

Stewardship as Counterculture: Stewards of Creation (Brookland)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 October 2017

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Hinson

[0 : 00] Please be seated. Did you know that in America, we spend more money on fashion accessories every year than we do college tuition?

It's an interesting fact. Did you know that in America, 40% of our food goes to waste? 40%. That we waste more food than all of sub-Saharan Africa produces in a year.

Did you know that in America, the average U.S. household carries around \$16,000 of credit card debt? Average American household, \$16,000 in credit card debt.

Did you know that most American households have more TVs, functioning TVs, than people living in them? Interesting facts, right?

It's no secret that we live in a pretty consumerist culture. And yet what's interesting is that research consistently shows that all of that spending doesn't actually make us happier, that it actually makes us more anxious and more depressed.

[1 : 26] So a way of thinking about it is to say that consumerism is all about spending money we don't have to buy things we don't need to find happiness that's really not for sale.

And yet this is the culture that we live in. Now why am I talking about this this morning? Well it's because we've been doing a series that we started last week called Stewardship as Counterculture. Stewardship as Counterculture. And we're looking at this idea that we see running all through Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. This fundamental truth that the Bible says about human beings, and that is that we are created to be stewards.

That by design what it means to be a human being is to recognize that we are stewards in God's world. Which means everything belongs to God. And whatever we have in our lives, those are the things that have been entrusted to us to steward and to keep in trust.

And what we said last week is that the more we live like stewards, because of what we just said, the more truly human we become. The less we live like stewards, the more dehumanization results.

[2 : 47] And so what we're doing each week is we're applying this general idea of stewardship in specific ways to specific areas of life.

And we're asking what does it look like when we actually live this out? And what we see is that we become radically countercultural. This mindset, lived out, is radically countercultural.

So this week we're going to be focusing on stewardship of creation itself. Of the world itself. And what I hope we'll see is that the more we live like stewards in creation, the more that runs directly against and challenges and liberates us from the consumerist mindset.

Which really holds sway in our culture. So we're going to be looking at two texts. They're both brief and they both get at the same thing from slightly different angles. We're going to look at Genesis 1, 26 through 28.

And then we're going to look at Genesis chapter 2, verses 15 to 17. Both telling us something about what it means to be stewards of creation. So what we're going to do is we're going to ask first, what does it mean to be a steward of creation?

[3 : 58] And how is that countercultural? And then we're going to begin to apply that in three specific ways in terms of what it actually looks like to take this into our lives.

So let's pray as we open God's word together. Lord, we do ask that every week as we gather around your word, that your promise is to take these written words and to illuminate them and empower them, to actually speak through them, to speak to our hearts, to reveal to us the living word, Jesus Christ.

He is the one we've come to see today, to hear from. And so we pray that by your power that would happen. In your son's name, amen. So stewards of creation, very big concept.

I want to try to get our teeth into this a little bit and try to figure out what that actually means.

Genesis 1 and 2 give us parallel accounts, if you will, of God creating human beings and then giving us our mission statement.

Why are we here? What's the purpose of human life? So Genesis 1 verse 28 says, after he's created Adam and Eve, it says, and God blessed them.

[5 : 10] And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. I want human beings everywhere. Fill the earth and then subdue it and have dominion over it.

Now some people hear those words, subdue and have dominion, and it's a little freaky. It feels very power hungry, very domineering. That's why it's helpful to then look at Genesis 2 verse 15.

It says it in a slightly different way. God restates the command to Adam. It says, the Lord God took the man and put him or placed him in the Garden of Eden to work and to keep it.

So subdue and have dominion, work and keep. This is all essentially saying the same thing. That God created a world that was good and perfect and beautiful and yet it was inherently incomplete. God creates a world of raw material and that raw material needs further work done to it.

Specifically, it needs the care and the attention of human beings.

[6 : 18] And so it says that God creates and commands human beings to be fruitful and then to multiply. Why? Because he wants every corner of creation to have someone to steward it.

Everything that he's created, he wants there to be a human being who can create and cultivate and care for, to work and to keep the stuff that he has made.

And this is the point of human life. When we do that, we are inherently glorifying God. And so the point is that human beings are called to be stewards of God's world.

And I just want to point out, as I said a moment ago, this runs completely against the consumerist mindset. Because a consumerist mindset, which again I think holds sway in our culture, tends to see things in terms of goods and services.

