Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, August 9, 2026
"Care for Creation: Introduction"

The Message

This week, we are starting a 6-week sermon series on Caring for Creation.

This idea came from a resource we were given at the recent Provincial Synod by the Board of World Mission.

The resource is titled "Everyone Wants a Better World." It is intended to be a Bible study, but I am adapting it for this sermon series.

The exciting news is that I will also be getting some copies of this so we can do a Bible study this Fall.

But for now, I'm excited about this sermon series.

This resource is based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

It actually has three different units. Unit one is "Care for Creation." Unit two is "Care for Each Other," and Unit three is "Care for Right Relationships."

Each unit explores different goals set forth by the United Nations.

The topics in this 6-week series are:

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Clean Water and Sanitation

Week 3: Affordable and Clean Energy

Week 4: Climate Action

Week 5: Life Below Water

Week 6: Life on Land

These are important topics for us to discuss as a church and as citizens of the world because not only are we affected individually by these things, but of course so is our country and the world.

The six goals we are discussing in this sermon series are about *stewarding the earth* in ways that ensure *all people* have access to clean water and affordable energy, and that animal and plant life (birds of the air, fish of the sea and all that creeps along the face of the earth, every plant yielding seed and every tree bearing fruit) are *cared for in a responsible and resourceful manner*.

My sermons during this series are likely going to follow the study guide pretty closely. The Board of World Mission has done a wonderful job creating this, and they are the experts on these topics.

I could not say anything about these things any better than they could, but I will adapt some of it as necessary to fit our context or to add my own stories or examples as needed.

So, with all of that said, let's reflect on the Bible passages we heard earlier.

Before we do that, Matthew 5:5 says, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

But what does it mean to inherit the earth?

To inherit something means that you receive it as a gift.

It means you become responsible for it. You become a steward of the resource you have been given.

The earth is a gift and a responsibility.

To be meek means to be humble, to know our place and our purpose, and not to wield power over the earth or its inhabitants.

In our passage from today, Jesus invites us to observe nature and learn from it, to look at the birds of the air and the lilies in the field.

It is difficult to learn from nature and animal life if they are compromised or in danger. It's also difficult if we don't pay attention to them or desire to learn from them.

It may appear on a surface reading of this passage that Jesus is simply inviting us to worry less, to birdwatch and smell the roses, but it is more than that.

There is economic anxiety in this passage. The framing isn't about anxiety more broadly, but about the worry of not being able to put food on the table or clothe oneself.

In this context, it is worth asking: How do those who are economically disadvantaged attend to ecological disasters when there are more immediate threats to their survival?

How does privilege intersect with environmental action?

We know that those most affected by climate change are in lower socioeconomic brackets, and yet these same people are least equipped to deal with these issues, both mentally (as this passage stresses) and in practical terms.

This passage also calls us to examine how our privilege connects us to rights and resources that are not available to our neighbours.

As with many things about our lives and about life in Biblical times, it is complicated.

We are given dominion over the earth and all that is in it.

We are called to keep the earth (Genesis 2:15), to till it and maintain the resources the earth gives to us (Genesis 1:28-31).

Later in Genesis (9:2-3), we are told not only that we can eat the plants that all living beings share, but also that every living thing can be food for us.

This is a huge resource matrix – a complicated, interwoven inheritance that depends on our understanding of the environment and how all life is interconnected, from the bottom of the ocean to the outermost reaches of our atmosphere.

And yet, our wisdom is limited.

The disciples couldn't still the storm raging on the sea; they called out to Jesus, and he rebuked the wind (Mark 4:39).

We can't shout at a tornado or a hurricane and tell it to behave.

When Job demands that God answer his question about the suffering he is enduring, God responds by asking whether Job understands the big picture.

God asks Job, "Who shut in the sea with doors when it burst forth from the womb… who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain and a way for the thunderbolt?" (Job 38:8, 25)

The answer to this rhetorical question is, "Not humans."

God did.

God created the world and is the author of the natural order; God also created Job and holds Job and all living things in hand (Job 12:7-10).

God loves Job as deeply as God loves all of creation. But Job is not in charge of the world (and neither are we!)

And Job's good behaviour does not entitle him to a life without suffering.

Here is the conundrum, though. We *want* Christ-like control over the winds and the waves, but we cannot have it.

God makes it clear that we are not in charge of nature; instead, our responsibility is to care for the earth.

Humanity is in relationship with something powerful, unpredictable, and divinely created.

However, what we do to the earth will have consequences, and we have been given minds to navigate cause and effect within the natural world.

Care for creation should be scientific and intuitive, as well as spiritual and filled with respect and awe.

We might call the issue of climate care a "wicked problem."

This term is not being used in this case as a moral judgment. Rather, it is a technical term used in social policy circles to denote problems involving complex, intersecting issues without clear origins or outcomes.

Other examples of wicked problems include poverty, homelessness, refugee crises, and healthcare inequalities.

Pastor and scholar Rebecca J. Copeland writes, "Wicked problems do not have universally shared definitions of what the problem is, and, indeed, every wicked problem is enmeshed with other problems."

Climate care certainly meets this definition.

How do we address this issue from a Christian perspective?

Here is where scientific inquisitiveness and faith-filled attention intersect.

We have been given amazing and curious minds that seek to solve problems, and we have been created in the image of God with deep, compassionate souls that seek to care for the earth and humanity.

How do we reconcile our understanding of science with our understanding of God?

Copeland believes we need to bring our faith-filled attention to the issues of climate care and other wicked problems.

She suggests expanding our understanding of sin beyond individual actions or an outside force from the devil, seeing it instead as relational, multigenerational, communal, and sometimes unintentional.

From this perspective, we have to recognize that sinful systems are constructed by humans and can therefore be repaired by humans through repentance and determination.

Framing these complex problems with language and understanding from both science and religion may bring us closer to creating a better world.

The Good News of all of this is that there is hope.

Hope for a better world, yes, but also hope that because God has created us as intelligent, problem-solving, social beings, we have the tools we need to start to address climate care collectively.

Indeed, we have already been working both individually and collectively.

We know that what we have been doing so far may not be enough, but we also know that we have the capacity to learn, grow, and own the mistakes we have made in the past.

This is not a problem we have necessarily created personally, though we contribute collectively to a system that perpetuates the problem.

But we can also be part of the solution. We can get the engine running if we are willing to work together, trusting both science and our faith in God.

And thinking through these concepts in this sermon series is one way we can start the engine.

May you leave here today hopeful for a better tomorrow… hopeful for a better world yet to come.

Amen.

Let us pray: Creator God, from the face of the deep, you called forth land and gave the waters their boundaries. You commanded lights in the sky, and named day and night. You created humanity in your image and told us to take care of creation. As your gift of the earth has provided all that we need, teach us to protect and care for it. Amen.