

# Our Earthly Stewardship

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Great spiritual blessings are promised to those who love and care for the earth and their fellow men and women.

While visiting our native country of France, my wife and I recently had the pleasure of taking a few of our grandchildren to explore a magnificent garden situated in the little town of Giverny. We enjoyed wandering along its paths to admire the beautiful flower beds, the elegant water lilies, and the light playing on the ponds.

This amazing place is the result of the creative passion of one man: the great painter Claude Monet, who, for 40 years, tenderly shaped and cultivated his garden to make it his painting workspace. Monet immersed himself in nature's splendor; then, with his paintbrush, he conveyed the impressions he felt with strokes of color and light. Over the years, he created an extraordinary collection of hundreds of paintings, directly inspired by his garden.

Brothers and sisters, our interactions with the beauties of nature around us can produce some of the most inspiring and delightful experiences in life. The emotions we feel kindle within us a deep sense of gratitude for our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, who created this magnificent earth—with its mountains and streams, plants and animals—and our first parents, Adam and Eve.<sup>1</sup>

The work of creation is not an end in itself. It is an integral part of God's plan for His children. Its purpose is to provide the setting in which men and women may be tested, exercise their agency, find joy, and learn and progress so that they may one day return to the presence of their Creator and inherit eternal life.

These wonderful creations were prepared entirely for our benefit and are living proof of the love the Creator has for His children. The Lord declared, "Yea, all things which come of the earth ... are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart."<sup>2</sup>

However, the divine gift of the Creation does not come without duties and responsibilities. These duties are best described by the concept of

*stewardship*. In gospel terms, the word *stewardship* designates a sacred spiritual or temporal responsibility to take care of something that belongs to God for which we are accountable.<sup>3</sup>

As taught in the holy scriptures, our earthly stewardship includes the following principles:

*First principle: The entire earth, including all life thereon, belongs to God.*

The Creator has entrusted the earth's resources and all forms of life to our care, but He retains full ownership. He said, "I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine."<sup>4</sup> All that is on the earth belongs to God, including our families, our physical bodies, and even our very lives.<sup>5</sup>

*Second principle: As stewards of God's creations, we have a duty to honor and care for them.*

As God's children, we have received the charge to be stewards, caretakers, and guardians of His divine creations. The Lord said that He made "every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures."<sup>6</sup>

Our Heavenly Father allows us to use earthly resources according to our own free will. Yet our agency should not be interpreted as license to use or consume the riches of this world without wisdom or restraint. The Lord gave this admonition: "And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion."<sup>7</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson once remarked: "As beneficiaries of the divine Creation, what shall we do? We should care for the earth, be wise stewards over it, and preserve it for future generations."<sup>8</sup>

Beyond being simply a scientific or political necessity, the care of the earth and of our natural environment is a sacred responsibility entrusted to us by God, which should fill us with a deep sense of duty and humility. It is also an integral component of our discipleship. How can we honor and love Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ without honoring and loving Their creations?

There are many things that we can do—collectively and individually—to be good stewards. Considering our individual circumstances, each of us can use the bountiful resources of the earth more reverently and prudently. We can support community efforts to care for the earth. We can adopt personal lifestyles and behaviors that respect God's creations and make our own living spaces tidier, more beautiful, and more inspirational.<sup>9</sup>

Our stewardship over God’s creations also includes, at its pinnacle, a sacred duty to love, respect, and care for all human beings with whom we share the earth. They are sons and daughters of God, our sisters and our brothers, and their eternal happiness is the very purpose of the work of creation.

The author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry recounted the following: One day, while traveling on a train, he found himself sitting amidst a group of refugees. Deeply moved by the hopelessness he saw in the face of a young child, he exclaimed: “When by mutation a new rose is born in a garden, all the gardeners rejoice. They isolate the rose, tend it, foster it. But there is no gardener for men.”<sup>10</sup>

My brothers and sisters, should we not be the gardeners for our fellow men and women? Are we not our brother’s keeper? Jesus commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves.<sup>11</sup> From His mouth, the word *neighbor* does not merely mean geographic proximity; it implies a proximity of the heart. It encompasses all the inhabitants of this planet—whether they live near us or in a faraway country, regardless of their origins, personal backgrounds, or circumstances.

