

SEASON OF CREATION

1 September to 4 October 2020



Devotional Guide

PREFACE

Author Chuck Swindoll told this story of a Native American and his friend who were in downtown New York, walking near Times Square in Manhattan. It was during the noon lunch hour and the streets were filled with people. Cars honking their horns and taxi cabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening.

Suddenly, the Native American said, "I hear a cricket."

His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!"

"No, I'm sure of it," the Native American said, "I heard a cricket."

"That's just crazy," said the friend.

The Native American listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket. In utter amazement, the friend said, "That's incredible! You must have superhuman ears."

"No," said the Native American. "My ears are no different from yours. It just depends on what you're listening for."

"But that can't be" the friend replied, "I could never hear a cricket in this noise." The Native American simply replied, "It depends on what is really important to you. Here, let me show you."

He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. Even with all the noise of the crowded street blaring in their ears, nearly every person within twenty feet noticed the sound of the coins and turned to look and see if the money that hit the pavement was theirs.

"See what I mean?" said the Native American. "It all depends on what is important to you."

PREFACE

What are our ears attuned to?

Are we inclined to hear the clinking of loose change or the cajoling of our Creator?

Has the cacophonous sounds of our callous ways clouded our hearing of God's word?

What does the Lord have to say to us regarding His creation and what is our response?

Over the next few weeks, may these devotions guide our hearing and indeed grace our living.

8 "But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you;
And the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you.

"Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you;
And let the fish of the sea declare to you.

9 "Who among all these does not know
That the hand of the LORD has done this,
10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind?"

Job 12:7-10

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WEEKLY TOPICS

#1 LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF

30 August to 5 September

#2 PROTECTING THE COMMONS

6 September to 12 September

#3 THERE IS ENOUGH FOR OUR NEED, NOT OUR GREED

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#4 LIVING A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

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#5 THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

27 September to 3 October

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF

by Dennis Tan Wei Jie (Sengkang Methodist Church)



“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:36-40

Humans make up 0.01% of all life on Earth. Yet, it is estimated that more than 80% of life on land is under direct human influence. How do the Scriptures, written two to three thousand years ago, relate to our lives and our lifestyle in today’s world where we humans dominate life on this planet?

What does Scripture say in the face of self-centred politics and corruption? Of greed and increasing inequality on the planet? Of prioritising economic growth over the well-being of humans and the planet? Of environmental destruction on an unprecedented scale, threatening over 50% of species with extinction? What does Scripture say about mounting mountains of waste, entering our food chain and poisoning both the natural environment and people?

Does the weather feel a lot more unpredictable now? Have you been frustrated about how hot it is in recent years? With global warming bringing about increased weather extremes and unpredictability, what does Scripture say? With deforestation bringing about the destruction of the lungs of the planet, with our food supplies threatened and the very future of life at stake, can we find the wisdom and guidance needed from our Scriptures?

The answer is **yes**.

We can start by looking at the second Greatest Commandment from Jesus: “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).

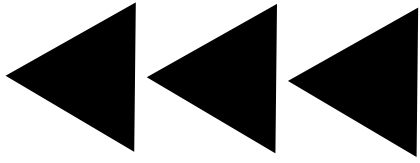
In our modern society, we need to ask ourselves – **who are our neighbours?**

Our neighbours are the people who live downstream of our waste. Our neighbours are those who are impacted by climate change because of our choices of energy or investment income. Our neighbours are the future generations to come who will live on a bleak and barren world because of our consumer choices. Our neighbours are also the many living creatures who make up the web of life on which we depend and which God has called us to safeguard.

How do we love our neighbour in the current ecological crisis? For too long the church has been involved in ambulance work – seeking to heal the damage done by self-centred misbehaviour. We know that we must feed the hungry, but the question we should ask ourselves today is “How do we stop people from becoming hungry?”

How do we establish justice and equity for all of life? The destruction of planetary life is not God’s will. This must be loudly proclaimed from every pulpit and Bible study around the world. Creation care must become a priority.

We are commanded to love our neighbour, the vulnerable, future generations and the whole web of life. To do so, we must consciously seek to live in harmony with God, one another and the natural world. We must be an example to all of humanity that we must stop being so selfish in the way we treat nature and our fellow human beings.



LIVING THE WORD

#1.

READ PSALM 148

As you read the psalm, look outside your window, and admire what our Creator has made.

1 Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

2 Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

3 Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

4 Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for at his command they were created,

6 and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

7 Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,

9 you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,

10 wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,

11 kings of the earth and all nations,
you princes and all rulers on earth,

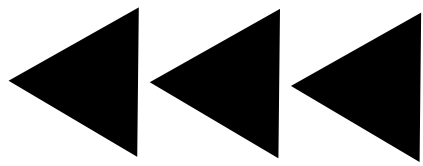
12 young men and women,
old men and children.

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

14 And he has raised up for his people a horn,
the praise of all his faithful servants,
of Israel, the people close to his heart.

Praise the Lord.

Read Psalm 148 again. This time, read it aloud as a song of worship for the God that created the sun and moon, skies and seas, the birds of the air, beasts of the earth, and creatures of the deep.



LIVING THE WORD

#2.

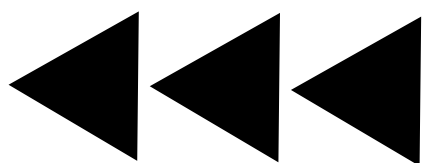
READ GALATIANS 5:14

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command:
"Love your neighbor as yourself."

How can we care for our neighbours if we don't know them?

Take some time today to look up the one of following:

- Our local biodiversity – maybe even try to identify the birds around you!
- Environmental disasters across the world – how are they affecting the environment, and in turn, the people and biodiversity in the area?



LIVING THE WORD

#3.

READ LUKE 6:31

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Today, keep a look out for littering.

