

Listen, hear all Nature's plea
For the sons of men to follow,
To possess their liberty
From the sins in which they wallow.

Hear Earth's moaning as it longs
For deliverance from frustration.
We alone must sing the songs
That precede a freed creation.]

Sing boldly, brothers and sisters, no matter where "in the garden" God has "placed" you to serve and guard His work.

01-02-05c-Caring for the Garden-Part 3
creation, Incarnation, humanity, stewardship, leadership, work, ministry
Gen 2:15 (HCSB)
As God's image bearers, humans are to *grow* and *guard* His creation.

INTRODUCTION: (Gen 2:15 (HCSB), *The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.*)

–So far in this series, we asked 3 questions to address 2 themes: "Who we are is inseparably interwoven with what we do," and "God made us in His image on purpose for us to live with purpose." **HOM.idea.**

Originally, humanity failed in this purpose. [We **struck out** in the 1st inning. Then God joined us by Incarnation. Now, it's a whole new ball game. Jesus is Team Captain, we're up to bat again, and Heaven is cheering us on to hit home runs.]

–As I ended my last message, I spoke about the 2nd task in Gen 2:15: guarding. We have 2 more questions that will explore the 1st task....

I. "How is being servants of God shaped by our privilege of being co-creating 'friends' of the Creator?"

A. God finished creation, then assigned us the task of cultivating it.

1. [This word, abad, means to **work on** or **serve things, people, or God.** When it's *servicing God*, it implies "joyful liberation" not "toilsome labor."]
2. Desiring "to work" is *natural* to humans. [Think of toddlers who love tinkering with real tools rather than toys; hobbies that people *work at* harder than at their jobs; "out-of-work" adults or retirees getting *depressed* unless they're *servicing* as volunteers or *doing something useful* or worthwhile.]
3. The modern stigma of *work* as "toilsome labor" is turned around by Christ— Col 3:23-24, Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

B. Serving God by working with creation is a privilege for humans...

1. It's not a mechanical or hierarchal form of service— John 15:15, I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you **friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (With our incarnation united to Christ's Incarnation, human work and service on earth becomes a form of companionship, collaboration, friendship—a return to what we were meant to be as co-creators with God.)
2. **Also**, just as God's creation is responsive to God's authority, so this present *sin-cursed creation* still responds to us, as God's

image-bearers. It does so favorably or unfavorably, depending on how we do or don't embody God's will:

- a. This is a **huge subject in Scripture**, encompassing everything from Abel's blood crying out from the ground to Jesus talking to a fig tree or telling a sea-storm, "Peace, be still."
- b. We also hear reports of strange phenomena, like the way plants and water respond to human emotions and moral actions:
 - (1) [**Cleve Backster**, a CIA "lie detector" expert, claims that a lie detector attached to plants recorded this kind of *responsiveness*, even including *memory*. In one experiment, a plant responded violently when a man ripped apart a nearby plant. Later, when other men walked in the room, nothing registered. But when the man who had killed the neighboring plant entered the room, the recorded plant reacted violently.]
 - (2) [Japanese researcher, **Masaru Emoto** claims that, when frozen, water previously exposed to *words, pictures, music, or moral actions*, either formed lovely crystals or formless masses, depending on the good or bad nature of what it was exposed to. He believes this shows that water connects all of life and that its responsiveness is a means by which good thoughts can effect our bodies and shape our lives and environment.]
- c. *Atheists* call these experiments "*fairy tales*," just as they do the Scriptures that support such evidence— Prov 18:20-21 (ISV), The positive words that a man speaks fill his stomach; he will be satisfied with what his lips produce. The power of the tongue is life and death—those who love to talk will eat what it produces.

TRANS: Our words matter, because we're the King's prophets. Our views and attitudes matter, because we're the Kings' priests. Our work matters, because we're the King's friends. Religion serves a distant God of law. We serve a God of love Who drew **close to us** by Incarnation. So, what does this *collaborative, human-friendly, co-creating service* with a *loving God* look like? ***This invites our last question:***

II. "How does 'caring for the Garden' relate to our activities in the secular world around us?"

- A. For us, we must not divide secular and spiritual (The true division between godly and worldly, and God helps us to navigate that...)
 1. **Mat 6:33a**, "Seek first God's kingdom and righteousness..." (Placing the Creator as top priority keeps our *creational priorities* in order.)
 2. **Rom 12:2**, Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and

approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (*God's will is to live incarnationally with renewed minds in a fallen world.*)

3. **Col 3:17**, And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (For *servant-friends of Jesus*, all ground is holy; all work is sacred.)
- B. Also, we must renew our ties with creation [**Loren Wilkinson** wrote "...reconciliation between persons and their Creator is incomplete if it does not include a reconciliation with the creation from which they are estranged?"]
- C. To live out our calling to care for creation, we must stay aware of our prophetic, priestly and kingly roles, while always remembering that people and relationships are also part of creation.)
 1. As prophetic voices, we can speak *God's will* and ways into our environments. (Planting *godly principles* in *ungodly places* often requires a group effort in *wise counsel* and *ongoing prayer*.)
 2. As priestly ambassadors, our presence brings Jesus the Healer to every person and into every situation. (Because He indwells us, our visit becomes His visit; our touch is His touch.)
 3. As leaders and protectors, we can become *skilled and bold* in using Kingdom authority against spiritual darkness.
 - a. We must see beyond the visible— Eph 6:12 (ISV), For our struggle is not against human opponents, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in the darkness around us, and evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm.
 - b. We must use every means of grace available to gain victory for God's Kingdom— 2 Cor 10:4-5 (NIV), The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

CONCLUSION:

—God's image-bearers must grow and guard His creation. Wherever in creation God has placed us, that's our sphere of influence in *caring for the garden*. As creation groans in longing for Resurrection Day, its eyes are on us, expected us to be *God's co-creating friends*— **Rom 8:19**. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. Let me close with a portion of my poem ["EARTH'S GROANING"...

Listen gently, friend or foe
Of the God-Man, Christ the Savior.

Feel Earth's groaning down below,
Under humankind's behavior.