



The Parish of St. Mary York

Faith in Action

Building hope for tomorrow in the face of climate change

Not My Circus? *Abad* and *Shamar*

Guest Author: Kevin Stockall

*The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to **till** it and **tend** it.
Genesis 2:15: JPS TANAKH translation*

Thus far we've looked at two of the four commands that God gave to humanity at the time of Creation: to have dominion (*Radah*) and to subdue (*Kabash*) the created order. And in both cases, we noted that the authority given by God to humanity requires of us a respect for the goodness of God's image in creation, and a responsibility to use our gifts in a way that allows creation to flourish according to its own nature. This time we're going to look at the final two commands: to till (*Abad*) and to tend (*Shamar*).

Abad has a huge range of meaning, which include agricultural images of cultivating, plowing, tilling, and dressing. In other situations, it speaks of labouring and serving. But in Moses' encounter with God in the Burning Bush, God promises that when Moses has led the People of Israel from slavery to freedom, they one day will 'worship' God on the same mountain where God is speaking to him; and the root of the word worship is *Abad*.

In the Scriptures, *Shamar* likewise has a wide range of meaning. It speaks of watching, waiting, and observing; keeping, caring, and preserving; as well as guarding and protecting.

So, on the most obvious level *Abad* and *Shamar* speak of the basic tasks needed to provide food for humanity: tilling and tending the soil; planting, seeding, weeding and harvesting. But together they require the willingness not just to take, but to give and preserve; balancing the impact of using God's gifts with the need to guard them for the future. And when we recall that using these gifts in such a way carries with it the image of worshipping and serving the God who has given the gifts, we are reminded of the great responsibility we've been given: to use creation carefully and wisely is not just prudent, it's not just good asset management, it's an essential part of the worship we offer every day to the God in whose image we've been made.