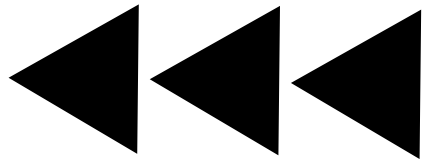
While you may not do this on purpose, have you ever accidentally dropped a wrapper and thought "it's okay, it's so small"?

While Singapore incinerates all its trash, waste that escapes our rubbish or recyclables collection streams – like litter – can easily enter our waterways and float out to sea. Eventually, that small piece of waste could end up in someone's home.

The plastic litter adds up, affecting not only the health of coastal communities but also their livelihoods due to a lower yield from fisheries and reduced tourism (which is even worse now!).

How would you feel if the trash of others' starts piling up at your doorstep?

Let us show love to our neighbours today by making sure we leave each place cleaner than it was before.



LIVING THE WORD

#4.

READ PSALM 19:1-4

1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

3 They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.

2 Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.

4 Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

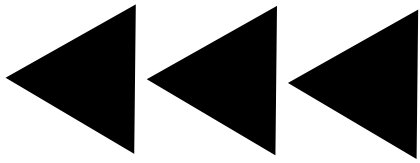
In this mid-week reflection, take some time today to think about how the entirety of the created world worships the Lord, and what that means for how we should treat it.

Often, we tend to underplay the implications of our actions on the rest of creation because we may think of them as lower beings that lack emotion or sole purpose is to serve us humans. (Especially inanimate objects!)

However, that is not why God created all things. Instead, creation exists for His pleasure (Revelations 4:11) and to worship the Creator.

Could the birds calling outside your window be singing worship songs together? Does the pitter-patter of rain resemble the beating of a drum in worship? How is the blooming flower and stoic tree a testimony to the beauty and strength of the Lord?

If we desire to love God, how can we rethink the relationship that we have with the rest of creation?



LIVING THE WORD

#5.

READ MATTHEW 25:34-40

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

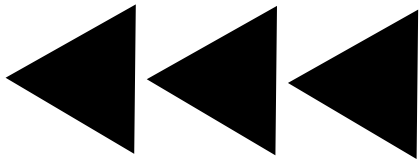
"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Today, the amount of food the world's cattle alone consume is equal to the number of calories needed to feed 8.7 billion people – more than the entire human population on Earth. In fact, roughly 2 of every 5 tons of grain produced in the world goes to feeding livestock, poultry or fish.

How much of that could go towards providing for those who are experiencing starvation or food insecurity? How do you think you can live out Jesus' command to "feed the hungry" by reducing your meat consumption?

You can start today by:

- Having one meatless meal today – and committing to having a meatless meal every week
- Ordering more vegetables instead of meat when eating out – it's better for your health too!
- Cooking a meatless meal for your family, and explaining why to them using what you have learnt from this week's devotional



LIVING THE WORD

#6.

READ MATTHEW 18:15-20

"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

How do we respond to Church members who are sinning against God's Creation? For a long time the Church has focused on individual sins. And yet our lifestyle is destroying the web of life and hurting the most vulnerable of society.

The Patriarch of the Orthodox church, Bartholomew I says this:

"We have traditionally regarded sin as being merely what people do to other people. Yet, for human beings to destroy the biological diversity in God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by contributing to climate change, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, land and air – all of these are sins."

Take some time today to reflect on this question: **How do we challenge our brothers and sisters in Christ to stop sinning against Creation and the generations to come?**

PROTECTING THE COMMONS

by Vinnie Chua Liying (Bukit Panjang Methodist Church)



**“THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND EVERYTHING IN IT,
THE WORLD, AND ALL WHO LIVE IN IT.”**

- PSALM 24:1

In 1964 Garit Hardin wrote his famous piece “Tragedy of the Commons”. In it, Hardin tells the story of two adjacent properties, one privately owned and the other a common property. Hardin observed that the state of the private farm is much better than that of the common. He explains that the owner of the private property understands that grazing his cattle on a certain patch until the patch is fully grazed and then moving the cattle to graze on another fresh patch, allowing the previous patch to recover, is important because the owner has a personal interest in the longevity of his property. Contrastingly, the common land is overgrazed because herders have no personal stake in protecting communal property.

This story has become crucial in understanding how we are to care for the environment.

As the psalm above mentions, everything on Earth is the Lord's and this makes it a sort of "common property" for all of us, with each individual having a personal stake in the areas where they carry out their daily lives in.

Hardin's story tells us that unless we begin to care for common property as shared property for the benefit of all we will suffer the consequences of systems breaking down. Already we are beginning to see the impact that our use of fossil fuels has on the climate.

For the past two decades the leaders of the world have been meeting to discuss how best they might respond to the impending climate crisis. The basis of all these talks has been that every country is focused on what their own nation needs rather than what's best for the Earth in its entirety. All this while carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere is increasing, storms are getting greater in both frequency and intensity, and record extreme temperatures are set on an almost annual basis. Similar situation can be seen in happening other systems such as the oceans which are becoming more acidic, forests that are being felled, water resources drying up and arable land becoming deserts.

How is God calling us to care for our environment today?



LIVING THE WORD



#1. MEMBERS OF GOD'S COMMUNITY

READ ROMANS 12:3-8

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[a] faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, [b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

When we work together as a Christian community to protect our Earth, we have to recognize that each of us hold different gifts and can serve effectively in our own special way.

Take some time to consider your spiritual gifts. How can you use these gifts to help in creation care? (Take for example someone with the gift of hospitality – you can use this gift to gather the members of your community together and encourage them to serve the environment out of their love for God!)



LIVING THE WORD



#2. TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Have you identified the gifts with which you can serve God’s creation? Now, it’s time to take the next step. Gather a friend or two and discuss how you can use these gifts cohesively, just as each part of the body works together to keep it alive.

Once you recognise how your different gifts, all equally unique and important, can be used in an interdependent and harmonious fashion, we can all work together in unity with Christ to fulfill His calling to protect the planet.



