

“Custodians of the Planet Earth”

[Genesis 1:28-31](#)

We are in a critical moment of losing the Earth. The earth is suffering from extreme exploitation, pollution, degradation, deforestation, extinction of important, tribes, species and minerals for human consumption and power. In some part of the world, the extreme exploitation of the natural resources of the earth is one of the major causes of civil wars. I would describe this phenomenon in my context as a shift from human slavery to slavery in the natural resources of the land.

Though humans depend on the earth for existence and they must in many ways exploit it for survival, extreme exploitation, degradation and deforestation is counter to human existence. It is deception so to speak, for any one including our world leaders to down play the importance of saving the earth. We cannot be deceptive about these extreme exploitation and pollution of the earth. We are **Custodians of the Earth Planet**... we need to take care of it and save much of it for our generations yet unborn.

Growing up as a boy in a small but very important diamond rich district of Kono, in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone, West Africa, I saw a well preserved natural resources: running stream, rivers, and thick forests, green grass and land and fresh air. I was taught how to cultivate manually without damage to the earth and soil. The soil, the forest and bushes were always left to fallow for years before cultivating it again. Much was preserved for the people, by the people and with the people. We would run for a whole day in the forest without fear. I saw my great grandparents really taken care and preserving their environment and the earth.

And then, and then, and then with my very eyes, as a teenager and not too long, I saw the same land, the very soil, the green environment, the super enormous mountains that gave fresh air. The forest, hills, river, streams and flamboyant landscape diminished and gone. The land was torn apart and bulldozed by the powers and people who think God has given them dominion over the earth. It was torn apart for precious diamonds, gold, bauxites and silicon. The people who owned the land, their soil, and the resources of their earth were enslaved in their own land with these natural resources.

The thing that actually bleeds and pierced my heart, the unimaginable systemic structure that torments my mind and soul is the fact that these minerals: gold, diamond, bauxites that the very land produced and was bulldozed for never enriched the lives of the people who owned it. The people were and are left vulnerable, devastated, and poor and improvised after exploiting the land. No compensations given for their land, minerals and soil. The land, the people and their natural resources were exploited extremely.

Who is responsible? Is it God who gave them the resources and did not give them the knowledge how to cultivate and make use of it? Is it because of their ineptitude to make use of the very good stuff they have? Is it the foreign powers that think they have dominion over foreign territories and use every means to exploit? The foreign powers are gone and gone forever after exploiting the land. At the end the land is left bared and never to regain its texture but left flowing open rivers, holes and pits that even become death trap for the people whose land have been ripped apart.

We are in a critical moment of losing the earth planet. Every one of us needs to play a part to save his or her environment.

I want to believe what happened and continue to happen to my native environment may have similarities around the world. In the USA, Europe, Asia, South America and elsewhere we find similar cases though in different context.

In the West, we can see that too many buildings, urbanization and industrialization have caused a lot of destruction to the earth and its environment. Pollution of the air, with cars and factories are making our environment unbearable and hard to live and cultivate. The WHO releases a report that air pollution in 2012 contributed to the death of about seven millions around the world. Throwing rubbish, garbage, carrier bags, diapers, damaging the flowers rather than growing them are all destructive tendencies of the earth.

What will happen if we continue this trend unchecked? My answer is that when we are finish destroying the trees, forest and the earth's resources, people will not get better clear air and or better oxygen. We will begin to inhale the polluted air and life will be drastically affected. It may just take few minutes for one crazy world and chemical weapons pioneers to pull the trigger and pollute the air with chemical weapons.

John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker integrate vast personal experiences across multiple global cultures and disciplines to produce a keen, fresh insight for today's world. In their work, 'Ecology and Religion', they state that "a shared sensibility regarding our planetary future is spreading around the globe—from native people seeing their homelands altered by climate change to megacity dwellers in Asia suffering from the pollution of air, water, and soil. We are facing a critical moment in the earth's history as our overextended human presence is affecting every region of land and water. Our explosion from two billion to about 7.8 billion people in the last hundred years is exacting a toll on the ecosystem and species. Rapid industrialization, heightened consumerism, and unrestrained technologies are causing environmental degradation on an enormous scale. Indeed, not only are we altering the climate and radically undermining life, but we are also triggering a mass extinction of species. What will future generation say of this diminished legacy of life? What can world religions contribute?"¹