As disciples of Christ, we have a solemn duty to work tirelessly for peace and harmony among all nations of the earth. We must do our very best to protect and bring solace and relief to the weak, the needy, and all those who suffer or who are oppressed. Above all, the greatest gift of love we can offer our fellow men is to share with them the joy of the gospel and invite them to come unto their Savior through sacred covenants and ordinances.

*Third principle: We are invited to participate in the work of creation.*

The divine process of creation is not yet complete. Every day, God’s creations continue to grow, expand, and multiply. A most wonderful thing is that our Heavenly Father extends to us an invitation to participate in His creative work.

We participate in the work of creation whenever we cultivate the earth or add our own constructions to this world—as long as we show respect for God’s creations. Our contributions may be expressed through the creation of works of art, architecture, music, literature, and culture, which embellish our planet, quicken our senses, and brighten our lives. We also contribute through scientific and medical discoveries that preserve the earth and life upon it. President Thomas S. Monson summarized this concept with these beautiful words: “God left the world unfinished for man to work his skill upon ... that man might know the joys and glories of creation.”<sup>12</sup>

In Jesus’s parable of the talents, when the master returned from his journey, he praised and rewarded the two servants who grew and

magnified their talents. In contrast, he called the servant who hid his unique talent in the earth “unprofitable,” and he took away even that which he had received.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, our role as stewards of earthly creations is not solely about conserving or preserving them. The Lord expects us to work diligently, as moved upon by His Holy Spirit, to grow, enhance, and improve upon the resources He has entrusted to us—not for our benefit only but to bless others.

Among all of man’s achievements, none can equal the experience of becoming *cocreators* with God in giving life or in helping a child learn, grow, and thrive—whether it be as parents, teachers, or leaders, or in any other role. There is no stewardship more sacred, more fulfilling, and also more demanding than that of partnering with our Creator in providing physical bodies for His spirit children and then helping them reach their divine potential.

The responsibility of cocreation serves as a constant reminder that life and each person’s body are sacred, that they belong to none other than God, and that He has made us guardians to respect, protect, and care for them. The commandments of God, which govern the powers of procreation and the establishment of eternal families, guide us in this holy stewardship, which is so crucial to His plan.

My brothers and sisters, we should recognize that all is spiritual to the Lord—including the most temporal aspects of our lives. I testify that great spiritual blessings are promised to those who love and care for the earth and their fellow men and women. As you stay faithful in this sacred stewardship and honor your eternal covenants, you will grow in the knowledge of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ, and you will feel Their love and Their influence more abundantly in your life. All this will prepare you to dwell with Them and receive additional creative power<sup>14</sup> in the life to come.

At the end of this mortal existence, the Master will ask us to give an account for our sacred stewardship, including how we have cared for His creations. I pray that we will then hear His loving words whispered to our hearts: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”<sup>15</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Notes

1. The earth and all things upon it (with the exception of Adam and Eve) were created by Jesus Christ under the direction of the Father; Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created by God the Father (see John 1:1–3; Moses 2:1, 26–27).
2. Doctrine and Covenants 59:18.
3. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Welfare Services: The Gospel in Action,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 76–79.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 104:14.
5. See Spencer W. Kimball, “Welfare Services,” 76–79.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 104:13.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:20.
8. Russell M. Nelson, “The Creation,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 86; *Liahona*, July 2000, 104.
9. See Gospel Topics, “Environmental Stewardship and Conservation,” [topics.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/topics/environmental-stewardship-and-conservation).
10. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Terre des Hommes* (1939), 214; see also *Wind, Sand and Stars* (1939) in *Airman’s Odyssey* (1984), 206.
11. See Mark 12:31.
12. Thomas S. Monson, “In Quest of the Abundant Life,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1988, 2; “In Search of an Abundant Life,” *Tambuli*, August 1988, 3.
13. See Matthew 25:14–30.
14. See David A. Bednar and Susan K. Bednar, “Moral Purity” (Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, Jan. 7, 2003), [byui.edu](https://byui.edu).
15. Matthew 25:21.