequences it presents to God's creation.

What does the Bible have to say about the care of Gods wondrous gift to mankind? Did God leave any instructions about how we should protect all the creatures and other life he put on earth? Just by reading through the Torah...Genesis to Deuteronomy, we find a number of instructions given by God on how he would like his creation cared for.

However, Genesis 1:28 seems contradictory; "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' This passage is often interpreted as giving us total freedom with his creation and giving us licence to do whatever we want with it. Historian Lynn White Jr. in a 1966/67 talk and essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," points to this passage and notes that after God created Adam: ".....Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose other than to serve man's purposes."

However, Stephen Jurovics in his book, "Hospitable Planet: Faith, Action and Climate Change," counters by pointing out that translations from the original Hebrew, brought with them some of the ambiguities found in the original. This foundational Hebrew text of the Torah contained no vowels or punctuation, making it difficult to tell where one word ended and another began. The first of three major translations from this original text was the Septuagint, and because Alexander's Greek forces had controlled the country for many years, most Jews spoke Greek, so the Septuagint was translated into Greek. Decisions had to be made and words

separated, and punctuation inserted. Jurovics asserts that nobody knows for sure if the right decisions were made, and whether or not the correct intentions remain; e.g. Does Genesis 1:28 really say what was intended?

Jurovic's book goes on to illustrate a number of instances in which God truly shows his concern for the well-being of earth's inhabitants. Likely the strongest indication of God's concern for the earthly life he created, was when he observed a world overwhelmed with sin, forcing him to destroy life on earth and start over. He caused a great flood, but not before he had instructed Noah to build an ark, and take with him a pair of every living creature on earth, including all animals and birds. Following the flood, God punctuates his commitment to life on earth with a rainbow sign, "This is the sign of the covenant I make between me and you and every creature that is with you....." This was not a God who had populated earth with creatures for..... "any purpose other than to serve man's purposes."

Man's continual intervention into the natural processes gifted by God, often for the sole purpose of profit, is pushing earth in a dangerous direction, and as servants of God, we are stewards of God's creation. Stephen Jurovics sums up this stewardship nicely:

"Scripture invites us into a relationship with the Creator; the Creator directs us to care for creation. Climate is presenting us with irrefutable evidence of damage to God's creation. Do we choose to pay attention to what we observe in the natural world largely as a result of our actions and respond, or do we choose not to witness it and accordingly take no action? We are God's witnesses, and we are called to action."

Brian Reis