It tends to turn everything into a commodity that can be bought or sold. And more fundamentally, a consumerist mindset tends to see everything in terms of the way it may or may not meet my needs.

[7 : 29] It's the job of the world to meet my needs. It's the job of everything around me to satisfy my longings. That's the heart of a consumerist mindset.

And then stewardship runs directly against that. Because the stewardship mindset means understanding that we have a responsibility to the world that we live in.

And more specifically, we have a responsibility to our corner of creation. Wherever God has put us, that the relationship is meant to be symbiotic.

Right? So another way of thinking about this is to say that consumers take, stewards cultivate. So it's a matter of taking versus cultivating in the world that we live in.

So the question that we ask is, are we fundamentally living as takers or cultivators? And so what I want to do is to just think about this as we push in more specifically to our lives here in D.C.

[8 : 31] What does it mean to be a cultivator versus a taker? Well, when we talk about stewardship of creation, the first thing that we have to talk about is the environment. And our relationship with the physical world around us.

And our natural resources and energy. And all of those things. When it comes to the environment, the question that we should be asking as Christians is, am I a taker or am I a cultivator?

Now, I know that climate change is a highly controversial topic. I didn't realize until this past week I had lunch with somebody who told me that research shows that climate change is actually more controversial now than abortion.

Which shocked me. I had no idea it was that controversial in our society. But it really is. So it's highly controversial. But it's a simple fact that consumerism drives environmental degradation.

That's really not, I don't think, too controversial. It's measurable. You see that happening. So if Christians are called to be cultivators instead of takers, I think there's no reason that Christians should not care about and invest their time and energy into the caring and stewarding and conservation and beautification of the world that we live in.

[9 : 46] I simply think that it's a part of what it means to follow Christ faithfully. You know, it makes you wonder, what if Christians, you know, as much as we're known for being vocal about certain issues, what if Christians were known as being on the leading edge of advocacy for environmental

stewardship?

What if that was synonymous with what it meant to be a Christian in our society? You know, centuries ago, Christians were on the leading edge. We were the leading voices to abolish slavery. Right? I mean, you know, you look everywhere. And the abolitionist movement was driven by Christians. Right? What if environmental stewardship became such an issue where we could unite around it?

I think one of the reasons that this is hard for us to grasp and get our mind around is because we're afraid of getting too political. And it may sound like I'm getting political right now.

Right? I mean, I think most of us in this room care about the environment. I'm not telling you anything that you don't believe. I think most of us recycle. I think most of us, and if we don't recycle, when people come over and they ask, where's the recycling?

[10:56] We just make something up so that they'll think, oh, it's that bag over there. Oh, it's just that pile in the corner. Just put it there. That's our system because we have one, you know?

So we at least pretend that we recycle, you know? I think people, you know, most of us are thinking about our energy use. You know, we have Nest thermostats and we like the idea of driving a Prius even if we can't afford it just yet.

We would like to one day. Yeah, I think most of us, actually a lot of people are thinking very intelligently about this on a policy level, which is great in terms of who we vote for and what kind of policies we advocate for.

And some of us actually work professionally in this sphere, right? So this is something that we're already thinking about. The point I want to make is that at Christians, as a Christian community, it actually matters why we care.

Not just that we care, but our motivations actually matter just as much. And I want to make this very clear. This is not about political alignment. This is not about our church being a more liberal or a more conservative church.

[11:59] That shouldn't even enter the conversation. As Christians, we care about the environment because we care about following Jesus faithfully. That's why we care about the environment. Because we believe that's part of what our role is here in God's world.

And, you know, as we seek to follow Jesus faithfully, sometimes that brings us into seeming alignment with the left. Sometimes it brings us into seeming alignment with the right, right? This is a series on stewardship. We're talking about stewardship of creation. Not too long from now, we're going to be talking about stewardship of our bodies. And we're going to sound politically probably very different on that Sunday than we do now.

So it brings us into seeming alignment with the right and the left. But the fact is that following Jesus faithfully takes us all directions across all lines of political division.

Christians don't fit in politically. We're politically homeless. Our king doesn't make a very good Republican or Democrat. But the truth is, if we're talking about being a church, as our mission statement says, that seeks the flourishing of Washington, D.C., that needs to include the environment and on a local level, not just a policy level.

[13:16] But being in a city means that we share a lot of common space. I mean, we have a lot of people packed together who share and experience the same common space. So thinking about environmental stewardship means that we should be doing all we can to enhance and to beautify the immediate space that we live in.

