

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON

GRAND NORTH PRESBYTERY

SERMON PREACHED BY REV CHEWACHONG AMOS IN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GAROUA TOWN ON “CARE OF CREATION ”

TEXT: GENESIS 1:26-28.

Theme: “The Crises of Ecology and Christian Faith”

Beloved in the Lord, one of the greatest challenges facing our world today has to do with the progressive destruction of the environment. Apart from poverty, malnutrition and the spread of diseases, we face the prospect of cultural extinction if the forces that are causing these crises are not curbed.

The threat to life and the increasing ecological devastation comes as a result of the destruction of the environment through activities of deforestation by men, both for commercial and agricultural purposes. We find that in this part of the country every day as we witness the sales of charcoal indiscriminate cutting of trees for firewood and the like.

Famine already experienced in some parts of the world is a clear indication of how life might look like for several million people in the future if the fertility of the earth is retarded. Immediate causes of famine are overgrazing and inappropriate methods of farming which have eroded the topsoil. Therefore, in every part of the world, humanity has to discover a new, less exploitative relationship with the natural world.

In the quest for such new relationships, Christian faith must play a very important role; it must help us through the proper interpretation of certain Christian doctrines, to recognize the respect deserved by every creature of God, while not neglecting physical and biological insights to redress this situation.

The challenge of the ecological crises calls for a response from Christians. It is a challenge that deals with relationships both at the level of human beings and with the rest of creation and their various systems.

E. Mansell Pattison has compared human life with the two sides of a coin. On the one side is our individual identity and on the other our group identity. Each is reciprocal to the other. Each is a living system.

This is worth appreciating at the level of human beings, but when it comes to human beings relating to the environment, it becomes different. This is because humanity has seen itself to be the best of creation and has treated other creatures brutally and exploitatively. Humans seem determined to prove their superiority over nature.

Though there are many global issues, we find those that relate to the environment more pressing. Therefore, the crisis of ecology today is a concern for every body because it concerns the survival of the whole world.

Beloved in the Lord, I venture to say that, Christian theology has greatly influenced life and relationships throughout history and in fact contain a 'germ' of the crises of ecology. How have we Christians interpreted the creation myths in the book of Genesis, particularly Genesis 1:26-28?

In my view, what amounts to the rapping of the earth can readily be associated to Christian traditions, which propagate the idea that only human beings are created in the image of God and so are given authority to exercise 'dominion' over the rest of creation. According to such traditions, dominion means to Lord it over the lesser creatures of the earth. Thus justified within this mindset, humanity has treated its environment ruthlessly and brutally thinking that they are following the command of God.

Dear friends, the word dominion is defined as supremacy in directing and determining the actions of others, something that is subject to sovereignty or control, to have absolute ownership. Then, there is another term domination which is the ability to have control or power over something or someone, a very strong influence, or to be the most important or obvious person in something.

My dear Christian friends, the two terms defined above seem to propose the same meaning, but they are different especially when theological connotations are given. 'Dominion' in Christian theology will mean stewardship. That is what God means in the context of the creation narrative. He intends humanity to ensure responsible stewardship over the other creatures of the earth. Domination deals with the exercise of power by those in authority in which hierarchy is the presiding ideal and the tendency is always to Lord it over the others. Usually the power dynamic makes the one to grow and the other to diminish. The implication is towards abuse.

Friends we must not see dominion as domination- a control, authority, and absolute power with unlimited freedom to do as one desires. "The

appropriation of a right without fulfilling a corresponding duty or responsibility will inevitably lead to the pervasion of privileges.

The responsibility lies primarily with men who have throughout history been in authority and wielded power. The crisis of ecology therefore reflects the Christian attitude towards nature so as to meet His demands. Thus the Historian Lynn White Jr. has remarked, "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt for our present ecological crises".

The command of God for us to have dominion over the rest of creation is only a privilege which we are misusing. It is not power to coerce others but to control in a responsible way, to be good managers and or stewards.

Dear friends, the image of God and man's 'dominion' is related to the Lordship of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God as recorded in Colosians 1:15.

The Lordship of Christ is associated with service rather than mastery. The role of steward, which is the Lord's mode of having 'dominion' should be copied by all who want to emulate His footsteps. The greatest glory of Christ is in taking the form of a bond servant and though God has given Him the name above all names, Christ exemplifies His Lordship in stewardship. Dominion with our master Jesus Christ begins with "His availability and service to men, expressed in patterns of caring and compassion which eventually qualify his dominion over all the earth.

God gave us status to be lords over the creation in order that we should uphold and enforce His claims as lord.

May He deliver us on this very special day from any deadness that makes us claim unnecessary superiority over other creatures of the earth eventually leading to destruction.

The Lord be with you. Amen and Amen

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June 2012