LIVING THE WORD



#3. GATHERING IN HIS NAME

READ MATTHEW 18:20

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

As one body of Christ, an important activity that we always rely on is prayer. Prayer for the environment can sometimes be the only thing that we can do to help, especially when a situation is occurring far away from us. Even if we aren't able to contribute directly, our prayers that are lifted up to the Lord will be heard.

Take the time to think about the environmental events happening in our world today and gather your friends to pray about it. Start by praying for your local nature and then begin to expand outwards to include the environmental affairs of other nations and lands.



LIVING THE WORD

#4. ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER

READ HEBREWS 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,
not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,
but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

When we begin to look at the state of the environment, we can often get discouraged and defeated. This can be especially so after days and nights of continuous prayers that don't seem to be making a difference.

Encouragement and the pouring out of love for one another, just as Christ poured out His love for His disciples in challenging times, is crucial in the fight for creation care. Pray for your fellow brothers and sisters who are in this journey with you and take the initiative to send some words of encouragement their way.



LIVING THE WORD



#5. CLEANING GOD'S SEAS

READ PSALM 104:24-26

24 How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

25 There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.

26 There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

If you live in Singapore, you have probably seen pictures of East Coast Beach with litter all over its shores, especially in the recent months. There have been volunteers from all around Singapore that have come together to clean our shores with the aim of restoring the beaches to its former pristine conditions. They have affectionately called this the "East Coast Beach Plan" and are actively conducting beach cleanups, with hundreds of locals signing up to help in this effort.

If you have the time, organise a beach cleanup with your friends or join an existing one. When we have a more hands-on experience with caring for creation, we often develop a deeper appreciation and passion for saving our Earth. Even if we are busy, we can help spread the word to encourage others to help out and pray for those who have set aside their time to do so.



LIVING THE WORD



#6. SERVING AS A CHURCH

READ ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12

9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:

10 If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.

11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?

12 Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

After a week of meditating on the importance of community for creation care, let's quieten down to reflect on what we have learnt in the past week.

- Is there anyone in your community that you have been thankful for?
- Has there been anyone that God has prompted you to reach out during the week?
- How can you continue to serve as a community in creation care?
- Have you grown deeper in your love for God and His creation both as an individual and a member of your community?

THERE IS ENOUGH FOR OUR NEED, NOT OUR GREED.



“For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord”

LEVITICUS 25:3-4

by Jonathan Kong Ying Wai
(Wesley Methodist Church)

According to local agencies, Singapore generated 763 million kg of food waste in 2018, a weight that is more than 540,000 double-decker buses. This is stunning for a nation that has no local food sources, heavily reliant on importing these life necessitating resources.

This statistic is common among developed nations in the world. On the other end, there are places in the world where famine and drought are a constant looming threat. Experts have warned of a “hunger pandemic” as COVID-19 death count rises, doubling the number of people in need of food, with nations such as Yemen, Congo, Afghanistan and Venezuela facing the possibility of starvation.

So in view of this gaping divide, how should we respond to this?

One theme that echoes throughout the Old Testament is Sabbath. While Christians talk about Sabbath as a time of personal rest mandated by God, Sabbath has a greater significance across all Creation.

Sabbath is stated as one of the Ten Commandments issued by God (Exodus 20:10). But what is interesting is that God even granted the land Sabbath, with God commanding after six years of working the land that the land not be sown or harvested on the seventh year (Leviticus 25:4).

But if the land is not to be sown or harvested for one year, what will we eat and survive on?

God promises His providence to the people of Israel that as long as they abide by His Sabbath commandment, He will ensure that the harvest on the sixth year is sufficient to tide the people all throughout the seventh and eighth year till the harvest of the ninth year comes (Lev 25:20-22)

So what does Sabbath teach us about our lives today.

We learn from the Sabbath given to the land that **God is our all-powerful Provider**. As society and technology is advancing and Man tries to gain security and control over essential needs like food and water, we should not forget that while Man plans, they can only achieve anything through God's provision (Proverbs 16:9)

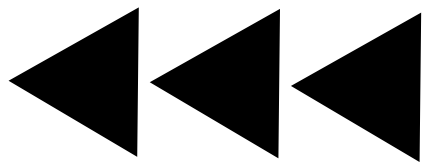
We learn from Sabbath the **meaning of "enough"**. Sabbath for the land and animals can only happen if the people were willing to stop exhausting their resources and be content with less so that others will be able to have enough. In view of the abundance in Singapore, how do we lead lives of "enough"?

*In their hearts humans
plan their course,
but the Lord establishes
their steps.*

Proverbs 16:9

It might mean buying seafood from sustainable sources to give our marine life its "Sabbath" to regenerate and restore itself. It might mean reducing or abstaining from meat sources with high carbon footprints to give the earth its "Sabbath" from methane emissions. Or it could just mean buying only enough food rather than over-buy just so that we can avoid throwing away uneaten food.

God provides enough for our need and not for our greed simply because our greed is never satisfied and will threaten us and His Creation which sustains us. So while we pray for God's mercy for people who are in need, let us endeavour to be good stewards by abiding by taking less so that there will be enough for all.



LIVING THE WORD

#1.

It is not easy learning what it means to have “enough”.
But what we can remind ourselves is God's providence.

READ EXODUS 16:1-18 (Preferably before breakfast)

Read it through once and then imagine. Imagine the blazing heat, endless scenery of rocks, sand and dry vegetation.

Feel the fatigue of carrying all your belongings on your back and the hours of walking without any visible aim.

Experience the groan of your empty stomach and rising worry on when and how you will get food in such an empty and unforgiving place.

Then imagine the surprise the promise of bread and even meat! Imagine the amazement of seeing manna on the ground in the morning and flocks of quails in the evening. Imagine how sweet the manna and meat tastes after such hunger

Then give thanks to God for providing our daily bread and that we in Singapore will always have enough to eat.

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”



LIVING THE WORD

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" Moses also said, "You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord."

Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.'"

