

# S3E3 The Bible and Climate Change with Derrick-Schaap and Peterson Toscano

Sat, Oct 19, 2024 9:32PM 55:55

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Bible and climate change, food and faith, superhero discussion, grounding exercise, climate life verse, environmental justice, creation care, hope and suffering, scripture and nature, food justice, practical steps, climate Sunday, seasonal programs, climate action, theological reflection

## SPEAKERS

Ben Yosua-Davis, Anna Barron, Derrick Weston, Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, Peterson Toscano, Beverly G. Ward



Ben Yosua-Davis 00:02

You are listening to Climate Changed, a podcast about pursuing faith, life, and love in a climate-changed world, hosted by me, Ben Yosua-Davis. Climate Changed features guests who deepen the conversation while also stirring the waters. The Climate Changed podcast is a project of The BTS Center. What on earth does the Bible have to do with global warming? How could this ancient text be used responsibly to help us approach difficult contemporary issues? The topic of this episode is the Bible and climate change. Derrick Weston from Creation Justice Ministries is here to help me with these questions and more. Derrick, it's so good to have you with us, especially being the host of the Green Lectionary podcast, which talks about Scripture and ecology all the time. Derrick, what else do you want our listeners to know about you?



Derrick Weston 00:56

Well first, I'm really glad to be here, glad to have this conversation with you. Before I started with Creation Justice Ministries, a lot of my work was around the intersection of food and faith. So I come to ecological conversations with food, sort of as a lens of a way that we connect with creation. That's a lot of where, where I'll be coming from.




Ben Yosua-Davis 01:14

That sounds wonderful and kind of delicious. Maybe we'll have some extra recipes in our show notes by the end of our time together. So we're talking about scripture this episode. So I thought I would ask you a question about one of the sets of modern sacred stories, the superhero. Derrick, I know you're a geek like I am. So who's your favorite superhero?

 D Derrick Weston 01:36


All-time favorite superhero is Spider Man. Nice. I love that for most of the run of Spider Man, he has been awkward and failing at real life while doing his superhero gig, that he has been bad at love, that he has been bad member of his family, that he has been mostly broke and then managing all of that while trying to go out and fight crime and stop supervillains from destroying the world. And I love the with great power comes great responsibility, kind of as a mantra. So Spider Man has always, always been my guy.

 Ben Yosua-Davis 02:10

I'm a big fan of him, both the Peter Parker and the Miles Morales versions, absolutely. I wanted to actually take this moment to speak up for the one of the least appreciated of all Marvel Superheroes, which is Doreen Green, also known as the Unbeatable Squirrel Girl. Have you read Squirrel Girl?

 D Derrick Weston 02:29


I have, I have read a couple of comics where she features where, where she has been alongside the Avengers, or something of those of that. But not just her, her own solo.

 Ben Yosua-Davis 02:39

Okay, so let me, let me pitch you and all our listeners on why she is the best. She is a Marvel superhero with the proportional strength and speed of a squirrel. She goes along with her sidekick, Tippy Toe, who's a squirrel, they, quote, eat nuts and kick butts while going to college and learning computer science. So the comics are utterly hilarious. She uses her logic and computer science principles as often as our superpowers to defeat bad guys. And I appreciate in these moments when we're dealing with really heavy issues, it is just the sunniest, most intelligent comic that you can possibly read. It's like a ray of Marvel sunshine in your dark universe. So the Unbeatable Squirrel Girl is always, is always, absolutely my hero.

 D Derrick Weston 03:22

I will, I will throw in just if on this, on a similar vein, Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur, also just incredibly endearing Marvel comic of this young black girl who is the smartest person in the Marvel universe, who is often accompanied by a big red dinosaur as she saves the world.

 Ben Yosua-Davis 03:57

In each episode of Climate Changed, we provide a space for us to clear our heads from the busyness of the day and center ourselves. Beverly G Ward leaves the grounding in this episode. Beverly is the field secretary for Earth Care for the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. She assists monthly meetings and worship groups and projects and activities that promote care for the earth, linking their efforts with the wider Quaker world. Beverly has

been serving in this role since 2016. She is also the co-clerk of Quaker Earth Care Witness, and works with the Quaker United Nations Office. Beyond her Quaker work, she is part of the Bon Geverly Theatrical Troupe, facilitates Alternative to Violence Project workshops and teaches cultural and applied anthropology at the University of South Florida. Beverly, we are honored to have you with us today.

