

Why Care for Creation?

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it upon the waters.” (Psalm 24:1-2)



Stretching for 150 miles along the Atlantic Coast of Florida, the Indian River Lagoon is possibly the most biodiverse estuary system in the United States. It’s a home to fish, crabs, oysters, rays, turtles, alligators, and manatees, among many other species, including humans. These days, though, this beautiful and irreplaceable ecosystem faces dire threats.



In the early 1900s, a system of dams, levees, and canals were built to drain Florida for agriculture and development. By result, water now builds up in Lake Okeechobee — a massive inland lake — instead of flowing slowly south through the Everglades. To prevent catastrophic flooding during wetter periods, this pesticide- and fertilizer-rich water is funneled through canals and dumped into sensitive ecosystems, including the Indian River Lagoon.

It’s a somber sight, standing on the lagoon’s shore, looking down into contaminated waters that were meant to give life and health to all sorts of creatures, including humans. God’s world, though very good, is groaning.

It’s not just contaminated discharges, however, that are to blame for the degradation of the Indian River Lagoon. Likewise, it’s not just carbon pollution that’s to blame for climate change, or climate change that’s to blame for rising seas, food insecurity, forced migration, and extreme weather. These are all symptoms of deeper moral ills — ills like hubris, greed, selfishness, apathy, and every other kind of corruption.

In other words, these are all moral problems; they’re spiritual problems; they’re sin problems. At the end of the day, what we and all Creation desperately need is a solution to sin — at every level, in every place, far as the curse is found.

And, thanks be to God, there is a solution: Jesus Christ. Sometimes, Christians have claimed that Jesus only came to save humans, but throughout the Bible, we find affirmations of God’s love for all Creation, as well as Christ’s mission to reconcile and restore the flourishing of all things. We see this in the following four biblical themes.

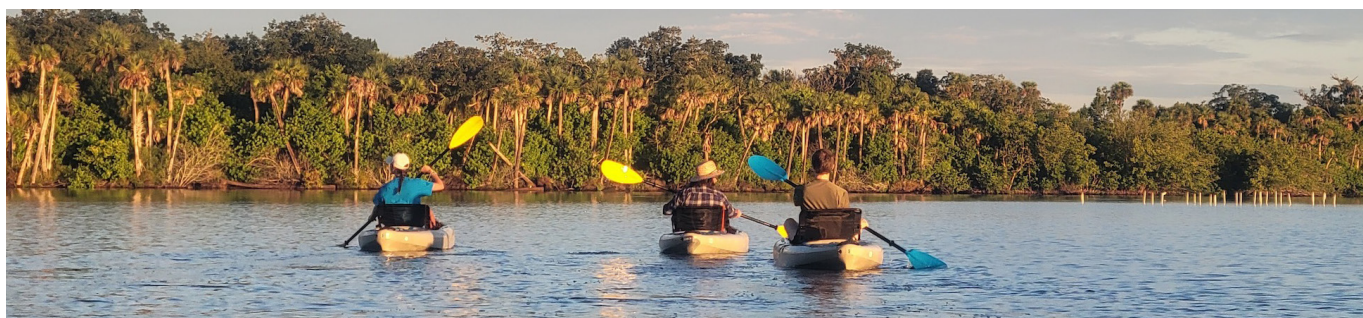


1. Creation Matters. God created the heavens and earth, the plants, waters, and all living creatures, and God saw they were “very good” (Gen. 1). Creation has intrinsic value regardless of its “usefulness” to us, for the simple yet decisive reason that God says so.

2. Humans Are Called to Care for Creation. God charged the first humans to “work and keep” the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15), reflecting God’s image of loving rulership to all creatures (Gen. 1:26-28). After the Israelites entered Canaan, they received sacred laws designed to preserve the land and its species (Lev. 25:2-4, Deut. 22:6-7), and their scriptures reminded them that the land ultimately belongs to God (Lev. 25:23).

3. The Cross Is for ALL of the Fall. That the Creator God became a creature in Christ and lived on this earth reinforces the biblical testimony that the physical creation is good. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus not only reconciles humanity to God, but “all things, whether on earth or in heaven,” which includes the whole community of Creation (Col. 1:15-20).

4. God Is Renewing All Things. The destiny of the earth is entwined with our own. Like us, it too will be set free from groaning and oppression (Rom. 8:18-23). In line with these and other passages, the biblical vision of God’s kingdom is of human civilization and the rest of creation renewed and flourishing in peace with each other and God (e.g., Isa. 11 & 65; Rev. 21-22).



In short, the Gospel isn’t only “good news” for us, but for all of Creation. As God’s people, we’re called to provide for Creation’s flourishing, joining God in restoring right relationships between us and the rest of this good but groaning world. Caring for creation is an integral part of how we can practically live out the call to love God and love one another.

This is why A Rocha organizations are working in over twenty countries, across six continents to protect and restore both people and places — through scientific research, habitat restoration, environmental education, church outreach, and more. For the same reason, A Rocha USA is supporting the recovery of oysters, seagrass, and coastal vegetation along the Indian River Lagoon and all the creatures that live within them.

Even as we lament the damage done to God’s world, we remember that one day, Christ will restore all things. If we so choose, we can join him in that mission, working towards the flourishing of life in all its sacred and wondrous forms.

(By Ben Lowe and Noah Guthrie)

To learn more about A Rocha USA’s work and how you or your church can get involved, scan this QR code, visit arochoa.us/welcome, or contact our team at hello@arochoa.us

