

“God Saw that it was Good”

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Grace and Peace to you my fellow earth stewards from God our Creator.

The compelling question for the “Earth Sunday” is,

“What am I doing to actively care for God’s creation?”

Of course I first needed to ask myself – How am I actively caring for God’s creation?

I have to admit – I don’t think I am doing even 5% of what I could be doing. Shouldn’t I at least be tithing back to in how I actively care for God’s creation - a minimum of 10%?

My job/career/vocation is focused on the environment and how we as humans can minimize our impact on the environment. I am passionate about my vocation as an environmental engineer. If asked to define what I do as an environmental engineer, I would say that “I work to improve the quality of life while demonstrating stewardship of the built and natural environment.” Sound familiar or catchy? It is the mission statement for the company that I work for, which sponsors OPB – so that may be where you heard it.

Sometimes my work means -

- trying to make an improvement to the natural environment, like restoring a stream to a more natural condition;
- or it may mean avoiding, minimizing or mitigating for the impacts from a large project like a bridge, a pipeline or resort.

It is my job to make improvements to the natural or built environment with little or no impact. This isn’t an easy task. Almost everything that we do as human beings has some minor or major impact on God’s creation.

So this brings me back to “Am I doing enough in my personal time to actively care for God’s creation?”

As people of faith, the care and stewardship of God’s creation should be taken as a mandate. Today in the reading from Genesis the refrain we hear over and over again is “God saw that it was good.” The light, sky, land, seas, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, and living creatures. God saw that all these things were good. On the sixth day, after God had created man, God even said it was **very** good. Very good, maybe because God gave man the responsibility of ruling over his creation. God gave man the responsibility of securing the well-being of every creature and aspect of His creation.

So why do we as Christians need to have compelling arguments to be good stewards of God's creation?

If a loved one were diagnosed with a medical condition that needed special treatment – wouldn't we go to the ends of the earth to get them the treatment? Doesn't God's creation need special treatment and care? I would argue that our "call to action" has nothing to do with proving that Climate Change is occurring or not – Our call to action has to do with the responsibility that God has given each of us to "Care for His creation" the creation that God saw was good.

In Psalm 148, the whole creation praises God. The psalm seems to indicate that God is given glory when created beings are allowed to 'be' all that He created them to be, in their beauty and wonder, their diversity, and majesty. Again, there is a challenge for us in how we relate to and care for the natural world, the creation.

So on this Earth Sunday, I would ask that each of us take on at least 3 new things that you can do to better care for God's creation. Whether you are a morning or evening person – or a sometime in-between-person – I have developed a list based on an average day for most people of the things that you could do from the time you wake-up in the morning – until you go to bed. I haven't included anything that would be a major expense, like low-flow toilets, energy star appliances or buying a hybrid vehicle. Not that these things aren't good things to do.

There are plenty of things that you can do on a daily basis that won't cost you any money and in most instances these will save you money.

1. Flush toilets less. For those that have been to Holden Village, you are probably familiar with the saying, "if it's yellow let it mellow, and if it's brown flush it down." Hopefully this is self-explanatory – catch me after the service if you need an explanation. It takes 3 to 5 gallons of water for each flush. One flush is as much water as an average African person uses in a day for drinking, cooking, bathing and cleaning.
2. Take a shorter shower. An average shower uses 5 gallons per minute. The average water consumption per person in the United States is 175 gallons per day, France is 77 gallons per day, Botswana is 20 gallons per day and India is 13 gallons per day.
3. Reuse Your Towel. Hang your towel up after your shower, reuse it for several days. You are clean when you dry off, "Aren't you?" (water and energy saving)

4. Brushing you Teeth. Don't run the water when you brush your teeth. Average faucet runs at 2 gallons per minute – a savings of 4 gallons.
5. Wear clothing more than once. Wear your clothes more that once unless they are soiled or smelly. When you do wash your clothes consider using a clothes line to dry your clothes on a nice summer day. (Water & energy savings)
6. Coffee – buy coffee with organic, Fair Trade, Bird Friendly, or Rain Forest Alliance certification seals. If everyone in Portland switched to these types of coffee a rainforest the size of Portland would be saved every year. Also, use a reusable mug even when you go to Starbucks. Styrofoam cups take 9 years to degrade in the landfill.
7. Become a Locovore – What is a locovore? – it someone who uses local ingredients and products. It takes about 4% of the total energy in the US to produce our food – it takes between 10% and 13% percent of the total energy in the US to transport our food. Buy local when you can. Shop at your local farmers market – but items in season.
8. Buy products that have minimal packaging.
9. Drinking water – make it a habit to carry a reusable water bottle. They have new stainless steel bottles if you are concerned about the plastic ones. Making all of the water bottles for the US requires more than 1.5 million barrels of oil annually. That's enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year.
10. Bring reusable shopping bags to the store – Americans dispose of one hundred billion plastic shopping bags each year. Enough bags of tied handle to handle would circle the earth 126 times.
11. Double side your copies – If you have to print something – double side it. If just 1 in 4 office workers in the US double sided their copies this have an annual savings of 130 billion sheets of paper – a stack thicker than the earth.
12. Combine your trips – combine your errands into longer, multipurpose trips instead of driving out for several shorter trips throughout the week.
13. Carpool or use public transportation at least once per week.
14. Recycle – If everyone in the US just recycled the simple thing: paper, plastic, glass and aluminum products we would reduce the amount of waste going to our landfills by 75%. Also, buy items made form recycled content.

15. Landscaping – if you water your lawn in the summer, don't water more than 1" per week. This can be measured easily by just putting a used tuna can in the area you are watering, let it fill to 1".
16. Wash your car at the car wash – When washing your car in your driveway, all the soap, scum, and oily grit runs along the curb. Then into the storm drain and directly into our lakes, streams, and bays. And that causes pollution which is unhealthy for fish. Take it to a car wash where the water gets treated and recycled.
17. Lights – turn them off and when they burn out replace them with compact fluorescents. A compact fluorescent can use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. Take advantage of the green teams program to recycle both Compact fluorescents and batteries every month that has 5 Sundays, with collection on the 4th and 5th Sundays.
18. Volunteer for a project that improves God's creation – Yesterday we had over 30 people participate in pulling invasive plants in our natural areas.

This is just a very short list of all the possibilities; there are an enormous amount of resources on the web, utility billing inserts and books. Find the things that work for you.

I throw out the challenge to all of you, "What are you doing to properly care for God's creation?"

God saw that it is good. We all need to do our part to be good stewards of God's creation. We need to conserve our limited resources and stop the degradation of our natural environment.

Write down your Earth Day resolutions – the three things that you will do to properly care for God's creation. God will see that it is good.

In the name of God the Creator – Amen.