

SERMON NOTES
Is the Bible Environmentally Friendly?

David Renwick
National Presbyterian Church
April 17, 2016
Genesis 1:1-2:15
Psalm 24:1; Mark 12:31; Matthew 25:31-46

Environment, the Bible and the Church

John C. Bergstrom, What the Bible says About the Environment (2014)
(Distinguished Professor of Public Policy at the University of Georgia. research on natural resource, environmental and agricultural issues and policy).

Craig Branch, Samford Symposium on Environmentalism (2007, 2012),
www.apologetics.org

Presbyterian Church (USA): Earth Care Congregations (2013)

Evangelical Statements

The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship (conservative evangelical), www.cornwallalliance.org

Evangelical Climate Initiative (2006) National Association of Evangelicals (and others; moderate evangelical)

Climate Change:

World Bank: Climate Change Complicates Efforts to End Poverty, (2015)
www.worldbank.org

United Nations Environment Program: Poverty and Climate Change: Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaption (2003). (*Most poor regions lose with global warming; central Asia wins*)

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): Climate Change: A Synthesis for Policy Makers (2014)

Richard Linden, Global Warming: How to Approach the Science – Testimony House sub-committee on Science and Technology, November 2010 (Professor at MIT in the Program in Atmospheres, Oceans and Climate. Summary: humans part of climate change; other factors beyond our control; alarm is overblown)

Tim Radford, Study Finds Plant Growth Surges as CO2 Levels Rise (2013),
www.climatecentral.org (scientists at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Organization, Canberra, Australia).

Daniel Sarewitz, It's the End of the World as We Prefer It (2014), www.slate.com.
(Dr. Sarewitz: Professor of Science & Society; Co-director, Consortium for Science, Policy and Outcomes, Arizona State University; Summary: any single issue solution to an apocalyptic view of world problems is generally self-confirming, hard to prove wrong, and almost certainly inadequate).

Sermon Outline and Questions

1.Climate Change

- central to the public discussion but not the central issue for today
- opinions in our own congregation vary-- multiple issues are involved
 - a. How much is related to human activity? (*almost everyone agrees we are part of the issues . . . but how much is due to us? How much change would occur without us?*)
 - b. How serious it is – is it universally cataclysmic? *Are there some winners as well as losers? (World Bank sees central Asia as a beneficiary!)*
 - c. What do we (individuals/world community) need to do to respond?
 - d. Have we read opposing views?

2. Life is Complicated

Could radical action for climate change hurt more people than it helps?
Think Appalachia coal towns, colleges, education and poverty (e.g., Pikeville University) . . .
Where else may unintended consequences be a factor?
Does the ultimate good outweigh the local harm?

3. The Bible and the Environment

- a. What would you say if someone asked “Why should we bother with caring for the earth when ‘we are just passing through’?”
- b. Reading Genesis 1
 - i. Read the whole chapter
 - see the parallels between Days 1 and 4; 2 and 5; 3 and 6
 - also in Psalm 24:1,2
 - Is poetry less true than scientific fact?
 - What truth can poetry convey that mere facts cannot?
 - Where can you see God’s infinite care for creation in Gen.1?
 - ii. Genesis 1 and Psalm 24:1 . . . The earth is the Lord’s
 - Do you think of life in terms of ownership? Your life? Environment?
 - What examples can you think of, of the difference it makes in our action when we think of who owns something?
 - How do we balance Genesis 1:28 with Genesis 2:8-15?
Fill, subdue, dominion, till . . . and keep (protect)?
- c. Reading the Gospels:
 - How Jesus’ teaching on loving our neighbor (Mark 12:31) and caring for ‘the least of these’ affect (Matt. 25:31-46) affect what we do with the environment ?