While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

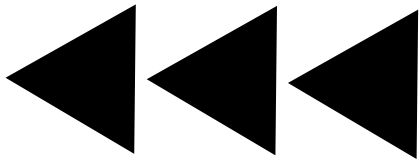
The Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'"

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer¹ for each person you have in your tent.'"

The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little. And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

Give thanks to God for providing our daily bread and that we in Singapore will always have enough to eat.



LIVING THE WORD

#2.

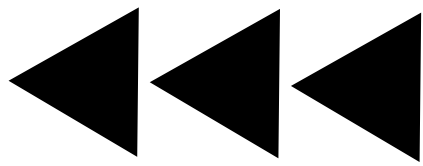
READ LUKE 3:11

John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."

How can we share what we have with someone? In our affluent and individualistic society, sharing does not come common to some of us. But sharing with someone can be a beautiful gesture that extends to more than just the item shared and affirms that we are all loved by God.

Take some time today to do one of following:

- Send someone a GrabFood order – This will help us to look beyond ourselves to the well-being of others
- Half your meal – Take your usual portion of food for a meal and split it over two meals. While this will leave us hungrier than usual, it will help us identify with those in the world who do not always have a full meal every day.



LIVING THE WORD

#3.

READ PROVERBS 14:12

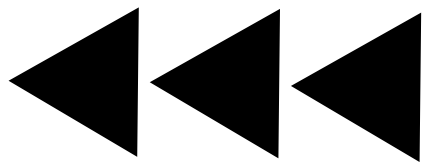
There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.

How are we following the trend of the world and choosing our food unwisely? There is a belief that as long as it is sold and you can pay for it, you should be able to buy and eat it.

But there are food items that we buy in our supermarkets or eat in restaurants come from unsustainable sources or even endangered. Besides this, some food items have a high carbon footprint which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions that damage our earth.

Take some time today and look at the following:

- Consider sustainable seafood consumption by checking out the Singapore Seafood Guide by World Wildlife Foundation to see how you can change your consumption patterns (https://www.wwf.sg/get_involved/sustainable_seafood/)
- Read this report on the environmental impact of food in Singapore to be aware on how much environmental impact does each type of food we consume contribute and consider how we can change our grocery purchasing patterns (<https://www.ecosperity.sg/en/ideas/environmental-impact-of-food-in-singapore.html>)



LIVING THE WORD

#4.

READ 1 SAMUEL 16:1-7

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

The Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate."

Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord."

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."



LIVING THE WORD

Just as God instructed Samuel not to choose the next king of Israel based on appearances, how are we picking our food simply based on their appearance?

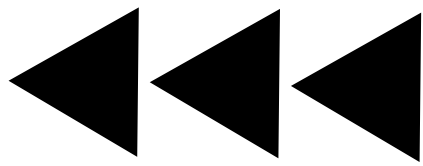
Each month, batches of good quality fresh fruits and vegetables are thrown into the trash. This is due these food items being rejected by supermarkets and restaurants due to them not conforming to the consumer's appearance preference. These "ugly foods" are high in nutrition despite their looks.

More meat, vegetables and seafood are thrown because they are provided in excess to what is demanded by shops. These contribute to Singapore's daily food waste.

There are platforms that collect and sell these food items so this week you can check out TreeDots and Ugly Food to see what they offer and consider doing your part to reduce food wastage by purchasing from them.

TreeDots - <https://www.thetreedots.com/>

Ugly Food - <https://www.uglyfood.com.sg/>



LIVING THE WORD

#5.

READ PROVERBS 22:9

The generous will themselves be blessed,
for they share their food with the poor.

Do you know that there are groups of people who are experiencing malnutrition or even starving in Singapore? This could be single-parent, low-income families who do not have sufficient means to provide healthy food in their households, or lonely elderly who stick with the same diet day after day.

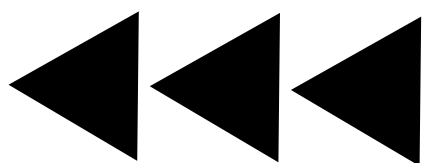
Try doing this today:

- Find out more about food provision in Singapore done by organisations like Food from the Heart or The Food Bank Singapore and seek God if He would like you to serve or support these initiatives
- Sponsor a meal through Project Belanja! and similar projects to bless someone with a free, nutritious meal.

Food from the Heart - <https://www.foodfromtheheart.sg/>

The Food Bank Singapore - <https://foodbank.sg/>

Project Belanja - https://www.giving.sg/foodfromtheheart/project_belanja



LIVING THE WORD

#6.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-21; 33-34

So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk.

So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

We end this week with the Holy Communion. It is a means of grace prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ in remembrance of His body and blood broken and spilt out for us. And what is important is that it is a meal that is shared with every member of the body of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians, the Corinthian church faced a discrimination of the poor by those who were richer, insisting of eating and drinking separately from their poor brothers and sisters during the Lord's Supper, eating different and better food from the rest.

It is in view of this that the apostle Paul rebukes them, showing that the act of Holy Communion is not only a time of personal repentance and remembrance but also of community within the Church.

So pray that when we eat, may we remember that we are one body of Christ and when one part hungers, thirst or is in any physical need, our whole Body is in need and it is our duty to reach out to meet that need.

