**The Earth Is Full of Your Creatures**

**The Word**

Read together Psalm 104:1-24

**The Big Idea**

As God’s image bearers, we are called to faithfully steward and rule over God’s good creation until God brings his kingdom.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What experiences or voices/sources have most shaped your views on issues related to how we use, care for, and relate with the rest of God’s creation?

2. On Sunday we talked about the kind of thing creation is. What from that conversation stood out to you most and why?

3. As you consider humanity’s God-given role with the rest of creation (as members and rulers), where do you agree with the perspective shared on Sunday? And where you disagree, what other biblical passages would you point to, or how would you interpret the passages offered differently in support of your view?

4. At the end of Sunday’s message, some general suggestions were given on practical steps we might take in this area. Is there anything specific you’re interested in pursuing at this time?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. Climate change is obviously a highly politicized, issue and we all probably have a gut take on it based on our political sensibilities

 B. Our task here is to outline a basic biblical framework for approaching these issues

II. What kind of thing is creation?

A. It is not God, but rather God’s creation (Gen 1:1). Not to be worshipped.

B. It is God’s masterpiece/work of art (Genesis 1 presents God as the consummate artist)

C. It is a source of God’s delight: “and God saw that it was good”

D. It is the object of his ongoing care (Ps 104)

God didn’t just set it up in the beginning and step away; rather the continuously sustains and cares for creation.

E. It testifies about God’s nature

1. It “declares” his glory (Ps 19:1-3)

2. It reveals his power and divine nature (Ro 1:20)

3. For the believer, creation is a window through which we can learn about and appreciate who our God is

 F. It belongs to God and exists for his glory

 1. The earth is the Lord’s, not ours (Ps 24:1)

2. Ps 104 mentions wild animals that serve no purpose for humanity and are often beyond human knowledge

III. What is our role in creation?

A. We are members of creation

 1. We are intimately connection with the earth (Gen 2:7)

2. We were made in the same way as the animals and on the same day as the (Gen 2:19)

3. We are blessed and told to multiply and fill the earth like the other animals

 (Gen 1:28 and 1:22)

 4. Sustained and fed the same way as the animals (Gen 1:29-30)

 B. We are rulers of creation

1. Made in God’s image and of so much more worth than every other part of creation (Gen 1:27)

2. Called to “subdue” the earth (Gen 1:28)

a. This implies hard work and taking a wild/untamed/uncultivated creation and bringing it under our control

b. Adam was called to “work it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). Life in Eden required gardening, ordering, tending, cultivating

c. Eden’s earth had gold and onyx (Gen 2:12)

1) God put resources into the land that could be used to build a society. Humans were to take raw materials of my good earth, and build a beautiful world”

 2) They were to cultivate the land and create culture

3. Called to rule over the other creatures (Gen 1:28)

 a. God’s royal representatives given authority over the other animals

b. Adam’s naming the animals (Gen 2:19-20) is a form of authority

4. Taking this all together we can imagine the kind of rule God envisioned

a. Not domination and exploitation

b. Not leave no trace

c. Rather: Faithful Stewardship

Care and protect it. Use it for our benefit. Cultivate it and draw out its potential for the flourishing of humanity and creation

d. A humble response: Psalm 8:3-8

IV. The Fall (Genesis 3:17-19)

A. God puts a curse on the earth and reshapes creation to match our sinful state

 B. God subjects creation to futility and decay (Romans 8: 21-22)

C. This does not negate the goodness of creation nor our role within creation. It simply means that role will now be full of painful toil, and we will regularly be unfaithful to that role

V. Redemption

A. The story of Noah

1. A profound outworking of the curse and the consequence of human sin

2. A profound outworking of God’s original role for humanity through Noah

- The ruler working with God to protect and preserve the animals

- God remembered Noah and the animals on the ark (Gen 8:1)

B. The Story of Israel

1. Their story is bound up with the promised land (much like Genesis 1-2)

2. He gives them a good land flowing with milk and honey and copper in the hills (Dt 11:10-12)

3. They are called to “subdue” the land by fighting God’s enemies (Num 32:22)

 4. They are told that the land ultimately belongs to the Lord (Lev 25:23)

5. Their faithfulness is literally tied up with the fruitfulness of the land (Dt 28)

 - Obey God: Land is blessed: rain, grass, crops, cattle, womb

 - Disobey: Curse: heat, drought, disease, dust and powder

 6. They are given laws to promote justice and proper care of the land

 - Sabbath rest for their animals (Ex 20:10, Dt 5:14)

 - Sabbath year where the land lays fallow rests (Lev 25:2-7)

 - Jubilee year (Lev 25:8-17): land lays fallow, property is returned

C. The Story of a new heavens and earth

 1. Romans 8:20-21: Creation liberated from the curse and given its freedom

2. 2 Peter 3:5-13: Creation destroyed (or purified?) just like with the flood but now with fire instead of water.

 3. An eternal Garden City (Revelation 21:1-2 and 22:1-3)

 4. Does does not abandon his plan for an earthly existence for his people.

VI. Conclusion: How do we bear witness to this biblical story?

A. Enjoy creation

B. Educate ourselves on creation and our effects on it

C. Engage in a life that appropriately honors our role with creation

 1. Consider your food, transportation, energy consumption, consuming

2. Pursue biblical values of love, sacrifice, self-control, humility rather than worldly values of convenience, comfort, self-centeredness, and excess.