B

**Beverly G. Ward 05:01**

I have this piece that I talk about, and it's not original. It's borrowed from a play. The play is *The Project Hope*, by Catherine Banks, and is from the 2017 Climate Change Theater Action. And I'm often reminded of this line: "Now tell me your first memory of the natural world." And when I first read that, I thought about, ah. Growing up in the southeast, we get storms that you can see from a distance. And as a kid, I remember racing the storm down the street. What comes back to me is the smell of the Earth, the red clay and the hot pavement and the joy of just running with my friends. That is probably not my first memory, but it's a favorite one to return to, and just being with water and earth and friend. Think of your first or earliest or happiest memory being in the natural world. What smells? Is there a breeze on your face? Is there water? How about the ground? Are you barefoot? Are you in grass, sand? What are you touching with your fingers? You're carrying that place with you all the time. I invite you to visit it whenever you like.



**Ben Yosua-Davis 07:10**

Thank you, Beverly. Our producer, Peterson Toscano also produces Citizens Climate Radio. For one of his episodes, he chatted about the Bible in a conversation that he had with Kyle Meyaard-Schaap, the Executive Director of the Association for a More Just Society US. Kyle brings a rich background in religious studies to the table, holding a bachelor's from Calvin University and a master's of divinity from Western Theological Seminary. He's also an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

D

**Derrick Weston 07:53**

Over the past 10 years, Kyle has dedicated himself to educating and mobilizing the Christian community worldwide. His focus to confront the climate crisis as a crucial part of their faith and commitment to loving their neighbors.



**Ben Yosua-Davis 08:08**

Kyle's work has gained national and international recognition with features in PBS, NPR, CNN, NBC news, the New York Times, Reuters and US News and World Report. His book *Following Jesus in a Warming World*, published by InterVarsity press in February 2023 offers a Christian perspective on climate action.

D

**Derrick Weston 08:30**

Outside of his professional life, Kyle enjoys family time with his wife, Alison, and their two sons.

Outside of his professional life, Kyle enjoys family time with his wife, Alison, and their two sons in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



**Ben Yosua-Davis 08:38**

Joining Kyle for the conversation on climate change in the Bible is Climate Changed producer, Peterson Toscano. In addition to his role with this show, he is the host and producer of other podcasts, including Citizens Climate Radio, Quakers Today, and Bubble and Squeak.



**P Peterson Toscano 09:01**

When you meet somebody and they ask, so what do you do? What's your go to answer these days?



**K Kyle Meyaard-Schaap 09:07**

Yeah, I wear a few different hats, but I think my favorite go to answer is a pastor who works to help the church recover its calling and responsibility to care for God's creation. I have a almost five year old. He'll be five in a couple weeks, and a 14 month old. They keep us very, very busy. I say us, because another important part of my identity is I'm a husband. Been married to my wife for almost 10 years.



**P Peterson Toscano 09:39**

There are some identities that some Christians think might disqualify someone from being an actual Christian. For instance, for some you know, being a liberal you can't be a liberal and a Christian, or others say you can't be an ultra conservative and be a Christian. And a lot of evangelicals might think you can't really be a Christian if you're an environmentalist or if you're concerned about climate change. So my question is, Are you a real Christian? And why? How is that possible?



**K Kyle Meyaard-Schaap 10:14**

It's a great question. Yeah. So one of the things that I like to do sometimes, if I'm giving a presentation at a church or to a group of Christians, is, I like to ask them, What do you call somebody who cares about the environment? It's an opportunity for people to kind of name what you just named. So you get answers like, tree hugger, environmentalist, liberal, and it's great we kind of, we're kind of laughing, we're rolling. And then I say, great answers. What about disciple? Let people name those perceptions that a lot of them have, and then trouble it and say, okay, great, those are all fine answers. But can we call somebody who cares about the environment or God's creation. Can we call them a disciple? Is it possible that a fundamental part of what it means to follow Jesus is actually to care about the works of His hands and to recognize the ways in which environmental harm and degradation and pollution and climate change, all of the things that are degrading God's good creation not only harm non human creatures, but also humans. And is it possible that this call that Jesus puts on all of us to love

God and to love our neighbor is inseparable from how we treat the rest of creation? Because we're going to love God who created all things and stepped back and called it good over and over again, and who still loves and cares for it and provides for it, we have to care for the works of His hands and do what He said in Genesis, which is to serve and protect it. And if we're going to love our neighbors, we have to grapple with the realities that are harming our neighbors around the world and down the street, things like stronger storms, more prolonged, protracted droughts, wildfires, pollution from industry and setting fossil fuels on fire. All of these things in my mind, are inextricably wrapped up with what it means to try to follow Jesus well and put into practice what he said was most important, which was to love God and to love our neighbor. I certainly don't do this work because I consider myself a quote, unquote environmentalist. And I don't do this work because I'm a Democrat or a Republican. I do this because I'm a Christian. Jesus is the reason that I do the climate work that I do. I'm just trying to get better at following him, because that's the most important thing in my life. Likewise, my faith has been enriched and deepened immensely by my climate work and my climate action. The task of evangelizing the good news of Jesus and the good news of the kingdom of God has to be enlivened. It has to be concrete. It has to be active. It has to be a verb. And it can't just be praying with somebody, the sinners prayer and then saying, congratulations, you said the magic words, now you're in the kingdom of heaven. It has to be deeper than that. It has to connect to people's real lives, because that's what Jesus did. He was impatient for the kingdom of God to break in, right here, right now.