LIVING A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

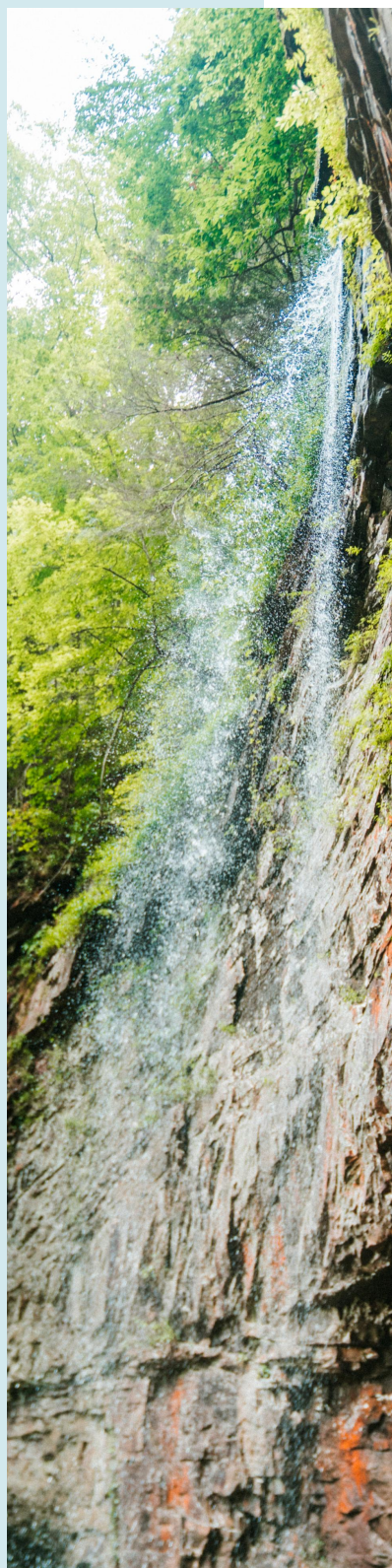
by Jonathan Kong Ying Wai (Wesley Methodist Church)

“Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.”

NUMBERS 20:8

Imagine you were there. Imagine you were among the Israelite community at the Desert of Zin. In the wilderness far away from any water source and facing with the unforgiving heat of the desert, suddenly a stream of water miraculously gushes from a rock. See the people rushing and crowding to it, lapping the water from the ground, tasting the cool water and not wanting to waste a single drop.

It can be hard to imagine such a scene in Singapore where fresh, drinkable water is available with the turn of any tap. However, it was just 60 years ago that Singapore faced water shortages, with water rationing being necessary. And even today despite being surrounded with water and Singapore seeking to expand its desalination operations, we are still heavily reliant on water piped from Malaysia for our survival.



Despite this, Singapore uses as much as 430 million gallons of water every day, the equivalent of 391 Olympic-sized swimming pools! In contrast, 1.1 billion people in the world lack access to water, and a total of 2.7 billion find water scarce at least one month of the year. This sobering fact reminds us of the need to use water sustainably in view that it is unavailable to so many throughout the world.

It is difficult to seek to live a sustainable lifestyle in this culture of extravagance and abundance, almost as difficult as squeezing water from a rock. But even as we read on how God provided for the Israelites, we are reminded that **what we have are not our entitlement or right but are all entrusted to us from our Lord God** who is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1). So the food on our table, the water that runs through our taps, our clothes that we wear do not exist just for our sake and have value just because they are created and provided by our God.

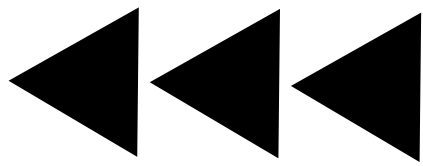
And that is the Christian call to sustainable living, to protect and cherish the resources around us just because it is from the Lord of all creation and has been tasked to us as stewards to manage, not masters to exploit.

The call to sustainable living is a humble one, calling for inconveniences and sacrifices that most people would not want to subject themselves. But we have a hope and example in the person of Jesus Christ. He was there at the moment of the earth's creation and everything on earth is His possession. However, rather than coming as a king clothed in finery and indulging in opulence, Jesus came as a servant (Philippians 2:7), living simply as a carpenter's son and going on foot from town to town.

Because Jesus was able to give up His right as God and humble himself as a human, we are called as followers of Christ to give up our rights to extravagance.

We are called to give up our rights to buying just because we can afford it instead of simply reducing our consumption or reusing whatever we have. We are called to conserve water by taking shorter showers and save electricity using energy-efficient appliances, being mindful that these are luxuries in many parts of the world. We are called to consider the sources and production of our clothing, choosing more sustainable brands rather than those which engage in environmental damaging activities in their manufacturing process.

Because from now till earth is restored in Christ's second coming, we are called to be stewards and to care for God's creation, even as we live up to our destiny as children of God.



LIVING THE WORD

#1.

READ JOHN 7:37-39

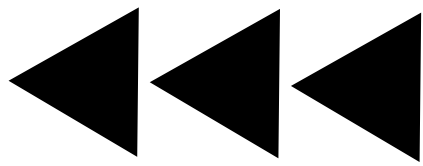
On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Water is a powerful symbol used throughout the Bible. In this verse Jesus uses the imagery of rivers of living waters as a symbol for the work of the Holy Spirit received by those who believes in Him.

It is interesting that Jesus did not use the word "pools" and instead used "rivers". Because a pool can be stagnant, self-containing, self-nourishing. But rivers are always flowing. They are continually supplied by the source and continually flow to tributaries, streams and deltas, giving life to anywhere that needs water.

This is a beautiful imagery for the Holy Spirit's work and how it should not only be a work in ourselves but also a ministry that is always other-focused and aiming to minister to those in need.

So even as we start our week, let us pray that the Holy Spirit give us the eyes to see those in need, both close to us as well as those far abroad who are impacted by our actions of conservation and sustainability. May we pray for the Spirit to grant us a desire to fulfil this call as stewards of creation and to bring others to know the Lord of All Creation.



LIVING THE WORD

#2.

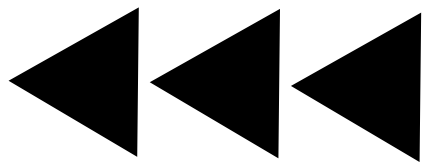
READ LUKE 14:28 - 30

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"

Just as Jesus teaches that it is unwise to start building a tower without estimating the cost to see if it can be finished, we cannot assume that our resources that we rely on will always be there and it is good to raise our awareness by knowing how much we use a day.

Take some time today to do one of following:

- Check your water usage in a day by checking your water meter (located outside your home or unit) at the start and end of the day, with the difference of both values being your water use for that day
- Don't just throw away or delete your utilities bill. Take some time to look at it and see how your electricity and water usage compares to the average usage in your community.



