

5. **Further discussion**

The New Testament includes a cosmic scope to the Gospel...

- Read Colossians 1:15-19 and Romans 8:18-23
- How might these verses help you to respond to your neighbour's question: "Is God interested in the environment?"

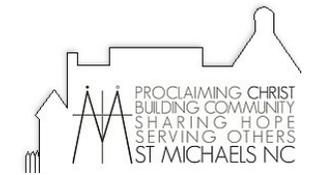
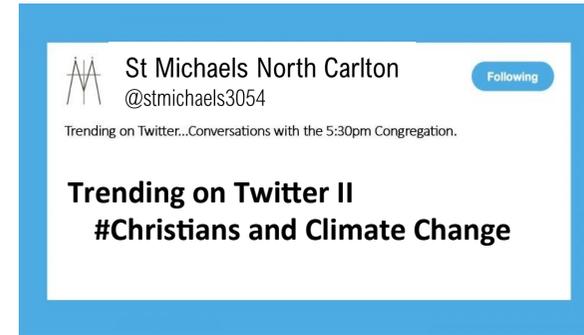
Discuss some of the following quotes with Psalm 8 in mind...

- Bernice King, youngest child of civil rights activist, the late Martin Luther King, says: "It is time for humanity to reset our spiritual compass from self-centeredness to other-centeredness."
- "Change is never easy, and it often creates discord, but when people come together for the good of humanity and the Earth, we can accomplish great things." David Suzuki
- "If I were a tree, I would have no reason to love a human." Maggie Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys*

6. **Taking Action**

What changes might you need to make in terms of attitude to the environment in the light of Psalm 8?

What changes in practical living can you commit to now that might express your commitment to having a high regard for God's creation?



CONVERSATION STARTERS

The Bible may not directly address the issue of climate change, yet there are various biblical/theological "lenses" through which one can look at this topic, such as the nature of God, creation, the purpose of humanity, the consequences of sin, eschatology (last things), and more. This particular study looks at climate change action through the lens of creation via Psalm 8, and the considers the relationship between humanity, God and the universe we live in. Psalm 8 is a song of praise to God the Creator. It helps us ask a fundamental question of ourselves — How should we regard the world if God created it?

PSALM 8

1. **Awe-filled inspiration**

v.1-2 The poet contemplates the glory of the starry heavens (v.1) and, behind that image, discerns the glory of God. He offers praise with the same awe and wonder that a young child shows — a fact that should silence God's opponents. The deep spiritual response of even young children to the wonders of God's world are a sort of audible 'bulwark' against the enemies of God. (v.2).

- What scene/experience in recent travels inspired you in a similar way to the Psalmist?
- What do other people commonly say (who are not Christians) when inspired by wonders in our world?
- In what ways might "wonder" and "awe" offer common ground to discuss with others your faith in God?

2. *Re-thinking Humanity*

v.3-4 The overwhelming nature of the poet's experience of God's glory in creation helps him to gain a right understanding of his own place within God's creation.

- What are some common ways people describe the role of humans in the world/universe today (both positively and negatively?)
- How might differing views about the place of humans in the scheme of things impact outcomes for the planet we live on?

God's revelation of Himself within creation illuminates humanity's status and presses the question 'what are human beings?'

- Read Philippians 2:5-11, Mark 10:45, and 2 Cor.5:14,15
- How does the example of Jesus challenge some views of the role humans have in the world today?
- More than just to give a mere example, what does implications does the death of Christ mean for those who follow him?

3. *Crowned, yet Servants*

v.5-8 Throughout the song it is God who is the subject. God has made human beings to be His image (as Gen 1.26 says more explicitly, and the Psalmist is familiar with this text). It is God who gave to humanity the authority of God the king (v.5) and the responsibility for the care of all 'the works of God's hands' (v.6).

In Scripture, the created order is always 'the work of God's hands', not humanity's to exploit or damage. The task of 'dominion' (part of the creation narrative, Genesis 1.28) is that of a commission given by God to exercise God's 'rule over' creation. The presumption should be that such stewardship should be carried out on God's behalf and in line with God's will and God's way.

This 'royal' task is to reflect the sort of kingly rule which God exercises— as in the following examples:

- "Give the king your justice, O God.. May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice.. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.' (Psalm 72.1-4)
- 'The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.' (Psalm 145.9)

'All that God has made' is illustrated in verses Psalm 8:7-8 of by reference to sheep, oxen, beasts, birds and fish. Again the resonance is with Genesis chapter 1. All good things around us are 'the works of God's hands' (v. 6).

- In today's context, how might you apply these verses to the topic of sustainability of the environment?
- What moral and social obligations might come with the role of humanity suggested in this psalm?

4. *Re-calibrate your humanity*

The psalm ends not by dwelling on the place nor the role of humanity, but re-directs the reader's gaze from both, toward a right focus that re-calibrates our understanding of humanity - the majestic name of God, who is sovereign over all.

- Pause to ask God to re-calibrate your sense of "being a human", and to fill you with appropriate awe for God, and a new appreciation of the stewardship of all "the works of God's hands".
- Offer some prayers of praise and petition in line with this renewed vision.