And a lot of people in our community, some people, you know, actually work on that on a local level. And a lot of people care about this.

Planting gardens, beautifying the common neighborhood spaces, advocating for more green space. These are all things that a lot of you are already doing. I just want to let you know that, you know, our core group structure now is pretty flexible.

It allows for different kinds of groups with different emphases. And if there's anybody out there who would like to be a part of a group that is focused around these issues and going deeper into the theology of it, but also what it looks like to actually serve the people of D.C. by doing this kind of work, please let me know.

And I would love to see if we can make that happen. We've had such things in the past. And I'd be very open to seeing that as a part of what our ministry in the city looks like. So let me know.

[14 : 29] So that's stewardship of the environment, right? What does it mean to be a cultivator versus a taker when it comes to the world that we live in? Now I want to bring this in a little closer to home and to talk about place.

Because stewards of creation don't just think about the environment. We think about the place that we live in. In other words, to God, place matters a great deal. And this is also countercultural because we live in a world that increasingly place and space, they don't matter.

We can fly anywhere in a day. We can talk to anybody or read the news from any part of the world. And more and more and more it feels that the world is getting smaller. And so we can forget about the importance of place.

And yet Christians think very deeply about the place where God puts us. You know, Genesis 2.15 says that God placed or put Adam in the garden. He places him in this particular place to fulfill his purpose there.

And then of course the Gospels talk to us about God placing his son into time and history and flesh in a specific sociocultural context.

[15 : 42] To fulfill his purposes for the world right there. Time and place matter a great deal to God. And in the same way, I want to suggest that God has placed you here.

It's true. God has placed you here. Right in here and right now. You know, one of my favorite verses to come back to is Proverbs 16.9.

Which says, man may plot his course in his heart, but the Lord determines his steps. You know, we plot our course. And yet God actually determines the steps that we take.

And I know that's relevant to many of you because a lot of you, you had a completely different plan. You know, you plotted some amazing course. You know, where you're, you know, getting all these degrees and retiring by 30.

And I don't know what your plan was. But for all of us, myself included, the course that we plotted and where we actually ended up, two completely different places.

[16 : 41] And so you're sort of looking around blinking, how in the heck did I get here? That's what Proverbs 16.9 means. That God had a hand in that. So when it comes to your life here in D.C., how do you think about this time?

Is this an aberration or a pit stop on your plan? Or did God actually bring you here for a purpose only he knows? A purpose that is now unfolding in your life.

Why are you here? More to the point, when you think about your life in D.C., are you primarily a taker or a cultivator? You know, I once had a conversation with a guy who had lived here his whole life.

And we were talking about how much D.C. had changed. You know, one of the common conversations that we have. And I said, well, in your experience, what's been the biggest change? And he said, well, I can tell you right now. D.C. has become a playground for young white professionals.

That's how it's changed. And as a young white professional, I sort of meekly said, yeah, I guess you're right. And it's true. But our vision as a church community is to seek the flourishing of this city.

[17 : 47] Because we believe that's part of what it means to love and serve God. That we can't glorify God if we're not loving and serving and seeking the flourishing of our neighbors. So maybe you came here, like a lot of us, thinking that you were only going to be in D.C. for a year or two.

You know, maybe you're here. But you know, as soon as my internship is done, as soon as my contract is up, as soon as I graduate, as soon as I get married, as soon as I have kids, as soon as my kids reach school age, as soon as we have our second kid, whatever it is, you have this kind of mental cutoff where you're like, that's when we're going to really reevaluate and probably going to move away.

And it's okay if you're thinking that way. I mean, it's technically okay if you're thinking that way.

You're going to turn it. But I just, what I want to do here is just to provoke you to think a little more. Because I think a lot of us have these kind of mental cutoffs. And we say, well, you know, because I know I'm leaving in a year or two, it's not really worth it to invest. You know, find a good church to plug into.

Find some, you know, just kind of make life work. But we're going to be out of here soon, so why invest? We're going to move somewhere and then we're really going to put down roots there. And I just want to ask maybe the opposite question.

[19 : 10] If you only plan to be here a year or two, why not invest? Why wouldn't you invest? You've only got a year or two to have an impact on this place.

You've got to get to it. Why not? Pour your time and energy while you're here into the people and the places around you. What do you have to lose by doing that?

You know, for right now, for whatever reason only he knows, God has entrusted your home and your neighborhood and your coworkers and your neighbors to your care.