#3.

READ 1 PETER 3:3-4

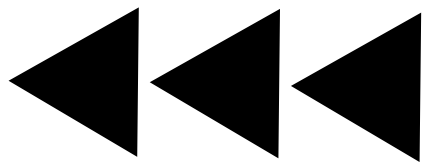
Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

Beauty is created by God and not just by what we wear. And in today's verse we are encouraged not to rely on fine clothes or outward adornments to gain beauty, but seek gentle and quiet spirits that are unfading beauty in the eyes of the Lord.

So what does our clothes have to do with creation care? Every year, clothes are thrown out of our households because they are old, worn out or just no longer "in fashion", with more clothes adding to the trash in our landfills. The demand for clothes is also rising, with the manufacturing of some clothes entailing processes that damage our environment.

Take some time today and consider the following:

- Read about the impact of our clothing to the environment in the write-up by ZeroWasteSG (<http://www.zerowastesg.com/tag/clothing/>) to understand the recycling programmes by some prominent brands in Singapore and consider how you can change your purchasing patterns.
- Visit a Thrift Store – These can be flea markets set up on an ad-hoc basis or Salvation Army Mega Store. These stores stock up on donated or upcycled clothing that are still in mint condition. Consider getting some value-for-money pieces there and help prevent these clothes from being added to the waste we generate!



LIVING THE WORD

#4.

READ MATTHEW 21:28-32

"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

"I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

"Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.

"Which of the two did what his father wanted?"

"The first," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

In this story told by Jesus, the son who initially did not agree to work in the vineyard but finally did was honoured above the son who agreed to work but did not in the end. This is a lesson for us that our actions speak louder than our words.

So instead of us just speaking about conservation and sustainability, why don't we consider some actionable steps that we can do this week that can be inculcated into a household habit?



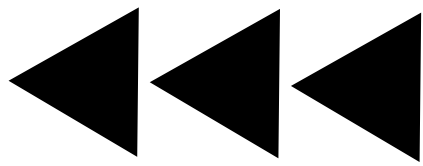
LIVING THE WORD

Here are some ways you can start:

- Take a look at some water-saving habits recommended by PUB and pick 1 -2 tips to start practicing today. The number of tips we set out to practice is less important than our determination to be consistent in practicing them. See if practicing these tips will help to lower your water usage you measured on Tuesday!
- Read up on recycling and how it can be done in Singapore in this guide by The Smart Local and start to set aside items from your daily trash to be recycled at your nearest recycling bin

PUB Guide - <https://www.pub.gov.sg/savewater/athome/watersavinghabits>

TSL Guide - <https://thesmartlocal.com/read/recycling-in-singapore/>



LIVING THE WORD

#5.

READ LUKE 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?" Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."

And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'"

"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Jesus taught through this parable the unpredictability of life. Like how the rich fool thought he had enough to last him for years, he would lose his very life the next day. In the same way, we should not assume that we will always have enough food and to daily look to God for our provision.

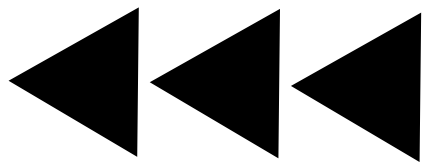


LIVING THE WORD

But sometimes city-dwellers like Singaporeans are so far removed from the land that grows their food such that they do not realize the time, cost and effort it takes to produce the vegetables and meat that appears in our supermarkets. This realization is something that we should all seek to recover.

To recover our appreciation for food, you can consider the following:

- Start a home-garden – It is not expensive and if you can reuse containers such as milk cartons or plastic bottles as makeshift plant pots then kudos to you! Seeds can be obtained from most supermarkets and it is really easy to get started. Seeing the time and care needed for plants to grow will increase your appreciation for them at the table.
- Helping others – Do you know that food security is a present reality for many around the world? Help ensure families in the most dire situations will have food at their tables and consider giving to international food initiatives such as World Vision's Food Security Fund (<https://www.worldvision.org.sg/en/ways-to-give/areas-of-need/food-security-fund>)



LIVING THE WORD

#6.

READ REVELATIONS 22:1-3

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

We end this week looking forward to the New Heaven and New Earth. The imagery of the city of God is a beautiful one, with a crystal-clear river flowing from the throne of God through the city. The tree of life stands on each side of the river, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

We imagine this scene and imagine how beautiful a sight it is for those living in water-scarce areas of the world. In many slums around major cities, people living there have to rely on contaminated water sources for their livelihood. These waters are full of human waste and trash that will lead to parasitic infections and illnesses. Even worse are water bodies containing industrial waste that can poison entire communities. In such places, dysentery and diarrhoea can be a death sentence to children.

Today we pray for God's mercy to be on slums around the world. We pray for community development that will allow people in these places to have access to clean water. We pray against water-borne diseases that take away lives young and old. And even as we experience the brokenness of this world, may we look towards God's restoration in the Kingdom to come.

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S!



by Prarthini Selveindran (Charis Methodist Church)

READ PSALM 104.

*May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works—
he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.*

Psalms 104:31-32

Psalm 104 begins by poetically drawing attention to God's initial creation of the world (almost like a retelling of the Genesis creation story). In the beginning, we are told of God's rule over creation, and the psalmist goes on to highlight his active care of the earth. This theme of God's provision is one that reverberates throughout the psalm.

As Psalm 104 unfolds, we are presented with this riveting imagery of God wrapped in light, vigorously unfurling the cosmos like fabric "Stretching out the heavens like a tent". There is great amazement at God's creative power: he has brought the earth and everything in it into being. Evidently, the Psalmist has paused to pay attention to this wonderful diversity around him! He exclaims at the different creatures he sees. Wild donkeys and beasts of the field. He notices the birds in the trees. He looks up and sees the high mountains with the wild goats and rock badgers; The cedars of Lebanon; The lion; The sea teeming with wildlife.

