



God's Earth – Our Home

Study 1

*Rediscovering hope –
Francis' call to action in an age of pessimism*

Columnist Lindsay Abrams sees Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* as a “green Manifesto”, cataloguing a litany of woes and demanding action.¹ Though not pulling his punches, especially in the opening two chapters, Pope Francis himself sees it as much more than that. Francis is calling for a new way of relating to our world and acting in it. He writes...

“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.... The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home... The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* (21 & 13)

Statements like these permeate *Laudato Si'*. If they are true, according to Francis, we have much to repent of and much to do. We will also need to re-vision our understanding of creation and what it means for us to develop an ‘integral-ecology’ from this.

¹ Salon, Friday, June 19, 2015

In this study we will be considering two passages of scripture and asking: what does this tell us about God and how does this matter in the face of our environmental crisis?

Task

- Re-read Francis' statements (above)
- Read: Genesis 6:9-13 & 9:8-17
- Then read: Luke 8:22-25

Comment

For the ancients water was an ambiguous substance. On the one hand water gave life, on the other it was destructive. The deluge story appears in different mythologies throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. In these, the watery deep is a threatening and capricious force beyond human control. Both the writers of the Hebrew bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament wrote against this backdrop, giving their account a distinctive spin. These stories tell us about God and our world which are important for us in deciding, "how then should we live?"

Answer questions together

- What do these passages tell us about God's relationship with 'nature'? How does God engage with the created world – including humans? .
- In the extract (over) from his introduction to *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis sees two things at work in relation to the environmental crisis:² God's *faithfulness* and our *responsibility*.
 - Allowing for its mythopoeic language, in what way can we take God's promises to Noah as trustworthy and applicable today?
 - If God will not allow the destruction of the creation – including humanity – how are we responsible?
- Francis calls for "the whole human family together" to take up the common challenge to "seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change." How do you see this might happen?

² N.B: Francis sees the science of climate change and environmental degradation as a non-negotiable fact. For the purposes of this study series we will assume the same.