Now, why did God determine your steps to lead you here? I have no idea. You probably have no idea. But the fact is, he's done it. And he may have specific purposes for you that you don't even know.

And here, maybe you will leave in a year and maybe you won't. Do you know how many people have been here for 10 plus years, myself included, who at one time said, I'll probably only be here a year or two?

[20 : 15] Or three or four or five, eight, ten. It just keeps going. Why? God's not done with you in this place. Maybe you're ready to leave.

He might not be ready for you to leave. Are you a taker? Are you a cultivator? Maybe you should consider staying longer. Maybe you should give it three more years. I want to give you two practical, I'm going to stop twisting the knife, and I'm just going to ask you to consider two practical things that you can do, whether you're leaving next week or not.

Here's two things you can do right now to shift out of that taker mentality and to begin to live more like a cultivator. Okay, first thing you want to do, consider doing.

I talk about this at least twice a year because I think we just need to keep asking. So you've seen this before, but the first thing I want to do is to encourage you to just simply learn the names of your neighbors. And Emily, if you can put this up on the screen.

You've seen this before. It should be in your bulletin, but I think it's an incredibly helpful tool. It's a neighbor map. And all I'm asking you to do is to think about where you live. You live here.

[21 : 21] And I want you to think about all of the living spaces immediately around you, whether it's apartments or condos or houses or wherever you live, and all of those people. And what I'd like for you to do, and some of you have done this, take this map.

You should have gotten a printed out version. If you didn't, we can send it to you. Print it out. Put it on your fridge. And then fill in the names of your neighbors. If you don't want to put it on your fridge, put it in your bedroom, wherever you're going to look at it.

And fill in those names. You know, some of our neighbors, some people in this church, they organize an annual block party. And they block off the street, and everybody comes. It's in the fall. We just had it yesterday. And it's amazing to see the impact of having something once a year where neighbors come out of their homes, and they meet each other, and they start to learn each other's names.

That transforms the feel of the entire block when those people come, and they see each other, and they know each other. So all I'm saying is, learn the names of the people who live around you.

[22 : 18] And then the next time you see those people, use them. Instead of doing what I do, hey, man, hey, dude, hey, bro, what's happening? We should not be talking like that.

I'm 40. I should not use any of those words. None of them should count anymore. And yet there are ways of getting around. And so what if you say, hey, Bill, hey, Janet, how are you?

How are you today? Do you know the difference that makes? Being missional starts with just learning the names of the people who live right around you. That's one thing that you can do.

Second thing I want to encourage you to do is to commit yourself to building a culture, to cultivating a culture of hospitality where you live.

Now, I know that there are tons of things that make this hard. I know that we all work crazy hours. Most of us do. I know that a lot of us here in this room, we have young kids.

I know that if you don't or you're not married, that maybe you live and you have lots of roommates. Or maybe the place that you live in is really tiny and you just don't feel like you can fit anybody in it. And I know, honestly, I know that for all of us in this room, because I know most of you, I know that when we talk about hospitality, we are 100% in agreement and we love the idea of hospitality.

[23 : 37] But let's just be totally honest. And I'm including myself in this. The idea of cleaning our house, getting all the kids dealt with in bed or something, shopping, cooking a halfway decent meal, hosting, which is the thing we actually want to do, and then after everybody leaves, spending

maybe two hours cleaning again, that is just overwhelming.

Honestly, when you add all of the things that we have to do in D.C. already and then you add that to it, it's just exhausting to think about. So we end up not doing it.

You meet somebody that you don't know and you say, hey, it's great to meet you. And in your mind, you're thinking, I should really invite this person to dinner, but then you're thinking about all that.

Then I've got to shop and I've got to clean, I've got to deal with the kids, and I've got to clean again, and blah, blah, blah, and all the energy and time, and I don't have to give it.

And you say, well, maybe we'll see each other around. Or you say, we should really do dinner. And then you, you know, you just kind of leave it open, you know? So I'm with you.

So I want to propose a solution. Here's a solution. We need to set some ground rules for the Advent dinner party. We need to set some new ground rules.

[24 : 56] We need to get all of the stuff that really doesn't matter out of the way, and we need to focus on what actually matters, the point of hospitality, which is deep and meaningful relationships being formed in homes around the city.

So here's my proposal. Let's put it up on the screen, Emily. You know, you know, you know I like acrostics?

Here we go. So the new standards for the Advent dinner party. You ready? A stands for ask people to share a meal. It's pretty simple.

