



The Parish of St. Mary York

# Faith in Action

*Building hope for tomorrow in the face of climate change*

## Not My Circus? “Radah”

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Doesn't the Bible tell us that God gave us animals and plants to dominate however we want? For example, in Genesis 1: 27 to 28 we read...

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

In this account of creation God uses the Hebrew word '**radah**' which translates to 'have dominion over' or 'rule'. We think we understand this familiar word as meaning '**to dominate over**,' like a mediaeval ruler dominating over his subjects, using them for his own ends, whether pleasure, prestige, or war. But a closer look at **radah** shows us that this is not the type of 'dominion' God wants us to have over creation.

In Leviticus 25, for example, harsh **radah** is forbidden. And in Ezekiel 34:4 God condemns the '**radah**' of the uncaring shepherds:

*Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have **ruled [radah]** them.*

God wants our **radah** of creation to not be harsh, cruel or selfish, but to reflect God's act of creation, and our role as image bearers of that creating God. Our **radah** needs to flow from the goodness of God's act. If God is love, then we must show love towards creation.

We are called to heal those parts of creation that are sick, bind up those parts that are injured, bring back those parts that are straying, and search for those parts that have become lost.

We are not to be destroyers nor consumers of creation, but **shepherds** of creation, just like the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. **Radah** is the kind of authority that helps its subjects to develop and grow as God intended, rather than exploiting them.

Understanding **radah** is especially important in this age where humanity is affecting the entire planet. The Earth is warning us, in its Creator's Name, that we have been doing wrong. Much of our **radah** has been dysfunctional. We have destroyed (e.g. rainforests) for our own selfish ends, and consumed (e.g. oil, fish, cattle, minerals) for our own greed and power.

Environmental destruction and climate change are not merely biological, political or economic matters, but a matter of our obedience to the God who has made us in his image and created the world with love.