P

Peterson Toscano 13:31

I love that impatient for the kingdom of God. That's awesome. When I first became a Christian, at a little Bible Church in a little town in Pennsylvania, everyone kept asking everyone, what's your life verse? And at first I had no idea what they were talking about. Like, what? What do you mean? Like your life verse, like one to guide you through your life. And mine has changed through the years, depending on where I'm at, but I definitely have a climate life verse. What I love about the Bible is it can apply to lots of things, and that can be done inappropriately, and it can be done very movingly. And so for me, my climate life verse these days is Romans, 12, one and two. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service, and be not fashioned according to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." The part that really jumps out at me is to not be fashioned according to this world. I find that life has gotten more and more detached from nature, and we noticed this particularly during the pandemic, when we were able to reconnect with nature in so many ways. You know, in the world, it's like we're being told that, you know, we're apart from nature, that we can go into nature. And really, what I'm hearing as I'm sitting and listening is that I am nature and I have to be transformed by renewing my mind to see that I'm not outside of this ecosystem. I'm reliant upon it.

K

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap 15:15

Yeah. Oh, I love that. Peterson, thanks for sharing that

P

Peterson Toscano 15:20

Any life verses or climate life verses you'd like to share?

K

**Kyle Meyaard-Schaap 15:25**

One of my favorite climate verses is from Colossians one, 15 through 20. "He is the image of the invisible God Christ, the firstborn of all creation. For in Him, all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers, all things have been created through him. And for him, he himself is before all things. And in Him, all things hold together. He is the head of the body the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in Him, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And through him, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." I love so many things about that passage, but one of the things I love most is this repetition of all things, all things, all things, all thing. It's over and over in that passage, and I think it's, it's Paul trying to get our attention and trying to undo that anthropocentrism that I just talked about. It's not that, you know, Christ created humans only, and in him, humans hold together. No all thing that Christ is concerned about, all things, that everything was made for him, not for us and for our personal use, and this idea that he's reconciling all things to himself, not just human hearts and human souls, which tends to so often be the focus of our gospel, but everything, somehow, all of heaven and earth is bound up in God's saving sights. The whole ball of wax when it comes to God's rescue mission was about turning the invisible visible, right? You think about the incarnation. It was taking the invisible God and making him visible like God. God is all about making himself visible to his people, whether it's through Christ in the Incarnation, whether it's in the bread and the wine of communion, whether it's in the waters of baptism or the the pillar of cloud and fire that led the Israelites out of bondage into freedom, whether it's the temple or the tabernacle. Like God, God is an invisible God, but he's all about making himself visible and coming close to his people.

P

**Peterson Toscano 17:59**

You echoed so much of what Reverend Tony Campolo said when I interviewed him for an episode here on Citizens Climate Radio. He wrote a book back in 1992: *How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshiping Nature: A Christian Call to Save Creation*. And boy, he's so fiery about this and so fiery about our responsibility as believers, that it is a call. You wrote the book *Following Jesus in a Warming World: A Christian Call to Climate Action*.

K

**Kyle Meyaard-Schaap 18:35**

It's part memoir, it's part theological Biblical Studies, and it's part field guide. I especially wrote it for millennials and Gen Z Christians, because a lot of it was born out of conversations that I had when I was at Young Evangelicals for Climate Action, traveling the country talking to young Christians. I especially wanted that audience to feel seen, to feel validated, to be told, No, you're not crazy. Yes, this is central to our call to follow Jesus and to give them tools for how to do it. I wanted to read from my Epilogue. This was me trying to offer a hopeful vision to close the book, about what I think it might look like for the church to wake up again to its calling to care for God's creation, to lead the way. I structured the Epilogue as a letter to my imagined grandchild on her high school graduation day. So it's dated May 22 2066 On the day you were born, I spent a lot of time ruminating on your future, an old habit, I guess I picked it up around

