

Environmentalism, Part 2 or Ecotheology

The nations were angry, but Your wrath has come. The time has come for the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to Your servants the prophets, to the saints, and to those who fear Your name, both small and great, and the time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth. – Revelation 11:18 HCSB

Sin cursed the ground but did not change the command to care for the planet.¹ The ground was cursed for our sakes, and our job became much more difficult. However, God did not abrogate our call to care for the soil and the plants therein. It is to be by the sweat of our brow, but it still needs to be done.

We are to work with and learn about God from nature.² Job tells us that we are to ask the animals for instructions. He says that the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea and the earth itself will speak to us of the great web of life and that that knowledge will lead us to know that God has done this. It will cause us to bow our knees to His mastery and acknowledge that every living thing is in His hand.

When we abuse creation, use it and discard it simply for our pleasure, and with no concern for the long-term consequences, we are in effect rebelling against God's sovereign ownership. We are plugging our ears to the cry of the earth that it belongs to Him.

Not only are we to not actively damage the soil, we are to allow it to periodically rest and recover.³ It takes an average of 100 to 500 years to make 1 inch of topsoil. It takes such a phenomenally long time to produce new arable soil that as far as humans are concerned, soil is a non-renewable resource.

God our creator knew this and He instituted laws that would protect soil. Unfortunately, we have flaunted His commands and as a result, Iowa alone has lost about half of its 14 inches of top soil to erosion.

We are not only to use nature but assure its continued use for future generations.⁴ God instituted specific laws dictating our behavior in harvesting the land. We were allowed to do what needed to be done to provide for our families, but not at the cost of continued harvests. We are allowed to enter our neighbor's vineyard and eat to our fill, but not strip it bare. We are allowed to enter our neighbor's field and pluck the grain to eat, but we are not allowed to use tools that would keep our neighbor from having a harvest. Even in war, though we are allowed to inflict collateral damage on the environment, we must ensure that the fruit bearing trees remain untouched.

If this much care and concern is to be demonstrated for our neighbors and our enemies, surely our children and grandchildren deserve as much care?

¹ Genesis 3:17-19

² Job 12:7-10; Psalm 19:2-4; Romans 1:18-20

³ Leviticus 25:2-7

⁴ Deuteronomy 23:24-25; 20:19-20