

# To Till it and to Keep it: Personal Responsibility for Preserving God's World

May 1, 2022

Bill Given

Scripture: Genesis 2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and to keep it

To Till it and to Keep it: God is quite clear what he expects of us! Last Sunday we learned that Jesus said to Simon Peter if you love me you will feed my lambs, and tend my sheep. If these are expressions of our discipleship, how do incorporate these acts and make them part of our lives??

The scriptures consider the environment, beginning in Genesis where we learn about God creating the world and humankind. References to the natural world and the environment continue through new testament and conclude in Revelation with its commentaries on the relationships among God, humankind and the world. Beginning with the fact that so much of climate change and global warming lies beyond each of our ability to grasp or control what do we do as individuals? Each year record amounts of both carbon dioxide and methane gas are dispersed into the atmosphere. While we recognize that we are contributing, ultimately, to own demise, we are frustrated by the enormity and complexity of the problems. Calls to address the problems focus on governments and global industries but, ultimately how can we become disciples living

in Cristian communities use our teachings, our beliefs guided by our scriptures and our faith to act as stewards of God's world? When we Confront these slow but inexorably worsening conditions we may have a sense of futility of our individual actions when paired against the needs for change at all levels and by the global population. As Christians we recognize that we have not been good stewards of God's world ! Jesus teaches us to have a right relationship with one another, with our world and our creator. This means each of us assuming our role as stewards of Gods world. This will not be easy! We cannot simply hope that technological advancements alone will restore our world. Each of us must find ways to become better stewards ourselves. How do we as people of God, learn to care for God's world and to help one another to protect our environment. First we must recognize how our daily actions are linked to our being good stewards. The changes we must make will test our commitment to our basic Christian beliefs ,challenge our convictions and the strength and endurance of what it means to be a Christian each hour of each day! What makes this so difficult is that, unlike coming forward to help members of the church family in times of need, health challenges or other crises, care for our world requires us to be cognizant of the implications of each of our acts and what are its implications for our natural world. In our daily individual actions we have to make important changes related to preserving resources through recycling, consuming less fuel and energy and to lower polluting the

earth and air. As Christians, we must assess and monitor our own behaviors and incorporate our Christian beliefs to guide our lives toward becoming better stewards.

As we move through our day; ask yourself ; can what I plan to do next be done in a way that is better for our environment? . Can I recycle this item, is it possible to reduce my use of electricity or natural gas Revising even some of our behaviors will require us to ask ourselves how the action we are about to take will preserve even in the smallest way God's world . Changing our behaviors will be inconvenient and inefficient— but then this will require us to reconsider “efficiency”! This will require sacrifice. Our scriptures can guide us; we can sacrifice money and time ( Hebrew and Romans) and reframe what it means to do good and to not be shaped by the current molds of behavior.

As a congregation we can lean on one another to help each of us improve how our acts affect our environment. Last Sunday during adult hour we learned about planting native plants, composting, and recycling. We can learn from one another how we change our actions that will lead to more environmentally responsible behaviors. In addition, we learned how our church is installing solar panels and the amount of electricity we can produce with no sacrifice to our environment. Members of the Green team are sharing ways to help members who might wish to install solar panels on their home; natural plants for their yards, recycle, compost waste

and to share ways we might join and work with other faith communities. Each of these actions begin as a revision of our behaviors both individually and as members of our congregation and through this we restore in small ways that, over time, grow towards preserving God's natural world. We begin by asking ourselves and those around us, can we revise our thinking in ways that will reshape our behaviors that over time lead toward preserving and restoring God's world. Can we become Jesus's disciples? We can do this through faith that our ongoing acts of stewardship serve God and that, through grace, each of us will grow as Christians. Together our Church will become a Christian community that through stewardship restores this natural world that God entrusted to us. It will begin as each of us commit to tilling and keep our earth

Please join me in prayer: Dear God, on this spring morning the environment around us is opening with renewed life and beauty. Let them be reminders of our responsibility to this good earth and to help us to think more deeply and to direct our actions towards preserving our natural world. AMEN