



The Parish of St. Mary York

Faith in Action

Building hope for tomorrow in the face of climate change

Not My Circus?

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One of the questions that we sometimes encounter when we think about how the Church should respond to the climate crisis is based in our understanding of what our God-given relationship to creation really is.

Is it true that humanity was given 'dominion' or 'domination' over the creation, as we read in Genesis 1:26 & 28? And were we not instructed to 'subdue' the earth in the same passage?

And if we understand those words as they have been long understood, does that not give us the power, as God's agents, to use all of creation as we choose to use it, even if our use of that creation damages and impairs it? Is that what dominion and subdue mean?

And if that is true, how can environmental concerns be the Church's concern if all we're doing is exercising the power that God gave us in the beginning?

These are all very important questions; and because some in the Church have argued that 'dominion' gives us absolute power to use the natural world as we wish, with no limits or boundaries, it's easy to imagine that all these discussions and concerns about climate change have no place in the Church's witness; that it's "*not our circus; not our monkeys,*" as some like to say, or that it's not our problem!

But is that true?

To answer that last question we have to look more deeply at the four commands that God gives to humanity in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis; four actions that we need to understand better if we're to know what our God given responsibilities really are.

Those four actions are these:

- ***Radah*** - Dominate
- ***Kabash*** - Subdue
- ***Abad*** - Till
- ***Shamar*** - Keep

Does that help? Maybe not, but we'll begin to look at each of these four central commands in my next column.