

Meditation #10: Revealing God's Children

What does it say? –

STUDY: Romans 8:18-30

GOLDEN TEXT: Romans 8:19-21 = *The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

What does it mean?

Jesus, the Son of God, was born to empower other people to become God's children, too (John 1:12). However, this passage in Romans 8 makes it clear that if we now consider ourselves children of God—and have some evidence that we truly are his children—we will serve God and labor to free creation from its being so badly “*subjected to futility*” (that is, uselessness, partly through pollution) and its being in “*bondage to decay*” (partly through depletion of resources). Ultimately, pollution and depletion are measurable results of our spiritual alienation from the Creator—and our creation-care is evidence that our alienation from God is being overcome.

1. According to the text, Romans 8:18-30, what can we do to reveal that we are God's children? How did Jesus show that he is God's unique Child?
2. Who has subjected creation to its futility and decay? Who are the assigned stewards of creation? Who is supposed to “*protect and improve*” it? (See Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15.) Who continues to pollute and deplete the creation?
3. In what ways has creation become a victim of human mistakes? Is pollution an example of “*futility*”? Is resource depletion a kind of decay? Are there other issues implied by these key terms “*futility*” and “*decay*”?
4. How does creation feel and express its hope to be set free from its futility and decay? Why is creation in “*eager expectation*” and “*groaning as in the pains of childbirth*” (Romans 8:19 and 22)? What can we do to help “*Mother Nature*”?

What are we going to do about it?

5. How can you help bring the “*freedom of the glory of the children of God*” to those parts of God's creation that you influence? Has the Christmas message penetrated your world? If so, how? If not, why not?
6. When creation is set free from the effects of futility and decay, how will people be benefited? Is there any better way to show our love for other people than to help “*protect and improve*” everyone's environment?
7. Should we wait for Jesus to return to fix everything, or is he waiting for us to do our part as God's stewards now? What steps should we take today to help reveal that we are his children? What behavior helps bring a real “*Merry Christmas*” to his creation?

Truth To Celebrate: *Active care for God's creation is a distinguishing mark of those who truly are God's children.*

Advent-Action: *Make a phone call today to your state or local environmental protection agency or walk around your neighborhood and find out what are the main creation-care issues in your community. Post a note about these local issues on your church's web site and in next Sunday's worship folder. Others in your church or neighborhood could join you in a “task force.” Who knows what great good could be accomplished!*

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