the time your dad was born. Back then the fierce storms and punishing heat that have been taken for granted during your life were just beginning to break through into our reality. For much of my life, to that point, they had been mostly abstractions, dangerous offspring of our inaction that would one day grow up and move out of the house to wreak their havoc on the earth, but innocuous enough, as they merely gestated in the womb of our collective ignorance and denial. By the time your dad was born in 2018 though, the consequences of our procrastination were becoming harder and harder to ignore. There were some our age, even then, who were choosing not to have kids, deciding that the future was too dangerous, too unpredictable, to be able to morally justify yoking a human life to it for decades to come without that human's prior and informed consent, a sentiment your grandma and I could certainly understand, though never quite embrace. I guess our hope in God's good plans for the world has always been more stubborn than our fear of our ability to derail them. That doesn't mean the fear hasn't been there, ever mingling with the hope. On the day your father came into the world, that alloy of hope and fear was forged and lodged deep in my heart for good. It's a paradox to loving other mortals, that even as your heart remains fixed in your chest, its twin beats inside someone else's, you watch your own heart's mirror as it jumps and laughs and aches. It's a phenomenon that repeats itself whenever we make the dangerous, awesome choice to love. All these years, as my own fearful heart has pumped dutifully inside my aging chest, it has replicated itself as first your dad and his siblings were born, and then again, when you and your siblings and cousins all entered this precious, precarious place. All of my dear ones.

P

Peterson Toscano 21:56

You do something so important in writing this letter, and I it's something that I think is very helpful for all of us to do who do climate work, and that is to imagine a future where there's success. Yeah, it would be so easy to write a letter of apology for all the ways we didn't do it, but it takes a lot of creativity and determination to imagine a world where solutions change things. And I believe this is something unique that believers bring to the climate movement. We believe in forgiveness and redemption, new life and miracles. We believe that hearts and minds can change, and we have experience of it, and the gift that we can bring this movement is hope, and hope grounded in reality, of course, but hope that that sustains us because we do believe in impossible things.

K

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap 23:01

I mean that there is in there a note of apology, because we have failed, right? We should apologize. Yeah, we have things. We have things to apologize for, but we don't have to live there. The biblical structure of hope is instructive there, and I like what you said about hope grounded in reality. I've studied scripture in seminary, and that's kind of my training and my background, and especially in the Psalms. When you look at the formula of hope for the ancient Hebrew people, it was always lament moving into hope, but you could never get to hope without lament. You had to go through lament first. We can't stay in lament, but there has to be a role for lament with a movement toward hope, if hope is going to be authentic and biblical and meaningful.

P

Peterson Toscano 23:51

Anything else you want to add about your book about climate change and faith?

K

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap 23:58

I think we covered it. Yeah, this is a great, great conversation.

P

Peterson Toscano 24:04

Thank you. Feel like I was at church, like a good church, a good church.



Ben Yosua-Davis 24:27

Thank you, Peterson, so much for sharing the conversation you had with Kyle with us. Derrick, as I was listening to Kyle and Peterson talk, they both shared a life verse that really grounds their environmental work. I'm curious, do you have a life verse that grounds and frames the work that you do?

D

Derrick Weston 24:46

I do, and it's actually kind of a cliché I'm finding in some of the Christian climate circles, but it's Romans 8:18-25 Paul says "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. For the creation was subjected to futility not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, and hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit grown inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope, we were saved. Now, hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what is seen, but if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." And I actually encountered this passage when I was in seminary. I was taking a course from a Franciscan school on social justice, and we were doing a segment on environmentalism, and this text showed up in the lectionary for Easter. And I connect some dots started connecting in my head. And the question that formed from from those dots connecting was, what if the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was for more than humanity and for all of creation and creation, which is groaning? And so that that passage has grounded a lot of my environmental work. How about, how about, for you Ben, do you have, do you have a life verse?



Ben Yosua-Davis 26:27

I was thinking a little bit about this, and I have one that kind of comes in the side door, and there's actually a story I have that's connected with it. It's Acts 17, verse 28 where Paul says, "For in Him, we live and move and have our being." I was thinking about this because there's a conversation I had with my son and my daughter at the dinner table three or four months ago where they've begun to ask questions about God, which is so much fun. So my son says to me,



so is God in the universe? And I said, Well, yes, and the universe is in God. And he's like, what the universe is in God? And I quoted this passage to him. I'm like, Yeah, you know, in Him, we live and move and have our being so God is in you and you're in God. So he goes, like, so God is in everything, and everything is in God. I said, yep. So he's like, so wait, this chair is in God, and this chair, so we continue in this line of conversation for like 10 minutes with both my children naming objects in the room and asking with greater and greater delight, like, the piano is in God and God is in the piano. And then Michael has this moment my son, he goes, Wait, so God is in God, who's in God, who's in God? That's what we call the Trinity. And he like, goes, Ah, so excitedly. And after dinner, he was like, that was the best conversation ever. The reason why I think about this is there was a point in my life when I thought about environmental justice as another good cause that I was supposed to do something about as a good person. And what I've come to realize is that caring for my other creaturely kin is about caring for the image of God that is present in everything, that it is fundamentally spiritual work, and that it's fundamentally relational work. The environment is not an other that I am doing good things for, but they are my kin who I need to care for and love, and I have found that to profoundly reframe the way I think about what the climate crisis is and what it means for me as a Christian to care for creation the way I care for my family.

