

Save the Humans!

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

"Welcome to the planet! Welcome to existence! Everyone's here!" These lyrics reverberate eardrums across the nation as the opening line of one of my favorite songs by Switchfoot. The message speaks to the commonality of all mankind sharing the globe in this adventure we glibly call "the human condition." Whether black, white or brown, in Africa, Europe, India, or the good ole Ojai Valley, people around the world share common attributes, challenges, wins and losses.

This week many celebrated Earth Day, commemorating multitudes of efforts to help protect our environment from unnecessary harm due to our ecological "footprint." At my home, we do our part in conservation and recycling. Living in this area affords us a lot of opportunities to be tuned into these issues. Whether oceanic marine life or the chaparral in the Sespe, air pollution or water quality, we are surrounded by the stuff in nature that make the headlines and intelligent voices that can speak to the issues. And yet, I do find some ironies in it all.

I meet way too many people who love the Earth, but reject God who made it. The Scriptures describe the foolishness of those who worship the creation rather than the creator (Romans 1). Some people expect environmentally conscious people to be part of a particular subculture that is reminiscent of a '70s flashback, kind of like the Partridge Family meets Trader Joe's. If you care about the environment, you will shop at certain stores where everyone brings their own hemp bags, wear Patagonia with Birkenstocks, avoid hairbrushes, and subscribe to a strange philosophy with roots in the ancient Near East. Some are actually surprised to learn about how many Christians there are that are "saving the Earth." But the Bible itself gives enough reason for every follower of Jesus to take appropriate care of this place. One only needs to open the book from the beginning and start reading to catch on to this.

Yet an unfortunate type of dichotomy exists that polarizes people. Some want to hug a tree more than they would hug their neighbor. Others desire to enforce protections restricting the killing of baby dolphins but advocate free "choice" for the infanticide of unborn baby humans. I like the bumper sticker that says "Save the humans." I have always been an animal lover and supporter of protections against cruelty, but this week we saw violence perpetrated against people in the name of compassionate outrage. Does anyone else see the contradiction here? I know of those who fill up their tank with gas to drive their car to a rally against the oil industry. Others use the freedoms purchased by the blood of men and women in uniform to alienate and vilify the ones who fight. It seems as though they recognize the societal fractures and know this thing is broken and want to help, but are lost in how to go about fixing it. Enter Jesus, who said, "I am the way!"

The Book of John opens with the proclamation that all things exist by the power of God demonstrated through Christ, that "without Him nothing was made that was made." Mother

Earth, as she is often called, was created by God. When we are trying to find answers for making a real difference, but insist that Jesus isn't welcome at the gathering, it is like fumbling around in the darkness. Jesus' voice still echoes, "I am the light!"

Years ago marketing strategy analysts announced that this would be the decade of "green." It is the buzzword that permeates almost every product strategy and commercial just as predicted, from cars to computers, the whole world has gone green. I just read about the new "Green Bible" that highlights the many verses about stewardship of nature in, you guessed it, the color green. Few people seem to realize that corporate America has taken the driver's seat on this, which has positive and negative consequences. It's great that environmental issues have become mainstream topics of conversation, but bad because people believe that if they purchase something painted green, they have done something good without even researching how it was made. The message gets blurry. What started off as a biblical principle and admonition of God to humanity was taken over by fringe groups and now mega-business and everyone has lost the purpose in why we are doing this.

Despite everything, the Bible records that there will be a catastrophic end and our efforts are temporary. If our hope is in stuff that doesn't last, disappointment is an eventuality. You will never regret putting your faith in Jesus. At Calvary Chapel, we have found at least one way to help save the planet and the humans at the same time; our recycling program actually generates enough funds to sponsor food and education for three children through Compassion International. That is something to feel good about. As you become a follower of Jesus, you will have both the way to make a lasting difference and the light to show you how.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



P.O. Box 1443
Ojai, CA 93024
(805) 640-9498
www.calvaryojai.org

Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:30am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave. Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View