This is how it works, okay? Step one, you simply have to ask people. It can be dinner. It can be brunch. It can be lunch. It can be any meal, but I think a meal is important. So ask people to share a meal.

Not just your friends, people you don't know. There are people in this room right now who are new, and they don't know many people here. Find them. Ask them to a meal.

[25 : 54] So ask people to share a meal. That's step one. Step two, this is important. Okay? You're not allowed to clean anything. If there's a pile of laundry on the couch, if there's a mountain of toys in front of your door, they have to stay, or it's not an Advent dinner party.

Leave everything as is. Pile of dirty dishes in the sink, that's great. Just leave them right there. It's part of the ambiance, okay? And you cannot shop, okay?

So you may not have much in your house, but you have to use what you have in the house. And if the people that are coming to eat with you want to bring stuff, tell them to bring stuff.

You look in your pantry, or none of us have pantries, you look in your... You look in the food pile in your kitchen on the floor and figure out what hasn't expired, and we'll do the same, and then we're just going to pile it all together.

This is why Jane Olson calls this kind of thing the scrounge and serve, because you're scrounging, okay? Figure out, get some ramen noodles, get some Cheerios, get some, you know, whatever you have, as long as it's not too far past the expiration date, and you figure out, okay, we're going to cobble together some food, and then somebody comes over to somebody else's house, okay?

[27 : 12] No cleaning or shopping, very important. The V stands for virtually no prep. The less, the better, okay? The less, the better. Just roll with it, okay? So choose food items that don't require a whole lot of cooking.

Instant food is really great for that, right? Virtually no prep. E, everybody helps. Also very important. Everybody helps cook. Everybody helps clean. If one person is cooking, the other person's holding the baby.

Everybody has a role. Everybody helps. The N stands for no apologizing. You're not allowed to apologize for the state of your home.

You're not allowed to say, it's normally cleaner than this, because that's a total lie. Don't lie. And we're Christians. Don't lie. God knows the state of your home and your heart.

No apologizing. Don't apologize that you're eating mac and cheese. Don't apologize that you're eating, you know, leftover lasagna from two days ago. No apologizing, right? You can compliment all you want as far as ramen noodles goes.

[28 : 16] This is some of the best I've ever had. You can say stuff like that, but no apologizing. You're not allowed to do it. And then lastly, the T. Talk about deep and meaningful things.

That's the whole point. That's the only reason hospitality matters. It's not about your food. It's not about your decor. It's not about your ambiance. It's not about the music. All of that is performance. All of that is the fruit of a consumerist culture.

Now here's the thing. If you can buy and prepare amazing food and clean your home and lay out candles and have music and all of that, by all means do it. Absolutely.

Christians should be amazing at throwing beautiful dinner parties. My point is, not to knock that. That's great. My point is to say, if our inability to live up to those standards is keeping us from spending meaningful time together, then we need to reevaluate.

So from here on out, from here on out, the new standards of the Advent dinner party, right here. And if you need a copy for your fridge, we'll send it to you. You can also just write it down.

[29 : 19] But from here on out, these are the new expectations. So let's start hanging out and having deep and meaningful conversations. If you're eating beef bourguignon, great. But sometimes you just need to sit on a pile of dirty laundry, eat some ramen noodles, and talk about life.

So hospitality, learning the names of our neighbors, these are ways that I want to begin to think about a stewardship of place. Why God has us where he has us.

What's it all about? Last thing I want to hit briefly is the church. As we think about our relationship with the church, God determined your steps to this city. He also, praise Jesus, brought you here to our church.

Now right now, I just want to focus on people who are members and regular attenders. If you're new or visiting, you don't need, this doesn't apply to you yet. It applies to those of us who really would consider this church to be our church home.

And I think from time to time, we have to, as Christians, ask, am I thinking about my church from a taking standpoint or from a cultivating standpoint? What's my orientation to the church, right? So just to focus on this community right here, most of you know, we started the Brooklyn Parish.

[30 : 27] We did this whole thing that we did a year ago because there were more and more people moving into the neighborhood with a missional vision for Northeast. People who said, I want to plant a church here.

I want to serve this area. There's so much potential for what we can do in these neighborhoods. And I fully agree. That's why we did it. You may also remember that the launch was a difficult process. It took us over two years to find space.

There were several false starts. There was a lot of waiting and uncertainty. And then once we started, we've had to spend a lot of time and energy making Sunday work.

