

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE:

To neglect the planet is to neglect His work

By SARAH HALVERSON

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Last week I attended the Orange County Interfaith Coalition's Care of Creation Conference.

One of the keynote speakers, Rev. Peter Gwillim Kreitler, spoke about the need for clergy to step out on a limb and speak to the necessity of caring for the environment.

He knew it wasn't an easy position for clergy to be in; too often we get criticized for being "too controversial," and the fear of upsetting our congregation often keeps us quiet on difficult topics. Yet he stressed that if we refuse to preach the prophetic message, then we are not doing our jobs. He challenged clergy to accountability and challenged congregations to support their clergy.

So, his challenge begs a question: Was Jesus green?

The reality is that until the industrial revolution, humanity, for the most part, was not terribly detrimental to nature. So, Jesus himself never did anything that was extraordinarily "green" and yet, he often used metaphors from nature to describe the kingdom of God.

Jesus calls his followers to responsibility and certainly speaks of caring for the least of these; one could argue that though he doesn't outright speak to care for the earth, he does indirectly speak to caring for God's creation.

Often, creationists point to the Genesis stories of creation to rationalize human dominion over the earth; and yet, eco-theologians are now pointing out that these same creation stories are calling us to accountability as stewards of the earth. If we believe that God created the earth, then we must acknowledge that God is a part of the earth, and as we neglect the earth, we also neglect God.

Fortunately, it's becoming trendy to be green. Beyond the trends and tax write-offs, there is something that is fundamental for the faithful — we have a responsibility to care for creation, and as people of God, we have a Biblical duty to respond to the wastefulness and negligence of our society and lives.

We ought to lead the way. It is not easy to call our culture to accountability. It seems, however, that Jesus and the Bible call us to be green people of God.

Reverend Sarah Halverson
Fairview Community Church
2525 Fairview Road
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
(714) 545-4610