



grow. pray. study.

January 26, 2020 “What Would Jesus Say About Climate Change?”

Scripture: Genesis 1:25-31a, Matthew 6:26-29

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

Everything God made “was supremely good”

MONDAY 1.27.20 Genesis 1:1-3, 24-31

This is a selection from the first of two creation stories in Genesis. The writing is poetic; Hebrews at times likely used the story in worship. Many of Israel’s neighbors in the ancient Near-Eastern world had their own creation stories, which tended to see violence between rival “gods” as creating the earth. The Hebrews, in contrast, saw creation as the beautiful gift of the one divine Creator. The world, they believed, came fruitful and “supremely good” from God’s hand.

- Professor John Goldingay summarized Genesis 1:31 in modern terms we might use for a building project: “At the end of the week of creation, God is in a position to stand back, survey the six days’ work as a whole, and smile in satisfaction. The project has come out very well. It looks great.” ** List 3-5 ways in which you still find the original goodness of the Creator’s intention in our world.
- Scholar John Walton noted a part of Genesis 1:28 that’s hard to see in English translation: “The characterization of humans being made in the image of God and the functions listed here reflect a royal role for people since these descriptions would most frequently be applied to kings....we see the attribution to all people of what was the sole prerogative of the king in the rest of the ancient Near East.”
** How can you, no matter your human “rank,” act on God’s charge to watch over and care for God’s good creation?

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the gift of our beautiful, abundant earth. Help me be a faithful steward of your gifts, always mindful of my choices and their impact on your world. Amen.

* John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1–16*. Nashville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, p. 24.

** Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 7321-7325). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

God’s commission to humans: take care of the garden

TUESDAY 1.28.20 Genesis 2:4-9, 15-17

Genesis’ second creation story was folksier and less structured. It said God created a human first, before any plants or animals. (If we read it as literal history or science, it would seem to refute Genesis 1.) It called God “Yahweh” (translated “LORD”) rather than Genesis 1’s “Elohim” (God). Yahweh gave the newly created human a “garden,” a fertile setting in which to thrive, and charged him “to take care of it.” (Later Israelite poets celebrated God as Creator—cf. [Psalm 19:1-4](#), [24:1-2](#); [33:6-9](#).)

- Scholar John Walton said Genesis 2 used different terms than Genesis 1, with similar import: “In the rest of the ancient world it was believed that humans had been created to serve the needs of the gods....Here, priestly terms are used in contrast to the royal functions given in 1:28–29.... the priestly function involved maintaining...sacred space and providing for the proper worship and obedience to

God's requirements." * How can you more fully live into your royal, priestly charge (cf. [Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6, 5:10](#)) to "take care of" the God's world?

- "The Hebrew words for human (*adam*) and fertile land (*adamah*) sound alike and emphasize the connection between human beings and their land." ** This connection was natural for Israel's mostly agricultural people. In what ways has our more industrialized, office-centered, hi-tech setting robbed us of some of that sense of connection? Why does it matter to remember that the land still nourishes our life?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, make me ever more aware of the ways in which my choices can harm the people, the other forms of life, and even the life-sustaining earth around me. Amen.

Did You Know? (information supplied by the [EarthCOR team](#))

Up to 100 million monarch butterflies migrate every year, up to 3,000 miles each way. Many of them migrate through Kansas City, with peak migration in mid-September. Planting native plants can help sustain this butterfly population, which has suffered substantial loss of habitat due to development. *** Ask your local garden center for help!

* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 7431-7436). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** Theodore Hiebert, study note on Genesis 2:6 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 7 OT.

*** From www.monarchwatch.org.

Jesus loved the world he'd created

WEDNESDAY 1.29.20 Matthew 6:26-30, John 1:1-5

Jesus lived in a society shaped in part by the Psalms, which spoke of all creation praising God (cf. e.g. [Psalm 98:7-8](#)). To teach people to trust God's providing heart it was natural for Jesus to point to the birds and the flowers, aspects of our world we tend to take for granted or dismiss as "just natural." When we begin to see the world through Jesus' eyes, we are, John's gospel reminded us, seeing through the discerning, appreciative eyes of the Creator.