The psalmist celebrates not only diversity, but also abundance! The Psalmist delights in God as a God of life, of abundant life—life flourishing. Life that brings delight to all who partake in it. Whether you are tree watered abundantly, a wild donkey having your thirst quenched, birds singing in the trees, Leviathan frolicking in the ocean, or man, savouring wine. Within this panorama of creation, we also see that man takes his place as part of the created order: like our fellow living creatures, we too are dependent upon our Creator. Within the God-centered world the Psalmist speaks of, creation's primary purpose is for God's good pleasure (vs 31).

How does remembering the goodness and beloved-ness of creation, its value to God the Creator, and his continuing care of all reorient us in relation to God, one another, and the rest of creation? How does this Psalm encourage us to recognize ourselves as very much part of creation, rather than standing apart from it?

In his praise however, the psalmist remains grounded and conscious of the realities of brokenness. A realistic dissonant note resounds within this symphony of beauty in vs 35a. After celebrating creation, the psalmist exhorts God to judge the wicked. The petition means that the psalmist has his feet planted firmly on the ground – it is an authentic assessment of creation, and a reminder that man is fully capable of wrecking havoc on the created order, on the how things should be.

What are some of the environmental concerns or issues that face our Singapore community? What are the consequences that we need to face should we be lax in our task as stewards and carers of God's earth?

We live in a broken world, but the psalmist reminds us that is nevertheless possible to live in wonder and joy. I wonder whether we can begin to reframe how we view the rest of creation—to see that all of creation is offering up its own song of praise to the Creator. Psalm 104 realigns our perspective, encouraging us to put God at the center of his creation, and sounding the call to enjoy God's world and worship him alone.



LIVING THE WORD



#1. A WONDER-FULL WORLD

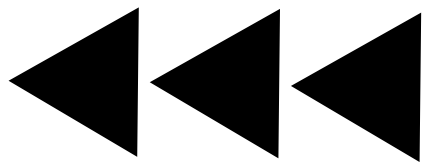
What does wonder look like to you?

In crafting Psalm 104, the Psalmist revels in creation's wonderful diversity and in its Creator.

There is a dazzling diversity on display. Not only of the various kinds of animals, but their various homes, and the relationships they share with one another and God. In taking all of this in, the Psalmist thus breaks out in this resounding climax, exclaiming at the grandness of creation, "How manifold are your works, O LORD, In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures"!

Eugene Peterson's 'The Message' version declares, "What a wildly wonderful world, GOD!" in translating verse 24. **Recall an encounter within creation where you 'wondered' at the beautiful diversity around you and gave thanks to our Creator for his wild and wondrous creation. What did you 'wonder' at? What does God's handiwork reveal about him?**

We tend to associate wonder with little children. Children experience many new things, and that gives a sense of wonder and curiosity. There is something that we, often in our rush from one thing to another, can learn from! Wonder cultivates the desire to explore not conquer, and ultimately nourishes a love for this created world. As we children know who the Creator is, ultimately that discovery also cultivates a love for the Creator. When we attempt, like little children do, to encounter the world "as if for the first time", then we wonder. Perhaps that expresses a little of what Jesus meant when he said that we are to be like little children.



LIVING THE WORD

#2.

GLORIOUS DIVERSITY

Recall your reflections from the past two days with Psalm 104.

We read of how God's presence is active within His creation—creating, sustaining, caring, rejoicing—God is not a distant uncaring being! The psalmist exuberantly calls us to live in wonder and joy through his panorama of creation and portrait of life.

At this point in these reflections, you may be thinking that's all very well for the psalmist who has high mountains to look at with wild goats, or has seen the cedars of Lebanon in all their majesty...but our highest point here in Singapore, is quite a small hill, and we are surrounded by much concrete—an urban jungle.

But surely non-human creation still creeps through and abounds!

So, relook Psalm 104 again, but with fresh eyes, adapting it to our own context!

Contextualize Psalm 104: 10-25 using Singapore's biodiversity.

If you were singing this psalm of praise today in Singapore, what specific animals/trees (try to identify them to their species!!) would you pen about instead?



LIVING THE WORD

For example, in recasting verses 16 to 18

16 The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

17 In them the birds build their nests;
the stork has her home in the fir trees.

18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.

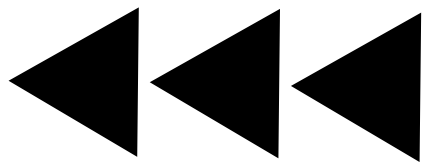
The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
the *Seraya trees* that he planted.

In them the birds build their nests;
the *white bellied sea eagle* has her home in the *rainforest trees*.

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, for the *Sunda pangolins*;
the *rocky shores* are a refuge for the *stone crabs*.

“By acquainting ourselves with subjects in natural philosophy, we enter into a kind of association with nature’s works, and unite in the general concert of her extensive choir. By thus acquainting and familiarizing ourselves with the works of nature, we become as it were a member of her family, a participant in her felicities; but while we remain ignorant, we are like strangers and sojourners in a foreign land, unknowing and unknown.”

A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation, John Wesley



LIVING THE WORD

#3.

SHALOM

READ PSALM 104 AGAIN

"Shalom is complete restoration and healing....God's original web of relationship is again intact; and we human beings are fulfilling our role as God's choirmasters, living out our lives in obedience and worship, with all creation around us singing his praises. That is full redemption!"

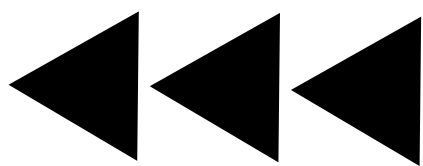
Our Father's World, Edward R. Brown

"...in the Bible shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Saviour opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights".

Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin, Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

Psalm 104 initially presents a vision of God's shalom—one of deep harmony and order and connectedness within all relationships of creation: between people, wildlife, land and God. However, as the Psalmist makes clear in verse 35, God's intention of shalom was not carried out. Sin has broken that shalom. But God offered a way to restore shalom – redemption. As God's stewards, we have a role to play in that reconciliation and redemption work.