D

Derrick Weston 28:44

I love that. I also kind of love the Russian doll image of God.



Ben Yosua-Davis 28:51

Yep, oh, it was a, it was a, it was kind of an amazing it was kind of an amazing moment when you see how Christian theology can blow the mind of an eight year old. It was really pretty incredible. I noticed too, how when both of us are talking, we talk about this sense of integration when it comes to environmental justice. This was one thing I actually also really loved about what Kyle was talking about. So he's saying, you know, I'm, I don't care about the environment because I'm a tree hugger. No, no shade on all of us who are tree huggers, by the way, but because I'm a Christian, so like Jesus is the reason I do this. I'm curious for you, Derrick, both for yourself, and I know you work with lots of people as I do, who are trying to connect the dots between the practice of their faith and what it means to care for creation. Like, what does it mean to care for creation in light of a commitment to follow Jesus as part of our faith identity? Rather than as I was saying, I used to feel like this is another good thing that good people should do something about.

D

Derrick Weston 30:00

Yeah, I think this is a huge question, and for me, I go back to Genesis to answer it, and our and the first two creation stories, and the role that humanity plays in those stories. The first creation story, God creates all the things and they're good, the land and the stars and Sun and Moon, and it's good, and the water and it's good, and the insects, and they're good, and the fish are good, and birds are good, and the land animals are good. And then God creates humanity. And the way that we often hear this is God created humanity, and humanity was very good. And that's not what the scripture says. The scripture says that God looked at all that God had created, and it's called that very good. And to me, it's us living in right relationship

with the rest of the creation, that's the very good part. And then I jump over to the second creation story, and God creates Adam from the adamah. So it's the soil, and gives Adam this task. And the task we often interpret a lot of English translations, is to keep and till the earth. But a lot of Hebrew scholars will tell us that that's not the those aren't the best translations of those verbs. The best translations are protect and serve, that the original human's original task was to protect and serve creation. And if we go back to that task and that a lot of the imagery of what it looks like when we are rightly restored at the at the end of time, I go to Micah 4, this idea of everyone having their own vine and fig tree, of of swords being beaten to Plowshares of lions and lambs laying together, that we're again in that harmonious relationship with creation. And I think that if we are, if we, if we imagine that as the as both the beginning and the goal, then the idea is, how do we get back to those beginning vocations that God gave to us. How do we get back to those relationships that were very good at the beginning in a culture that is so separated from nature, get back to those very good relationships. And I don't think we have to stay in the Hebrew scripture for that. When we look at Jesus on his last night with his disciples, compared his own body and blood to bread and wine, I note that he didn't say, wheat is my body and grapes are my blood. The divine image is found in these elements of creation that have been worked by human hands. And I find that incredibly captivating, and that there's the opportunity for Christ to be known in the right relationship of creation and humanity. There's so much inspiration to be found in that there's so much hope for that, and there's so much challenge to be found in that. It's very much not a side project of my faith. It's very much not an option for me as a Christian. It's very much deeply integrated to my idea of what it means to follow Christ.



Ben Yosua-Davis 33:41

As you say that, I'm just reminded a lot of Wendell Berry talking about what it means to steward land. And you know, how much land should you have, the amount of land that you can keep and care for well.



Derrick Weston 33:53

Yes, in this interview, I think one of the ideas that comes across is the idea that scripture, all of Scripture, is sort of an ecological text, and not just few verses. And Ben, I'm interested in hearing your thoughts on what does it mean for scripture, all of Scripture to be an ecological text, and not just those verses that we've picked out as as the kind of life verses for ourselves.



Ben Yosua-Davis 34:21

I know Derrick, this is an area where you've had a lot of a lot of practice with your podcast and the like. But you know, the thing that unlocked this for me was realizing the ways in which those who wrote scripture, for whom these were first their sacred texts, lived with a completely different worldview than my modern mechanistic worldview. And then when you look at it through that lens, you go, Oh, my goodness, this is all like about the relationship between people and God and the land. It's written through everything. It's things like, I remember growing up like the story of Balaam and his donkey, which I think is one of the most hilarious texts in the Scripture. If you take it seriously, then you've got to believe that donkeys can communicate, and they can see angels when humans can't, and they are actually able to obey

God, even when their human masters are really mean to them. And when I went and went, Oh, what if I was to take all these, these texts about nature, and assume that they actually met what they said, rather than all being poetic flourishes, like, what if the trees of the field actually were clapping their hands? That wasn't just a nice poetic flourish, you know? What if, when Jesus talking about the rocks crying out, like the rocks actually did cry out, rather than that just being a fun little, a little bit of hyperbole that Jesus put on because he's a good speaker, but we all know rocks don't actually do that. Taking the Bible seriously on its own terms, it's, it's almost unavoidable.

