

STRENGTH FOR TODAY, HOPE FOR TOMORROW

A devotional by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:19-25

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. (Ps. 24:1)

The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made. (Ps. 145:9)

When you think of compassionate actions which combat world hunger, what do you envision? Feeding a hungry child? Providing seed to grow new crops? Donating money to fund disaster response organizations? Compassionate actions encompass all these and many other deeds of mercy on behalf of hungry people.

But is compassion for people in need all that is required of us in order to eradicate hunger?

The psalmist states that the Lord, who made the world and everything in it, has compassion on all He has made. Does the Lord have compassion on soil, plants, trees, and water? Do moisture-retaining mulch and composted waste garner God's attention? If so, what implications does that have for us as we seek to feed hungry people?

God has blessed us with an incredible creation and commanded us to care for it. When we abuse creation for our own gain, the earth groans and those who are in need often pay the price. Yet when we care for the world — the world upon which God shows compassion — and help others to be faithful stewards of God's creation, the Lord is pleased.

On the one hand, we show compassion by providing emergency food aid to hungry people. On the other hand, we act mercifully when we work with people to help renew and replenish the earth so that more crops can be grown and more people fed. In obedience to our Lord's command, we care for creation as we care for each other. We support efforts throughout the world which help people to learn about conservation farming, to improve soil quality, to conserve water, to grow more food, and to advocate for just food policies and land distribution. When these two ways of showing compassion hold hands, they provide a solution that includes strength for today and hope for tomorrow.

The apostle Paul commanded us to be imitators of God and to live a love-filled life just as Christ did (Eph. 5:1-2). God has compassion on all He has made, including people and creation. As imitators of God, what concrete steps will we take to show compassion to needy people and the groaning creation so that all are fed?

PRAYER:

Dear God, when we consider suffering, hungry people and the afflicted creation, we cry out to you to deepen our compassion for all you have made. Help us to be responsible earth-keepers who understand that our actions have consequences for all your image-bearers. Give all of us — those living in need and those living in plenty — both strength for today and hope for tomorrow. In Jesus' name, amen.

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