

Job 12:7-10 CEV
Planet Earth and Human Sin #3
WRCoB 10.3.21

What have we done to our beloved planet Earth?

Not only is air pollution affecting climate change

Pollution on the ground is having

Devastating consequences on our fauna and flora

The last two sermons

We've touched upon climate change and human sin.

Today I finish with pollution, in general, and human sin.

In a paper from the Zoological Society of London

I read plastic pollution and climate change

Are not separate issues.

The two are intertwined

Each causing the other to worsen.

The article from BBC states

Manufacturing plastic items adds to greenhouse gas emissions, while extreme weather such as floods and typhoons associated with a heating planet will disperse and worsen plastic pollution in the sea.

The researchers highlight that marine species and ecosystems, such as coral reefs, are taking a double hit from both problems.

My premise in these sermons

Is that climate change is directly caused by human sin.

And that it shouldn't surprise us

That humanity is to be blamed for it.

Because it is a part of the larger biblical story.

Sin has corrupted every aspect of life on planet earth.

From the very first sin in Paradise

And its effects on Eden

To the devastation of the Great Flood

To the environmental crises

Of the ten plagues in Egypt

Humankind's footprint on planet earth

Has had shocking effects.

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Taking a quick survey through the Bible

We discover humanity's disobedience to God

Affects their surrounding environment.

When humankind is in a healthy relationship with God

Its effects extend out to other humans

And extends down to the environment.

For example, following the ten plagues

Pharaoh finally relents

And releases the people of Israel from captivity.

God, then guides the people of Israel
Through the wilderness to the land Canaan
A beautiful place flowing with milk and honey.

Deuteronomy 11:11-12 NLT

¹¹ the land you will soon take over is a land of hills and valleys with plenty of rain— ¹² a land that the Lord your God cares for. He watches over it through each season of the year!

God leads the people into this paradise-like location
Somewhat reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.

However, if the land with its wonderful climate
Is to continue being a healthy environment
God's people must be obedient to God's ways.

Now, these ways are not just the religious ways of their faith
Attending church
Giving the tithes and offerings
Making their yearly sacrifices

It must include caring for the widow
And the stranger among them

It also has to include
Being good stewards of mother earth.

If the people fail to keep good and healthy relationships
It will impact everything around them.

Deuteronomy 28:20-24 CEV

20 No matter what you try to accomplish, the Lord will confuse you, and you will feel his anger. You won't last long, and you may even meet with disaster, all because you rejected the Lord.

21-23 The Lord will send terrible diseases to attack you, and you will never be well again. You will suffer with burning fever and swelling and pain until you die somewhere in the land that you captured.

The Lord will make the sky overhead seem like a bronze roof that keeps out the rain, and the ground under your feet will become as hard as iron.

Your crops will be scorched by the hot east wind or ruined by mildew. ²⁴ He will send dust and sandstorms instead of rain, and you will be wiped out.

In an era of increased floods, hurricanes, and wildfires
Along with a pandemic
That has killed 4.5 million worldwide
You have to wonder . . .

Are these not so subtle messages from God?

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About six hundred years after
Israel migrated into the land of Canaan
And established the nation of Israel

And during the time of the divided kingdoms

God again, warns the people to turn from their sin
Before it devastates their environment.

God's warning comes to Isaiah in the form of a vision.

Isaiah 24:4-6 CEV

**⁴ The earth wilts away;
its mighty leaders melt
to nothing.**

**⁵ The earth is polluted
because its people
disobeyed the laws of God,
breaking their agreement
that was to last forever.**

**⁶ The earth is under a curse;
its people are dying out
because of their sins.**

The prophet Jeremiah also warns the people
In a prophetic voice that continues to ring out today

Jeremiah 2:7 CEV

**⁷ I brought you here to my land,
where food is abundant,
but you made my land filthy
with your sins.**

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Brothers and sisters, we have made God's good earth
Filthy with our sin.

Professor Heather of the Zoological Society of London

Climate change is undoubtedly one of the most critical global threats of our time. Plastic pollution is also having a global impact; from the top of Mt Everest to the deepest parts of our ocean.

A good climate is a gift from God.

There is no reason why a good and prosperous climate
Couldn't continue.

When we care for what God has given us.

There is no reason we all can't have a prosperous life
On planet earth
When there is a spirit of worldwide sharing

Sure, there will always be an occasional natural disaster

The tornado that runs through a town
Filled with both good and evil people

The occasional flood or drought, forest fire or earthquake.

And even though it happens
We can still be assured of God's goodness and care.

But when the devastation increases
When floods and droughts and fires
All increase in frequency

As God's people
We need to look to the heavens
To see if God might be vying for our attention.

From Lefebvre's article in CT

According to Scripture climate change is an expected instrument of divine humbling, we should be open to the evidence that is happening now.

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Climate change is God warning us.

Global warming and pollution are consequences
Of our disobedience to God.

We have trashed God's beautiful creation.

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Pope Francis describes humanity's destruction
Of the environment as a sin

And accuses humankind of turning the planet into a
Polluted wasteland full of debris, desolation and filth.

In October of 2020, the bishops of the Catholic Church
Held a synod concerning the environmental crises.

They identified what they called a new category of sin
Ecological sin.

They described it this way:

We propose to define ecological sin as an action or omission against God, against one's neighbor, the community and the environment.

It is sin against future generations, and it is committed in acts and habits of pollution and destruction of the harmony of the environment.

These are transgressions against the principles of interdependence, and they destroy networks of solidarity among creatures and violate the virtue of justice.

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Ask the animals and they will teach you.



Ask the birds of the air and they will tell you.



Ask the plants of the earth,



And the fish of the sea

And they will declare to you

Who among all these does not know

That in God's hand is the life of every living thing?

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What have we done?

God gave us, above all the other living things

The responsibility to care for creation.

We must do everything we can

To reduce our greenhouse gas emissions

And we must reevaluate our use of plastics.

We cannot continue to treat planet earth as a wastebasket

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2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray and seek my face . . .

The first step in all this is recognizing

Our complicity in climate change

And the devastating effects of pollution.

We need to lament our wrongdoing and pray for forgiveness

For our personal and corporate actions and nonactions

In perpetuating pollution

On land and sea and atmosphere.

We pray and seek God's face in God's creation

Reminding ourselves

That in God's hand is the breath of every living thing.

And turn from their wicked ways.

Lefebvre states that once we recognize
That climate change is a means of divine reproof

The sciences can instruct us how to be better stewards
As we seek God's redemption Spirit

The sciences can identify areas in human activity
That are the culprits for climate change.

*Industrial-scale carbon emissions have been identified as
the most significant factor contributing to global warming.*

Not to shift blame
For we are all responsible for contributing
To CO2 emissions.

But we need to make industry accountable
For their fair share of the problem.

We should call it what it is, ecological sin

*While secular policymakers focus on ways to reduce
greenhouse gas emissions, the church should address
matters of pride, greed, creation abuse, and other sins that
may be connected to some industrial practice.*

**Then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin
and heal their land.**

If we do our part in confessing
And lamenting our role in climate change

If we do our part in correcting past mistakes
In curbing our incessant appetite for material things

If we seek the general welfare of all God's people
All people near and far
Who share this good earth

God most surely will do his part.

For . . .

Psalm 107:28 They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out from their distress; ²⁹ he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.

³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.

May it be so. Amen.