D

Derrick Weston 35:50

Yeah, I totally agree. And one of the people who's been really helpful for me in thinking about this is Dr. Ellen Davis and her book, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*. Yeah, I love her work. For anyone who's interested in exploring this topic more deeply, I would definitely recommend that book. It's fun that in my work now, I've gotten to meet a lot of the people whose work has meant a lot to me, and I've gotten to spend a little bit of time with Dr. Davis recently. On one of our retreats that we were running in in North Carolina, she made this statement, which seems so obvious and yet was so profound, which is that our culture is the furthest away from the culture of the Bible, and that's not just in terms of chronology, but that's also in terms of our technology, our mindsets, and our disconnection and understanding of the natural world. I'm totally with you, Ben like once you start to see it, the prophetic texts are written about abuses of agriculture and people occupying land that is not theirs. So often in in the scriptural text, the health of people and the health of land are deeply interwoven. When you just see that there is nature everywhere that Jesus was preaching primarily in agrarian parables, and once you see it, you can't unsee it. It's one of those things that just becomes so a part, so deeply a part of of your reading of Scripture. And for me, it then kind of forces my hand, as a person living in 21st century America, to go, how can I understand Scripture better? If I'm staying indoors and sitting at screens and keeping myself detached from nature. Again, Wendell Berry is probably right here that we should be reading scripture outdoors.



Ben Yosua-Davis 37:59

We got chickens this last year, and all of a sudden I understand exactly what the phrase is, pecking order, or don't count your eggs before they hatch mean. Where it's like, I hadn't thought about pecking order is literally the way that chickens organize themselves. You know, we got we blended two flocks together, and there was a lot of pecking and they're now kind of figuring out who belongs where. And I actually find it's very similar with scripture. I was reading the psalm talking about the fields being jubilant and the trees of the forest clapping their hands because God was coming with judgment to judge the earth. I had this moment when I went, Oh, what if the trees in the fields have their own agendas and their own ways that they're crying out for justice, and I'm on the wrong end of all of that. In fact, I have a feeling we are farther away from the culture of the scriptures than maybe any other generation before. I know, certainly, as a white male Westerner, I certainly feel like I'm in that position. And there may be a sense that we occasionally, I have this unsettling feeling like I might be the bad guy in the stories, wondering, how does that play out in my understanding of what's happening in the world today, that like God's out advocating on behalf of the trees? Yeah, it's both energizing, but it's also highly unsettling as well.

D

Derrick Weston 39:14

Yeah, that's one of the things. When you read scripture from the from the perspective of creation. We are not the good guys. We are not the heroes. And it forces us to ask questions like, How do I get back on creation side? How do I get back on the side that creation you know, where, where I can, you know, say, Yeah, I was, I was with the birds the whole time. The rest of you guys, I, I was listening to the birds. But it's, but it's also, you know, one of the other pieces of, of, of this, and this has come out in our work on the Green Lectionary is that we recognize that, you know, creation is everywhere, and creation often gets caught up in the sins of humanity. I'm struck by it, and I just can't stop thinking about it right now, the text of the crossing of the Red Sea, and as as the people and and the people of Israel make it through the Red Sea, the waters of the Red Sea come down. And even in their celebration, they the people of Israel, mentioned that the horse and the rider fell into the sea. And like, what does it mean that the horse was co opted by the Empire, and the horse had to suffer the consequences of what the people of Egypt did. And like I and how often have we brought creation into the mechanations of empire? And like when we we talked about that text on on the on the podcast, and I have been haunted by that thought ever since. It continues to really unsettle me.



Ben Yosua-Davis 41:11

I hear a lot of conversations about the common good, but I wonder what happens to our definition of the common good when we think this is not just about other humans, but this is actually about our other than human kin as well. What would it look like for us to think about common good and include the trees and the and the cows and the chickens packed in, packed in cages and and the rivers that are polluted, noting that oftentimes, when we seek the common good of one, we end up seeking the common good of all because all abuse is inevitably tied together.

D

Derrick Weston 41:47

Yeah, yeah. It really forces us to change our perspective from the sort of binary zero sum. One group wins, one group loses to a more mutual understanding of ourselves in community as humans, but also ourselves in community that includes our non human brothers and sisters. And can that what it's what it's going to take, unfortunately, is what I think it's taking now is that we're starting to see the real human effects of what it means for creation to be out of balance. We're starting to see the real human effects of extreme heat in the summers. We're starting to see the real human effects of of drought and of famine, of extreme storms. I have also been working with with churches around these issues around climate change. And you know, so often churches feel so ill equipped to have these conversations. And they want the science. You know, they want, they want to have all of the data and the facts. And I and science absolutely is important to this conversation, but I always try to encourage people don't, don't forget the resources of the church. Don't forget the resources of our theology, of our scripture, of our tradition, and how much that can speak into the ecological crisis, and the fact that it can speak into the ecological crisis in a way that no other institution in our culture can. Yeah, let's not forget that the Bible, the Bible. You know, as much as we read the Bible, the Bible reads us, and when we open our eyes to see scripture a different way that you know it's going to bring those things that we are concerned about to the surface, because it's all there.