In 2002, with renewed interest in environmental protection, an ecumenical council of world religious leaders gathered in Italy to pursue a unity of purpose to save the earth planet. A major suggestion among many others was that each region be steadfast in protecting their environment... against degradation and exploitation. Every religion, cultures, tribe or regions was encouraged to make sure that they do not give up their environment to the powers that divide, the powers that will not seek the interest of their environment. They stressed the need for every culture and tribe and religion to preach environmental protection and to make sure that they preserve God's creation and creatures.²

Preserving God's creation is a mandate not only to the ecologists and environmentalists but also to us as religious people. The Genesis text gives us some reasons and explanation. Genesis 1: 28ff... Where after creating humans in the image of God, God then command humans to 'fill the earth and subdue it' and have "dominion" over all the fish, birds, and all living creatures..."

Many people use the Bible to justify slavery and war. Similarly many people use the Bible to justify the use of the earth and its environment forcefully, destructively and selfishly.

¹ John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker. *Ecology and Religion* (Washington: Island Press, 2014).1

² Ibid 15

For humans to “fill the earth and subdue it” and have ‘dominion’ over it from a destructive, forceful and selfish points of views means using the earth to gain power by any means and even to the detriments of the very life. To subdue and have dominion means using chemical weapons on people and getting rid of special human species on earth. To subdue and have dominion means, having no respect for life and using any kind of vulgarism: like ugly, stupid, nonsense, black, white, gay lesbians’ to describe other people. To have dominion means deforestation through fire, exploitation and extinction of the earths’ resources for personal and private gains.

From a useful generous points of views to “subdue and have “dominion” means that we are expected as humans to exercise patience and care for the earth. This can be done by growing trees, plants greens and all that we can to upkeep the surface of the earth for a clear air.

Psalms 72 describes the duties of kings as defenders and protectors of a nation and its people. The King delivers the needy when they call. He takes care of the poor and those who have no helper. The king protect the vulnerable from all that would rob them of life. Dominion and subdue in this regard mean protection and care. It means to tend to the needs of their subjects rather than exploiting them.

When we apply this idea to our relationship to the earth, it invites us to imagine that God gave us this creation to tend and protect and be partners in God’s creative process. God calls us to see our interest and future as wrapped up in the survival and flourishing of the earth. We are custodians and we are expected to preserve the resources of the earth and keep them safe for generations to come.

Today is Earth Day, Earth Sunday because it falls on Sunday, April 22nd. I encourage all to join the millions of people around the world, including our WONDER WORKERS of our church who work hard to keep our Church campus greener and in good shape. Join other people in San Francisco city and other cities around the world to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

As we go about our daily routine and busy lives, think of what you can do to protect and preserve the Earth. Whether you use technology or not do something meaningful and creative. Technologies and development are not in themselves evil but rather they are part of man’s nature by God’s creative will. However, we have to use these resources in accordance with safety and guidance to preserve our planet and the environment.

Let us plant trees. Let us even teach our children how to plant flowers and save them. I have seedlings here with me and will give any who wants work with them during coffee hour.

Drive only if you have to. Limit air pollution. Bike to work if you could.

Take care of the diapers. Use water judiciously. Use electricity only when you have to.

Hopefully the resolutions made for the protection of our environment at the gathering of Commonwealth Country leaders on Friday could be sustained and implemented successfully.

Our consumption of renewable resources: food, water, wild life, forest which I am guilty of like many other around the world should be maintained within the capacity of the natural system to regenerate them.

The use of non –renewable resources like minerals, oil, and coal needs to be substituted and restricted on the volume of activities that can be sustained. We just have to be responsible otherwise we lose our planet in a short time.

If you want to help with environmental protection, and care for our church compound and want to help replace trees, green grass and flowers and, the soil and dirt, please come to the church on Wednesdays and join the WONDER WORKERS....this is a group I do admire very much for the work they do in taken care of our campus and church environment. I have some seedlings too to give out today.

We are custodians of the earth and note that God has given us this earth so that we have dominion over it by taken care and protecting it. We should pay more attention to the needs and care of the earth, trusting that as we do we are obeying one of God's first commandments...to care for ourselves, others and environment.

God Bless Us. Amen.