- How could Jesus tell ordinary peasant people who often faced food insecurity not to worry? "[Jesus] asks them instead to view the world with new eyes...to see all around them evidence of God's care and provision. Jesus uses a well-known Jewish pattern of speech to persuade his followers: If this, how much more that?" * How can nature's lasting beauty (despite too many cases of ignorant or indifferent human stewardship) help you to trust God's care for you?
- John's use of the phrase "In the beginning" stretches our minds to areas of mystery of which science is just scratching the surface, even today. John didn't say the Word (Jesus) "began." He said the Word already "was" in the beginning. In other words, he was convinced that Jesus is eternal; he is God; he is Creator. In what ways does John's testimony that Jesus was more than just a good man shape your faith, and the way you live in the world he created?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, what came into being through you was life. Thank you for creating new life in me. Keep teaching me how to trust your creative power to provide what I most need in life. Amen.

* Eugene Eung-Chun Park and Joel B. Green, study note on Matthew 6:25-34 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 17 NT.

Jesus resurrected: making this world new

THURSDAY 1.30.20 John 20:19-28, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Jesus' response to Thomas and his doubts showed that the risen Jesus did not discard his human body. It clearly had some new qualities, but still bore the scars of crucifixion. So the apostle Paul didn't say in 1 Corinthians 15 that we will be "replaced." No—we will be "changed," our mortal bodies "clothed" in what can't die. Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, "Easter is the start of God's new creation....It has already burst in.

And the whole point of John 20 and 21 is that we who believe in Jesus are to become, in the power of his spirit, not only beneficiaries of that new creation but also agents.” *

- Pastor Hamilton wrote, “God’s work was only begun in Jesus’ resurrection. . . . This is why, on the night when the risen Christ finally appeared to his disciples, he breathed on them and said, ‘As the father sent me, so I am sending you’ (John 20:21). What Jesus began, we’re meant to complete.”** How can you be part of Jesus’ work of restoring, not just people, but the whole world to what the Creator intended?
- In 1 Corinthians 15 the apostle boldly proclaimed a divine victory so sweeping and comprehensive that death itself would be “swallowed up,” and would be no more. But he didn’t then say, “So relax and wait for the resurrection.” No—he wrote, “You must stand firm, unshakable, excelling in the work of the Lord as always, because you know that your labor isn’t going to be for nothing in the Lord.” How can you trust that every effort to make the world more like the kingdom of God “isn’t going to be for nothing”?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for winning the biggest victory of all on my behalf. Thank you for calling me to grow, stretch and become more than I am as I join in your victorious work. Amen.

Did You Know? (information supplied by the [EarthCOR team](#))

www.RecycleSpot.org provides comprehensive recycling information for the greater Kansas City area. Recycling is one way we can help renew the Earth and care for God’s creation. If you want to know if something can be recycled and where, visit their web site for more information.

* From N. T. Wright, “Jesus is Coming: Plant a Tree!” at <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/environment/jesus-is-coming-plant-a-tree>.

** Adam Hamilton, *John: The Gospel of Light and Life*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015, p. 157.)

“The creation itself will be set free”

FRIDAY 1.31.20 Romans 8:19-22

For much of human history, most people thought of the earth as “a given,” assuming that the air or the rivers and lakes would remain clean no matter what we put into them. But 2000 years ago, the apostle Paul understood that not just human beings but “the whole creation” was suffering from the effects of departing from God’s path. Yet he didn’t write in despair. His phrase “breathless with anticipation” was “a dramatic image of hope.” *

- Economic and political factors have made understanding the causes of more intense tropical storms or the disastrous wildfires in California and Australia controversial. But no matter how you understand causation, it’s hard to deny that these conditions and others fit Paul’s phrase that “the whole creation is groaning together.” How can God’s people be actively involved in relieving the suffering in our world?
- Paul’s hope drew on the long history of God’s actions for God’s people. “As God had liberated his children from slavery in the exodus, leading them by a cloud of glory. . . . so God would in the future liberate his children most fully and with them all creation.” ** One recurring theme in the Bible, especially in the story of Jesus, is that of setting captives free. In what particular ways does it appeal to you to imagine not just yourself, but all of creation, “set free” by God’s power?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to care about your creation the way you do. Show me how I can better care for your world and help me encourage the people in my life to do the same. Amen.