Ben Yosua-Davis 43:50

And serves as a mirror. I've noticed that oftentimes, what sometimes my colleagues or my seminary professors would name as problematic as the Bible would be the things that perhaps they would most honestly name as problematic about themselves and their culture, and the Bible is such a ruthlessly honest mirror about our human condition.



Derrick Weston 44:14

One of the things that I found really compelling in this interview was the way was was Kyle reading the Epilogue of his book. And in it he's, he's having this future conversation, you know. And I was so I was so one, I was jarred by him having like, this very precise date in the 2060s of when his grandchild would be finishing, would be graduating from high school. But it also made me think a little bit about like, what are the conversations that we want to be able to have with our future loved ones, both our kids and our grandkids, about the work that we do, about the work that we're doing?



Ben Yosua-Davis 44:59

We had one of these conversations with my son over the dinner table, which is clearly the place you have, clearly, that's conversation. Clearly, yeah, and he's asked a lot of questions, you know, asking questions about my work around climate and, you know, we've had to talk about some really hard things with them. And he said, so, like, if all this happens, what will we do? And what I said is, you know, we'll do what we've always done, we'll love each other, we'll show hospitality to our neighbors, we'll pray, we'll love the land. Nothing that happens has to change who we are and what we do. And for me, that's the through line is, how am I acting now in a way that actually it doesn't matter Win, lose or draw in the future, what happens? I can feel like this is a place I can stand on in integrity, and for me, that's what hope is about. Hope is not about outcome. It's about meaning in Scripture. Hope is rooted in suffering. That's the then Romans talks about this. The start of hope is not optimism. The start of hope is is suffering, and how we respond to suffering. And for me, I do not need to see a good outcome to all my work to believe that it's meaningful. And so when I think about writing from the future, I don't want to prognosticate and pretend that my hopeful vision of the future has to mean that everything's worked out. My hopeful vision of the future is that I've lived a life of deep meaning and integrity, regardless how it's worked out.



Derrick Weston 46:29

I love what you said about hope, man, I love what you said about hope, that it's not so much about outcomes, and we really got to get our visions of hope away from the idea of outcomes and that hope, in and of itself, is a value and a virtue, whether or not it produces the better world that we long to see in our lifetime. Hope to hold on to, hope to nurture hope, to to resist cynicism, to resist apathy, what that does in ourselves, what that does in our own spirits, I think, is invaluable and so to do that work of creating, upholding hope, I think is absolutely crucial for us.



Ben Yosua-Davis 47:26

I love that, and that sounds like a wonderful next step, the embodiment of hope, entering into refugia. One of the things that we like to do is offer you, our listeners, a chance to think about what your next steps might be, in response to the conversation that we've had today. So I'm going to offer one to start with, and for those of you who are interested in doing as Derrick mentioned, Wendell Berry suggested reading scripture outdoors, I would encourage you to engage in the practice called Lectio Terra. This is a way to be in conversation with God, Scripture and land. It's a process that finds its inspiration and the ancient practice of Lectio Divina, and takes 20 to 40 minutes spent outdoors in a place that you choose. You can find a guide at The BTS Center's Leadership Commons for that, or just click on the link in the show notes and have a chance to have a conversation with God in Scripture and land together. Derrick, I'm curious, are there any next steps that you might want to offer our listeners as a result of this conversation.



Derrick Weston 48:22

Yeah, as I've said, food was kind of my on ramp to some of these larger conversations about climate. And I think that food can be a great on ramp for a lot of people, because it's we all have to eat, and therefore it means that we all can do something. And the thing that I would encourage people to do is to shorten the distance that your food travels. And there's lots of ways to do that. You know, I kind of lean back on this mantra of know your food and grow your food. Meet a farmer. Meet a farmer. Go if you're the odds are you're not that far from a farm. We we sometimes put them in sort of invisible places. But you're, you're likely not that far from a farm, even in cities, and especially in cities nowadays, that you can meet a lot of great urban farmers who are doing amazing work. Meet a farmer and support them. Support them with your dollars. Yes, you may pay a little bit more, you may end up paying less in the long run when you think about the cost towards your health. And I would also say one of the profound ways that you can shorten the distance between your you and your food is to grow things. Grow what you can if that's just herbs in a window sill, do that. If that's a tomato plant, go for it, and, and, and for the love of God, Please resist the urge to say, I don't have a green thumb. There is no such thing as a green thumb. I have had this conversation with so many people. Do you know how many plants I kill? There's no such thing as a green thumb. You plant a lot of seeds, and you nurture the ones that come out of the ground and you continue to learn and grow. Humans have been growing things for 10,000 years. You can find a thing that you can grow. So I would, I would just say, you know, as a really practical step, think of the ways that you can shorten the distance that your food has to travel.



