

01-02-05a-Caring for the Garden-Part 1  
 creation, work, stewardship, identity  
 Gen 2:15 (HCSB)

*Who we are* is inseparably interwoven with *what we do*.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

–This sermon is the 1<sup>st</sup> of a 3-part series on “*Caring for the Garden*” taken from **Genesis 2:15** (HCSB), *The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.* **HOM.idea.** Our *privileged position* as *embodiments of God’s image* gives us a strategically important task to accomplish. *We bear our Creators “likeness” to reflect and represent Him in the created world through our own creative work.*

**My poem:** “CREATOR” (2/22/1992)

Someday you’ll compose a song or sing one very well,  
 Feel a thrill of satisfaction in a tale you tell,  
 Draw a picture, paint a portrait, shape a lump of clay,  
 Plan and build a dream-house, act a part within a play,  
 Plant a lovely flower garden, set a gem in gold,  
 Cut and piece and sew an outfit new and sharp and bold,  
 Tinker to invent a gadget saving people time,  
 Write an essay or a story set in prose or rhyme,  
 And, while feeling fresh fulfilment where you have achieved  
 In the goal of each ambition by your mind conceived,  
 You will pause when all about you birds are singing, too,  
 Wind is whistling, stars are shining, everything you view  
 Whispers softly hints behind them of a happy Mind,  
 As if all that is around you stands both sealed and signed  
 By a Person, Great Designer, One you imitate  
 When you follow yearnings to be skillful and create.]

–We are *creators* because we *image the Creator*. That’s the reason for *our job description* in **Gen 2:15**. God’s call to *care for creation* wasn’t cancelled by the Fall, but human sin can make us hard of hearing!)

–Because of our Fall, **God planned something *incredibly amazing*: *the Incarnation***. In *Jesus Christ*, God became one of us, not just to redeem us from sin, but to give us a *human example* of what it means for us to be *prophets, priests and kings*. Then, the *Holy Spirit* came as a personal Counselor to each one of us guide and empower us to follow Jesus as *servant-leaders* with *prophetic, priestly and royal* tasks in *cares for creation, as we, together with creation*, anticipate His Return. ***To assist us start thinking along these lines...***

## I. I've Made a List of Exploratory Questions:

- A. #1 - "Why did God create us as body-spirit beings in the first place?"
- B. #2 - "How does Christ's Incarnation define our own calling in a world disrupted by sin?"
- C. #3 - "What are the material and spiritual dimensions of a Christian concept of ecology?"
- D. #4 - "How is being servants of God shaped by our privilege of being co-creating 'friends' of the Creator?" **and**
- E. #5 - "How does 'caring for the Garden' relate to our activities in the secular world around us?"

**TRANS:** All of these questions imply that *most service to God doesn't happen at church, not even for pastors!* I discovered that fact when I became a nurse. Today's "garden" is our weekday world, Monday thru Saturday. That's where we use our physical, mental, and spiritual abilities that reflect God's image. These 3 sermons will barely scratch the surface of this theme, but I hope they'll lay a theological foundation to build on, and maybe help renew our zeal and inspiration to serve as prophets, priests and kings in the areas of life where God has "placed" us (that's the word in Gen 2:15, "The LORD God ... placed him in the garden" [lit., "caused to rest"]). We'll look deeper at this idea of resting in our tasks, but first there's another important question to add to the 5 others:

## II. "Is God Concerned About *Who We Are* or *What We Do*?"

- A. Now, that's a trick question. It asks an either-or response, but the answer is both-and. Who we are and what we do are interwoven....
  1. God is the Creator because He created all things; Jesus is the Savior because He saves sinners; the Holy Spirit is the Counselor because He counsels believers; **AND** we are believers because we believe. (**Who we are** cannot be separated from **what we do**.)
  2. Today's popular psychology says that who we are isn't defined by what we do. That's true in one respect and false in another:
    - a. Some may say, "I'm a student!" Yes, but do they really study their textbooks?
    - b. Some may say, "I'm a parent!" Yes, but do they really guide and provide for their children?

- c. Some may say, "I'm a citizen!" Yes, but do they really perform their duties of citizenship?
- B. Jesus said in John 10:10b (ESV), "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." (We are who we are as children of God by receiving new "life" from Christ, but we express ourselves as God's children by what we do with that "life,"—
  1. **how** we speak prophetically for God,
  2. **how** we minister to and serve others,
  3. **how** we lead with His royal authority.
  4. In other words, do we live poorly or "abundantly"?)
- C. God's concern about who we are and what we do explains this word "placed" with its dual meaning of both location and resting:
  1. As God's image-bearers we rest, since God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, after 6 days of creative work.
    - a. Saturday is the OT Sabbath, but ours is Sunday, because we rest in Christ's Resurrection work completed Sunday morning.
    - b. Until Christ returns, each activity in this NT workweek should be characterized by our Sabbath rest in Him, for He says, "my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (You can determine if you've taken on a wrong task, when you can't find Sabbath rest in it.)
  2. A Sunday Sabbath is for resting, relaxing, recreation! But the word, **recreate**, has 3 other meanings: **1)** to reanimate, repair, renovate, revive, or restore energy; **2)** to cheer, embolden or encourage; **3)** to reestablish or create anew. These definitions tell us what we humans need for getting ourselves back to work.
  3. God wants to re-create or restore who we are and what we do. (Our personal identity and creative work come from Him, and He wants to fill them both with new life: His life.)

## CONCLUSION:

—**Who we are is inseparably interwoven with what we do. Who we are** as image-bearers of the Creator must be kept aligned with **what we do** as cultivators and guardians of creation. Staying under the sound teaching of God's Word—in church and our own devotional lives—makes that divine alignment a regular, ongoing part of our lives....  
 —That's why we're in church right now, to keep who we are as God's children aligned with what we do for God's kingdom.... Let's pray.