

In 2006 former Vice-President Al Gore, fresh off his “hanging chad” Presidential defeat immersed himself in a cause that at the time was on the cusp of becoming part of our American mainstream conversation – the book and subsequent movie was entitled “An inconvenient Truth”. Gore who would receive the prestigious Nobel Peace Award similar to former President Jimmy Carter and his Habitat for Humanity ministry, may well be remembered moreso for his work outside the Whitehouse – the so called seat of power and quite possibly will be that rare politician/public figure in whom future generations will note his humanitarian efforts to society in the private sector. In a nutshell the book rather graphically and some would say intentionally offends to stir action – a change of behavior, similar to the “scared straight” documentaries of the early eighties that brought troubled teens into a “real prison to interact with so called “harden criminals”. The thought process is that if we see how bad things are a child or a nation will be .....”scared straight”. Al Gore in his “Inconvenient Truth” .....details the rampant destruction of our natural resources if allowed to continue in our lifetime such things we have become accustomed to will soon be extinct:

- Diminishing Fuel Supplies being always available for our vehicles, heating, etc.
- Diminishing polar ice caps from global warming – rising tides
- Diminishing Ozone Layer – impacting the likelihood of skin cancer
- Diminishing or extinction of some species, especially bears, wolves, etc.
- Diminishing open space such as our Fairmount park
- Overabundance of other species – elk....imbalance
- Overabundance of \_\_\_\_\_

One could argue that this “scared straight” approach brought the “inconvenient truth” of our ecological dilemma into the mainstream, the evidence became too overwhelming to ignore...of which we have now officially gone “green”. This may be the case and I must admit, that if it weren’t for recent internal pressure over the last few years within the Dow house by my “gorilla green” daughter Carmela I may not be where I am on being intentional about Creation Care – I am sure Rosalie would have arrived, but me? No Way! Carrying cloth bags to reduce the use of plastic bags that clutter our urban landscape.

- Use only \_\_\_\_\_ light bulbs.
- Recycling our trash carefully separating the metal cans from the plastics
- Not allowing the water to run while brushing our teeth or washing dishes
- Make sure the dish washer is full before running a cycle
- Buy local produce, and fruits and vegetables in season to reduce the market for chemical induced crops
- Buy fair trade merchandise...especially coffee, so that small farmers who live in the hood depend on our American markets will receive as close to the “real” value for their goods.
- Of course I haven’t been able to tie the correlation that keeping her room clean is good for the environment!
- Walk when you can – good exercise and forces you to plan
- Bike when you need to go more than a mile – good exercise and burns fat
- Take public transportation/regional if you have to go across town keeps heart rate down of sitting in traffic let alone emission from the cars (Philly car-share)
- Keep one car preferably a hybrid - if at possible reduces our dependence on oil which often dictates our foreign policy
- Talk about it Papi...people listen to you!

So if you like me –“Johnny come lately” somewhat slow to what many around the world and in our communities or in my case in my home have been screaming that the “**sky is falling**” by naming the global growing concerns you can easily assume that we the church/people of faith in Jesus Christ, individually or corporately really don’t belong in this conversation, let’s be honest we have enough on our theological table for

consideration – family/work battle, worship/prayer, being missional, violence/war, moral vices that we struggle with, etc. The assumption one can make is that the challenges that face our Earth – global warming, climate change, fair trade/food distribution, etc are concerns of the external world, be it scientist, ecologist, biologist or a conservationists even a farmer but not that doesn't impact us in the safe confines of our church and homes ...Right?

**Central Theme - People are important, Community is vital but people and community are also intimately intertwined with Creation. By caring for the earth you show how important people are.**

No. We find caring for creation – all creation at the beginning Genesis 1 reveals that God gave humans a responsibility as stewards of his Creation. Our God was **environmentally friendly well before it was trendy....** You see a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ I focused on the fact that the majority of those who seemed to passionately care about our earthly resources, seemed to worship the creation and not the creator – failing to be even more concerned as to what our God has called us to in caring for creation in the very beginning!

**27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.**

Admittedly, God didn't say anything about how difficult that responsibility is, or how we might feel about it. Yet it is still ours by virtue of appointment to the King. There's no squirming out of it, no matter how overwhelming it might seem.

Should I even make an attempt to do anything about the environment? Far too many of us operate in the Bobby Brown of "it my proactive to do what I want to do". Maybe you feel that each person has his or her own special calling to a certain ministry. Yours just isn't ecology. Doesn't that let you off the environmental hook? Read **Revelation 11:18** and you might want to rethink your position. It talks about God's judgment of both saints and sinners, and his plan to destroy those who destroy the earth. We're all caretakers of this planet.