Just getting enough people to serve in all the ways that an Anglican worship gathering requires.

And that's been difficult. My fear is this, is that slowly but surely we have begun to turn inward.

And this is just me as a pastor speaking. I think, you know, Augustine has this phrase, in cravata sin se, that sin turns us inward. And I think that that can happen on a community level too.

[31 : 28] I think if we're not careful, the path of least resistance in a church community is to turn inward. That's, if you do nothing, that's what you get. The only way to not turn inward is to continually push with all of your might outward.

For us to continually come together in rooms like this and remind ourselves the church exists not for the sake of the members alone, but for the sake of the world. This is why we're here. We exist for the sake of every man, woman, and child who lives in Northeast DC.

That's why we're here. And we need to remind ourselves of that because if we forget it and we go too long, we will die. We won't matter to anyone outside of ourselves.

And when that happens, churches die. So it's okay. I mean, it is perfectly okay if one of the reasons that you come is because it's closer to your house or because it's a morning service and that works well for your kids.

I mean, our kids come here for that reason. It's perfectly okay if you come for those kinds of reasons. The only point I want to make is if that's the only reason, if that's the only reason you're here, then you are thinking like a taker.

[32 : 42] And I want to encourage you to shift on that because, listen, we need cultivators. This may not feel like a church plant because it's a parish of Advent and so there's a lot about it that we had already established, but it is a church plant.

And we need every single person involved. Church plants are all hands on deck. All hands on deck. And so unless every single person who's actually would call this their church home is involved, we're not going to make it.

Our key volunteers who show up to set up and to set up our hospitality stuff and to set up for kids and to run sound and to set up and break down equipment and all of those key volunteers, it's been mostly the same volunteers since we launched in April of 2016 and they're tired.

And they're serving joyfully and they're not complaining and yet they're exhausted. And you can see it in their eyes and they need a break. So we need every single person to go home, to pray, to think about why has God determined your steps into this church?

And to think about your time and your energy and your gifts and your resources and to think about is there anything that you can give to contribute to the cultivation and the growth of this community and our desire to be a blessing to the neighborhoods.

[33 : 59] And by the way, that's the other piece of this. The parish council is going to be retreating in around January, February of next year. And the purpose is largely to prayerfully discern what are the most meaningful ways that Advent can reassert our commitment to be outward facing and to serve and to benefit in a common grace kind of way the neighborhoods where our parishes reside.

And so if the Lord is laying anything on your heart as you think about the needs that you see or the opportunities that you see in these neighborhoods where we live, I want you to tell us, tell somebody on the parish council, tell me, because we are right now praying and seeking the Lord's will for how we can serve these neighborhoods better.

We're asking the question, if we were to cease to exist tomorrow, would anybody miss us? I don't know right now. I want to encourage everyone to pray that God would lead us and show us ways that we might have a meaningful impact on the flourishing of the places where he has sent us.

So this is the kind of thing I'm talking about when we think holistically about what it means to be a steward of creation, what it means to be a cultivator instead of a taker. I don't want you to think that this is just a to-do list that you need to leave feeling guilty and here's all these other things that we have to do.

Many of you, in fact, are already doing amazing things. You're living like stewards. You're pouring yourselves out. You're taking responsibility for where God has you. So you're already doing this in many amazing ways.

[35 : 34] This is simply a call to more. And for those of you who are not, to reevaluate some of your motivations and some of your intentions and your priorities. Christians need to continually remind ourselves what our salvation is for.

You know, we're stewards of creation. Why? Well, ultimately, because God loves each blade of grass and each pebble more than we will ever love anything in our lives.

And if that's true about a blade of grass, how much more is it true of us? It's because of God's love that we're talking about all of this. And Jesus gave his life not just to save us from sin privately, but to enable us to take part in his renewal of this world.

So as we do the work of cultivation in our small corner of creation, we're participating in that renewal of all things. That's our calling as stewards of creation.

Let's pray. Father, you love each of us more than we would ever dare imagine. You sent your son to die for us to enable us to take part in this great renewing work.

[36 : 51] I pray and we all pray that your spirit would give us a passionate, unified vision for what that looks like in these neighborhoods where you've called us.

that we would be passionate about the conservation and beautification of our world, that we would understand the purposes behind why you've placed us where you've placed us, and that we would pour our lives into this church community even as this community seeks to pour its life into the surrounding communities of Northeast DC.

We thank you and we praise you, Lord, in your son's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.