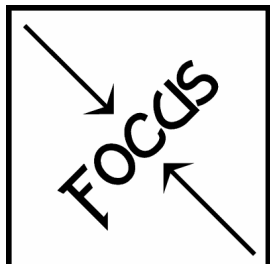


The Greatest Story Ever Told

Sermon Study Guide for 10/14

Then Came Darkness— Environmental Chaos



Whether we like it or not—we live in a war zone. The casualties are a little different than we experience in most conflicts. Instead of dead and injured soldiers resulting from war, in this conflict the cause of the casualties are hurricanes, diseases, old age, earthquakes, and famines (to name a few). All around us we have the evidence that nature is at war; and often we get caught in the crossfire. In some ways it looks normal since it is all we've ever known; but Scripture is clear that the upheaval and tension that today exists in nature was not always there. Like death (both spiritual and bodily), natural chaos had its start in a rebellion in the Garden of Eden many years ago. We

may look at it as “natural”, but nature itself is waiting patiently for the day God will once again breathe peace into the natural order.

Optional Readings (for those who want to dig a little deeper)

Revelation 21:1-5

A world in which all is made “new”



TIME IN THE WORD

READ & OBSERVE

Write down anything you find interesting or unique about **Isaiah 11:6-9**

ANSWER

Ponder at the start. If you were given the power to rearrange nature to be whatever you wanted it to be; what would you change, and what would the end result look like?

Genesis 3:14-19

After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God had some things to say to them about how life will change now that sin has entered the world. We often call this the “curse”, but as you look at this passage what exactly gets “cursed”?

Describe what the “ground” was like before the sin, and what it will be like now.

Isaiah 11:6-9

As you look at the picture painted in this passage of a time of peace brought by the “Branch from Jesse” (ie. Jesus), what stands out to you?

The question that is hardest to answer is this—these pictures the prophets paint of a day to come in which nature is at peace with itself (the lion will eat straw like the ox)—are these pictures of a day that has never existed, or are these pictures of what the original creation looked like?

Look closely at Acts 3:21. Peter says that Jesus must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to “restore everything” (or as some translations put it “the renewal of all things”). What is it that Jesus is coming to restore? Is it the “very good” world of Genesis 1?

Romans 8:18-21

Let nature speak. What is it that the creation is eager to see happen? Why is creation so eager to see this “revelation”?

How did nature end up in the mess that it is in? But nature has a hope—what is it and when will this hope be realized?



TIME FOR THE HEART

Does it help to know “why” when life gets tough? When we end up with a disease; when a flood wrecks our house; when aging starts to take its toll; or when a friend dies—does it help to know why? The great truth of this study is that not only was our life with God affected by sin, the very world we live in was wrecked by it too. We live in a war zone, and sometimes we will suffer simply because of the wreckage that sin brought to the natural order. This is the price we pay for being sinners. Maybe the next time you face something like this in life, the first response should be to pray for the day when all these affects of sin are taken away. That is what the “blessed hope” of the Christian life is all about.



Time for my world

As we continue to pray for those that God has placed on our hearts, think especially about those who suffer. Often God will use suffering in a person’s life to get them to think about eternal things. If you know someone who is going through a particularly tough time, maybe this is the week to reach out a hand in love towards them.