

Isn't It All Mine?

Genesis 1:1

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Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

Isn't It All Mine?

(A sermon by Stan Toler)

(Gen. 1:1)

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”

Today's Focus: God owns everything, including me!

Food for Thought: I will deed all my time, talent, treasure, and touch [relationships] to God.

Introduction

On September 26, 1991, the first crew of Biospherians—four women and four men—entered *Biosphere 2*. Located in the Sonoran Desert about 30 miles north of Tucson, *Biosphere 2* was a 7.2 million-cubic-foot enclosure built at the cost of \$200 million. This enclosed, three-acre ecological laboratory had a controlled habitat with a rain forest, savanna, desert, marsh, ocean, and agricultural area and all the factors thought to be necessary to sustain life. The original crew was to remain in this airtight container for two years.

However, after the first year, atmosphere levels fell to the point that oxygen had to be added from the outside. Nineteen of 25 vertebrate species and most insects in the unit became extinct, including all species that could pollinate plants. Water, air pollution, and temperature control became a problem. The crew lost so much weight, food was smuggled in through the airlocks.

With all the intelligence put into the design of *Biosphere 2*, it just didn't work. Yet some scientists still insist the wonderfully integrated ecosystems of Earth supposedly “just happened” without intelligent design.

The more we see of the world, the more we appreciate the God who created it. Isaac Newton said, “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of His dominion He is wont to be called Lord God.”

God created this world, and He owns all of it. By the way, that creation includes two people we know—you and me!

1. God Created Everything, and He Owns It All!

We like to use the words, “This is mine.” [If you have or ever had a toddler you heard the word, “Mine!” a lot. But we hear it among adults too. The Beatles, George Harrison wrote, “All I can hear, I, me, mine, I me, mine, I, me, mine...all through the day, I me, mine.”]. It’s fun to point to something we have or something we’ve created and say, “This is mine.” But is that really true? It just makes sense to think the Creator of everything is the Owner of it. The scripture for today says God created everything. Out of nothing, God formed the sun, moon, stars, earth, and all that lives. There are some who doubt this truth, though maybe not as many as you think.

A Gallup Poll found the greatest number of Americans (45 percent) hold to the strict creationist view that God created us pretty much in our present form within the last 10,000 years. Most other Americans believe in some combination of evolution and creationism, and only 13 percent of Americans believe in strict evolution (*Gallup News Service*, Nov. 2004).

Those of us who believe the Bible know God created the heavens [and the earth]. It doesn’t matter much to us what methods He may have used. We know He did it! The Psalmist said, “The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters” (Ps. 24:1–2). Genesis 1 and 2 give the accounts of God’s crowning creation: human beings. He took time to fashion and to breathe life into the first human being; however, this part of His creation was more than good; He said it was *very* good. As part of His creation, you and I belong to God!

God gave Adam and Eve dominion (authority) over the rest of creation. He entrusted them—and likewise, us—with caring for the earth. He has generously shared His world with His creations.

Consequently, this means the whole world, including you and I, belong to God. That’s a tremendous privilege. But it’s also a tremendous responsibility. We are answerable to God to manage the world He created.

2. We Are Responsible to Manage God’s World

I don’t know about you, but when I drive someone else’s car, I’m always extra careful. I try to be a good driver all the time, but when I’m behind the wheel of a vehicle I don’t own, I feel an extra sense of responsibility.

That’s the way it is with our situation. It’s like we’re driving God’s car. God created the world, and He has entrusted it to us, so it’s our job to take special care of it for Him—to be managers on His behalf. God chooses to entrust parts of His world to the people He created, but it all still belongs to Him. He does not relinquish ownership. Like the person who owns a business and trusts others to produce the product, sell and service it, and guard the income from it, God trusts us to use the resources He created to improve our personal lives and the lives of others—and to enhance His Kingdom. This means we dare

not treat our roles carelessly. We have a responsibility to live up to the trust God has placed in us.

Years ago, there was an ad campaign to discourage people from littering. In the public service announcement, the cameras panned an area teeming with garbage, then focused on a Native American man. The close-up of his face showed a single tear sliding down his cheek. The image was powerful. I think the sorrow in that man's face may have reflected God's sorrow as He sees the way we sometimes care for the world He has given us. We may treat it as if it's ours, but in reality it all belongs to Him.

<http://www.kab.org/uploadedFiles/KAB/Resources/psa2.htm>

As Christians, we have a responsibility to care for all God has created and provided for us. The Apostle Paul said men ought to regard us as servants of Christ. He said, "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Not only must we be faithful stewards of the world God has entrusted to us; we must also be faithful as individuals.

Think about the things entrusted to your care right now. Think about the little corner of God's creation under your control. [Your body, mind, spirit (private devotions, public worship, discipleship/fellowship in small groups, Service, and witness)] You may own a home, perhaps you have a family (are you treating your spouse and children according to God's principles?) —God's children temporarily in your care. You may own a business or property. All of us consume the earth's produce and use its resources.

How are you doing at managing God's world? Are you careful with what He created? Do you realize all of your possessions are really held in trust? God owns them, and you simply use them as His manager.