How does your present lifestyle encourage the development of shalom, and what are the ways in which it does not? How might you begin to move toward a way of living that embraces or encourages shalom rather than less?



LIVING THE WORD

#4.

CONNECTION & CONSUMPTION

READ MATTHEW 6:25-33

We have been dwelling on Psalm 104, where the Psalmist directs our praise to God for His generous provision. Read Matthew 6: 25-33.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.



LIVING THE WORD

We turn now to the examples Jesus holds up to us: that of the birds and the lilies of the field. Both do not labour to process their food or clothe themselves—their dependence on the Creator's provision is more immediate and obvious. The Lord highlights our dependence on resources from creation that God provides, for all living beings. This way of viewing the world as Jesus did would have only been possible with our attention drawn to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field—they have become, as Martin Luther remarked "...our schoolmasters". We learn from our fellow members of the Earth's community as to how God takes care of His creation. Thus, we can reflect on how God-given resources are sufficient for all God's creatures, but also reminded to consider what we understand today of excess and over-consumption.

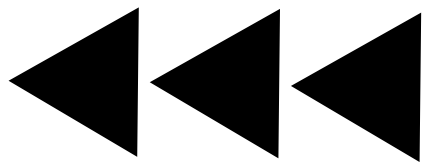
How have we been provided for through creation?

Let's focus just on food! Recall your prior reflections on consumption and food habits. Spend some time thinking about what you had for your meals (either yesterday or today): how have you been enjoying Earth's fruitfulness? Where did your food come from?

How was it grown or raised? What do we know about the people and places that were involved in the life of the food? What were the kinds of herbs or spices used in the food—how many have you tasted before, yet not seen the plant of?

How would you change your relationship with food? What are some steps that you can take from now on?

Spend some time to give thanks for God's provision and resources.



LIVING THE WORD

#5. SABBATH

Yesterday we reflected briefly on our consumption habits, particularly in our relationship with food.

Consider today the following quote:

“Creation as an intricate system has Sabbath built into it. And, just as the human body suffers if it lacks appropriate and timely rest, all creation suffers if rest is taken out of its interconnected system. The naturalist John Muir once wrote about this interconnectedness, “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” Once we see this, we can describe our current environmental crisis thus: Creation is not operating the way it was meant to (climate change, species loss), because humans have been abusing and misusing it as selfish consumers rather than caring stewards. We do not cease in our restless overconsumption and so creation gets no rest and is exhausted”.

God's Gardeners: Creation Care Stories from Singapore and Malaysia, Quek Tze-Ming

How can you practice the Sabbath rest—both by yourself, and within community?

Spend some time to craft a personal liturgy to help you practice restfulness while you are on the move (or even when not on the move). Put together a personal call to worship, with songs, Scripture, poetry or quotes that can help reorient you to God. How can you integrate earth-keeping themes into this act of worship?



LIVING THE WORD



#5. LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH, PRAISE THE LORD!

We began our week by reading the beautiful poem of creation in Psalm 104. Recall how one of the first Psalms we read at the start of this Season of Creation devotions was Psalm 148.

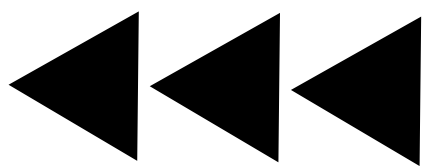
Consider both Psalms again, slowly reading them both aloud.

How do you feel when you read of the rest of creation – the animals, trees, hills – praising God?

“Of course, the other creatures don’t praise God in the same ways that we do. Frogs, I take it, are not consciously aware of God. Certainly, snow and hail, rivers and mountains are not. But they praise God by being what God made them to be – in all the endlessly diverse and particular ways they are. They reflect God’s glory and give it back to him. They have the value that God gives them, the delight he takes in them. It’s the value we recognise when we attend to them for their own sake. To take delight in the creatures or to wonder at them is to share, to some degree, God’s delight in them, to begin to value them as God does, and to recognize them as fellow-creatures”.

Bible and Ecology, Richard Bauckham

As we end our meditations over this Season of Creation and all that you have reflected upon over these weeks, ponder, what does it mean to praise God alongside our fellow-creatures?



LIVING THE WORD

As we pause, as we partake in the wonders that surround us, I pray that leads us to awe and adoration. May wonder give way to worship. We worship God with gladness and grateful hearts for his gift of life. May we join in Earth's chorus in singing hallelujah to our great God.

All Creatures of Our God and King by Sovereign Grace Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUZDohgtSgE>

All creatures of our God and King

Lift up your voice and with us sing

O praise Him! Allelujah!

Thou, burning sun with golden beam

Thou, silver moon with softer gleam

O praise Him! O praise Him!

Allelujah! Allelujah! Allelujah!

Let all things their Creator bless

And worship Him in humbleness

O praise Him! Allelujah!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son

And praise the Spirit, Three-in-One

O praise Him! O praise Him!

Allelujah! Allelujah! Allelujah!

He shall return in pow'r to reign

Heaven and earth will join to say

O praise Him! Allelujah!

Then who shall fall on bended knee?

All creatures of our God and King

O praise Him! O praise Him!

Allelujah! Allelujah!

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all creation Your eternal power is known through the whole flow of existence and in its intricacies and beauty your voice speaks to us of your wisdom and purpose. Rooted in your love and grace may we with all creation speak your glory from everlasting to everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This devotional has been prepared lovingly by the Advocates for Creation Care and Environmental Stewardship (ACES) from Sengkang Methodist Church.

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All Sunday devotions have also been adapted from Sustainable Preaching.. You may access more of their resources at sustainablepreaching.org.

If you have any queries, feedback, or would like to contribute to the work we do, please let us know at dennis.tan.wei.jie@gmail.com or michelle@skmc.org.sg

To God be the glory.