Ben Yosua-Davis 50:27

I love that. Thank you so much, Derrick for reminding me that my thumb is, in fact, green, along with everyone else's. And with some more suggestions for us, is Anna Barron, one of the producers of this season of Climate Changed.



Anna Barron 50:43

Thanks, Ben, that was a great reflection that you and Derrick made on the conversation between Kyle and Peterson. I super enjoyed listening to that. I'm here with a few more

invitations for you our listeners. The first is to organize a climate Sunday for your church. This can be a variety of different things. Usually it means that the service is climate centered. The Sermon addresses something about climate change, and there's an opportunity for members of the church to commit to climate action. I will link a website in the show notes with examples of climate Sundays so that you can get started on planning your own. Next I would love to invite you to discuss a Bible story that you find relevant to climate change with a friend. Ask yourselves what feelings come up and how can that story help ground you both in climate action. If you want to take this one a step further, I suggest posting on social media about your conversation and inviting friends to do the same. Lastly, I want to invite you to commit to doing one seasonal climate related program this year. For example, there's the Lent carbon fast. This was started by an organization in the UK called Climate Stewards. If you sign up for their program during Lent, they will email you some goals and ways you can reduce your carbon footprint. I suggest getting three friends to join you, so that there's some accountability. If you do any of these next steps, please feel free to share them with us or on your social media so that your friends can engage as well. As always, there's no pressure to do all or any of these next steps. We just want these to be a resource for you as you figure out ways to engage in this huge and overwhelming topic. Back to you. Ben.



Ben Yosua-Davis 52:28

Thank you, Anna. Thank you so much for joining us today for this episode of Climate Changed podcast. And thank you, Derrick, for joining me. Derrick, what are the best ways for people to follow you and learn more about your work?



Derrick Weston 52:47

I'm on all of the socials. I am Derrick L Weston, D, E, R, R, I, C, K, L, W, E, S, T O, N. You can find me any of those, those places you can follow Creation Justice Ministries, [creationjustice.org](http://creationjustice.org), you can also find us @creationjustice on most of the socials, and you can subscribe to the Green Lectionary podcast. Anywhere you get your podcast, you can find us.



Ben Yosua-Davis 53:11

And I also understand that you give talks and presentations.



Derrick Weston 53:15

I love to talk to churches about connecting the dots between our work around creation justice and theology. So happy to do that anytime. Love to talk about food justice and the ways that we I believe that food is our most intimate connection to creation. So love to talk about those sorts of concepts. And I had a book that came out recently called *The Just Kitchen: Invitations to Sustainability, Cooking, Connection, and Celebration*. For you listening, Ben told me that you can get involved in discussion we had today. What's your life verse that calls you to care for creation? Leave a voice message to share it. Area code, 207-200-6986, and we may feature it on a future episode or share your answer in an email. Email address is [podcast@theBTScenter.org](mailto:podcast@theBTScenter.org)



Ben Yosua-Davis 54:05

Yes, Derrick, we love hearing from listeners and sharing what they have to say on this show and in our social media. We also welcome any suggestions you have for this show. That number again is 207-200-6986, you can also email us. The email address is [podcast@theBTSCenter.org](mailto:podcast@theBTSCenter.org). That's [podcast@theBTSCenter.org](mailto:podcast@theBTSCenter.org). We have all of these contact details, information about our guests, full transcript and a discussion guide for you in our show notes. Visit [climatechangedpodcast.org](http://climatechangedpodcast.org), that's [climatechangedpodcast.org](http://climatechangedpodcast.org). Coming up next month, my co host Nicole Diroff and I will ask the question, What on Earth can a chaplain do to address climate change? Nicole will speak with author Terry LePage. She wrote *Eye of the Storm: Facing Climate and Social Chaos with Calm and Courage*.



Derrick Weston 54:59

The Climate Changed podcast is produced by Peterson Toscano and Anna Barron. Our podcast is a project of The BTS Center in beautiful Portland, Maine.



Ben Yosua-Davis 55:10

Learn about the many resources we share in our regular online programs by visiting [theBTSCenter.org](http://theBTSCenter.org). That's [theBTSCenter.org](http://theBTSCenter.org).



Derrick Weston 55:22

Friends Go in peace, and may the God who walks on wounded feet walk with you on the path. May the God who serves with wounded hands, open your hands to serve. May the God who loves with wounded heart, open your heart to love. May you see the face of Christ in all that you meet. May all that you meet see the face of Christ in you.



Ben Yosua-Davis 55:39

Amen.