God talks about "a new heaven and a new earth,". Remember Genesis 1, God declares all of Creation "good." God values that which was created....all of Creation, and we who have eternal life are still part of it.

**Colossians 1:19-20: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him [Christ], and through him to reconcile all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross."**

Creation itself "roots" for us, too. In Romans 8:19, Paul tells us that Creation waits "**with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.....a day is coming in which all creations will be liberated!**"

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### **Paul's Sermon @ Mars Hill**

In Acts 17 we read of the Apostle Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey. Paul did not go to Athens as a tourist, nor as a student of art; he went there as a missionary, carrying the

gospel of Christ. He found the city full of idols. Paul turned; he must have seen statues, temples, and shrines. Poseidon hurling his trident. Beyond this, he would have seen the statues of Healing Athena, Zeus, Apollo, and Hermes standing near the Sanctuary of Dionysus. While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy, whom he had instructed to join him as soon as possible (Acts 17:15), he must have explored the city in the same manner in which tourists do today. He could have visited the Royal Colonnade, the Metroum or Sanctuary of the Mother of the Gods with her image. Idols would have been somewhat overwhelming.....every – the god of war, love, fire, ocean, etc..

**22Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus (Mars Hill) and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. 24"'"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.....29"'"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. 30In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.**

The reality is that we live in a similar understanding of those listening to Paul as he dealt with idolatry – we no longer have statues as idols per say but similar to Paul's day there amongst us today....

- We live in a world that worship creation compared to the creator,
- We live in a world that worships technology and industry that firmly believes that we need not worry about anything because human ingenuity will always find a solution – no mystery, fact that we cannot solve never asking the moral question of should we.

- We live in a world that worships the god of advancement, capitalism, profit this allows us to ravage all and any natural resources at all and any costs for profit and market share.
- Lastly we live in a world that worships the god of “Bobby Brown” who coined the phrase back in the day that “it is my proactive – I can do whatever I want....”

Paul’s sermon in Acts 17 to those gathered around speaks to our world today.. **as we take seriously what is our call both individually and corporately as it relates to Creation Care.**

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1. **The first being the power and awesomeness of God. His power "In the beginning God created....God made the world and everything in it and it was good. We care about creation/environment because**

**"The universe itself declares His power, "for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).**

The Psalmist David said,

**"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge." (Psa. 19:1-2).**

Paul told the Christians in Colosse that by Christ

**"All things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (Col. 1:16-17).**

As the Apostles saw demonstrated, even the winds and waves of the sea are subject to Him (Matt. 8:23-27).

2. The second point of the sermon would be the omnipresence of God.

**"He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:27-28).**

Our God is not limited by space. At the dedication of the first Temple, king Solomon said,

**"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27).**

Neither is our God limited by time, for

**"with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (1 Pet. 3:8)". Moses, in prayer, said, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God." (Ps 90:1-2).**

3. The final point of Paul's sermon was that their "spirituality was admirable", their various gods affirmed the sky, the sea, the air, fire love, etc. Yet the various gods, in particular the "unknown god" was pointing to the one true God, found only through Jesus Christ who. That all that this world has offered to us – food, shelter, comfort, is an act of incredible, yet intentional grace...

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#### Conclusion

- When we adhere to best practices of irrigation, resting the land we then have Food to share instead of overpricing or food shortages
- When we are responsible and how we monitor the use of our vehicles, our heating during the winter months, our addiction to oil will be minimized and perhaps the international conflicts over one another to secure our addiction to oil
- When we recognize that **Psalm 24:1 declares, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,"** and **Genesis 1:26-27** reveals us as stewards of that earth. Surely God won't let humans destroy the earth. Maybe not, but in the mean time we may come close. Rest in the fact that God is ultimately sovereign, but he also gives us freedom to act, expecting us to act responsibly. Think for a moment about the concept of stewardship -- managing something on behalf of the owner.

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- When we begin where we are then we have not just heard the word this morning you have lived it out...Our Vision for Mission at OCMC envisions being a place and a people open to God's new life...We yearn for increased wholeness- spiritual, physical, environmental and social, purer hearts, healthier lifestyles cleaner neighborhoods, and safer streets. SHALOM! **Peace Garden at House Rec garden by the OCCDA.**

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