The world doesn't belong to us. Just realizing this biblical truth will change the way we think about the things we "own" and the way we think about ourselves!

3. God Wants *All* of Us

(We) say (we) own (our) own home. Of course, the bank really owns most of it. Anyone who has a mortgage on a house or a lien on a car doesn't really own it. But (you *are*) looking forward to (your) mortgage burning—the day when (you) can tear up the little piece of paper that says (you) owe money to the bank. (You) want to own (your) home free and clear.

God is the same way with you and me. He created us, and He wants to own us—*all* of us, not just a part. He wants us to give all we are and all we have to Him. When we do, we find our greatest joy and purpose in life.

I can read your mind. You're thinking Christ already has all of you. "Pastor," you say, "I gave my heart to the Lord a long time ago. I've never taken it back. Jesus has all of me."

And I would agree. Probably nearly every person here has made a decision for Christ. You gave your life to Him, and you really meant it. I don't doubt that for a second.

But let's think about this business of letting Christ own us from a different perspective. A wonderful parable written by the late pastor/educator Robert Boyd Munger describes what it means to give ourselves completely to the One who created us, loved us, and sacrificed His Son to save us. It's called "My Heart—Christ's Home."

In this story, Munger speaks about his life as if it were a home with Christ moving from one area of his life to another, examining the things he read or viewed, the things he valued (such as academic degrees, investment portfolios, and fame), and at last inviting the man to find true satisfaction in following God's will in every area.

Finally, Jesus confronts him, "'Stop seeking your own pleasures, desires, and satisfaction. Seek to please Him (God). That food will satisfy you.'

"There at the table He gave me a taste of the joy of doing God's will. What flavor! There is no food like it in all the world. It alone satisfies" (Munger, InterVarsity Press, 1986).

Now think about this business of giving Christ all of your life again. Here is a helpful model for thinking about the totality of your existence. Think of your life as a home with these four rooms: Time, Talent, Treasure, and Touch. Take an inventory in each of these areas and ask the question: "Does it all belong to God?"

First, think about your time. All of us have the same 24 hours in each day. They are a gift from God. He created the world and gives us the ability to move about and do things. Here's the question: "Does your use of time show you acknowledge God's control over your life and everything in it?" [The way we spend our time says what is really important to us. Is working out at a gym more important than training yourself to be holy? Is taking your child to sports or other events more important than taking them to church? We can miss church, prayer, Bible reading, ministering to others needs, but we can't miss work, school, a favorite TV show etc. Take inventory of how you use your time. Is the use of your use of time really under God's control?]

Next, consider your talents. When I was younger, (I loved playing baseball...I just wasn't very good at it). After a while, I found out there are some things I have the talent for and some things I don't! But all of us have some talent. We have abilities to preach or teach or create or repair things or earn money or care for children. There are things you can do better than anyone else. It's because God gave you that ability. Again, here's the question: "Are you using your talents in a way that honors God?"

Now, think about your treasure. That's right, let's talk about money. All of us have some—usually not as much as we'd like! But here's the good thing about the time and place in which we live. Almost every one of us has more money than we need to survive.

We have a roof over our heads and food to eat—and we still have some left over! Do you know why? It's because God gave it to us. Do you realize the Bible says even your ability to work and earn money is a gift from God? Everything you hold is on loan—a trust—from Him. How are you using your money? Does your use of money honor the God who gave you everything you have? If someone were to look over your shoulder at your credit card receipts and checkbook entries, would it tell the tale of someone who puts the things of God first in life? Or would it reveal a pattern of selfish or careless spending? Have you given God control of your money?

Finally, let's talk about your touch; that's the relationships you have with the people in your life. We all touch people every day. We encounter others at home, work, school, church, and the convenience store—everywhere. This is a harder area to analyze, but ask yourself: “Do I honor God in my relationships?” Think about the ways you interact with your spouse and children. Think about the ways you influence your friends—or are influenced by them. Think about your business partnerships and relationships. Are you affecting people for the Kingdom? Are you using the gift of touch to reach others for God?

I know you've given your heart to Christ. And I applaud you for it. Now I'm asking a different question. Does Christ have *all* of you—not just your heart, but your *time, talent, treasure, and touch* as well?

It's a question of ownership. Who holds the paper on your life—you or God?

Conclusion

The great reformer Martin Luther said, “I have held many things in my hand, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands that I still possess.”

The same is true for you and me. When we give our lives to God, He does a marvelous thing; He gives them back to us. He lets us use our time, talent, treasure, and touch to bring joy to our own lives—so long as we honor Him. You can't lose by surrendering to God!

I challenge you today to do what every business in the country must do at least once a year: take an inventory. Make a listing of all you have and all you are. Then go down the list one item at a time, and do what an accountant would—determine whether each item is an asset or a liability.

If it belongs to God, it has value. It is an asset. If it belongs only to you, it is a liability. Before you are finished, see if you can wind up with all assets and no liabilities. Give all you have and all that you are to God.

You won't be disappointed!