Did You Know? (information supplied by the [EarthCOR team](#))

When food goes to the landfill, the nutrients in the food never return to the soil and the rotting food produces the potent greenhouse gas methane. Preventing food waste or composting helps reduce methane emissions and creates healthy soil.

* Michael J. Gorman, study note on Romans 8:19-21 in *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 289 NT.

** Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 255888-255890). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Eternity with God on an earth made new

SATURDAY 2.1.20 Revelation 11:15-18, 21:1-5, 22:1-3

In the Biblical creation stories (cf. [Genesis 1 and 2](#)), God made human beings stewards to care for and protect God's good earth, not "owners" allowed to exploit and ravage the planet's people, living creatures and resources. The seer of Revelation said the time would come when God would destroy those who wickedly destroy the earth (specifically, in his focus, the brutal Roman emperors and those who served them). But his great vision didn't stop there—it rolled on to end in Paradise restored. With images from the prophet Isaiah as well as the Genesis creation stories, it showed the world as God meant it to be, full of harmony, beauty and well-being. In Revelation 21, "the one seated on the throne" made a resonant promise to our broken, hurting world: "I'm making all things new."

- In "Big Yellow Taxi," Joni Mitchell's refrain said, "Don't it always seem to go/That you don't know what you've got/Till it's gone./They paved paradise/ And put up a parking lot." * Reflect on all of the complex social and economic choices we call "civilization." Which parts have tended to care for and nurture creation as "God's garden"? Which parts have instead directly or indirectly led to "destroying the earth"? Every day natural or man-made disasters, illnesses, some large or small economic factor declining or the world scene getting more hostile can make it feel as though the news is trying to snuff out hope. In whom do you place your confidence that "the worst thing is never the last thing"? Do you trust that Jesus meant it when he promised to make "all things new"? Can you live in hope that, in the end, God will win, restoring you and the world you live in?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I yearn for the day when you make all things new. Keep renewing me and empower me to live and work for good with trust and hope in a world painfully short of both. Amen.

Family Activity: Read the Creation Story from a children's Bible (we recommend *The Beginner's Bible* by ZonderKidz, available in The Well bookstore as well as many other sources). Go on a walk outside and pay special attention to all the things God created. Discuss ways your family can help take care of God's creation. Some ideas are: recycle, walk or ride a bike instead of asking for a ride in a car, correctly take care of your trash, use water and other resources carefully, remember to turn off the lights, plant a tree or flowers, go through clothing and toys and donate what you no longer need, use the library, shop at garage sales.

* Songwriter: Joni Mitchell. Big Yellow Taxi lyrics © Crazy Crow Music / Siquomb Music Publishing. Quoted from https://www.lyricsfreak.com/j/joni+mitchell/big+yellow+taxi_20075370.html.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Phyllis Perry and family following the death of Lawrence Kent Perry (husband), 1/6/2020

Richard Demarest and family following the death of Christine A. Clark (sister-in-Law), 1/2/2020

Family and friends of Edith (Edie) Mae Bowen following her death, 1/15/2020

Steve Logue and family following the death of Ruth Logue (mother), 1/18/2020

Ona Belle Stephens and family following the death of Margaret True (sister-in-Law), 1/17/2020

Dennis Butler and family following the death of Reve Marie Butler (wife), 1/18/2020

Aimee Leicht and family following the death of Steve Bass (father), 1/20/2020

Tammy Gray and family following the death of Aaron R. Kunzweiler (son), 1/16/2020