

The responsibility of care (Psalm 8)

Made in the image of God, we stand in as God's representatives in creation.

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Who are humans, that God decided to give us the responsibility to care for creation?

After a lifetime of insisting that we are both plant killers, my spouse decided last year to change that trend. We bought a tradescantia at the farmer's market and named it Horace. After studying up on its needs and seeing it appear to thrive under our care, we bought a calathea (which has much fussier needs), and then a friend gave us a spider plant, and as these things so often unfold, now we have many, all with names of their own. They are thriving near big windows with mostly indirect sunlight in our kitchen and living room. We water them enough, not too much or too little.

We also spend what a year ago would have sounded like a surprising amount of time thinking about and looking at them. We feel responsible for them, and of course it's not just a feeling—it's a practical reality. They aren't going to water themselves, or open the window blinds to let the sunlight inside.

Considered in that (sun)light, the gift of dominion sounds a bit less dramatic or elevated than some interpretations might suggest. While some might read "dominion" as the power to exploit nature, resources, and people who have been put, as the psalm says, "under our feet," we might argue that we are being called to tender, loving care. The call is not to assert dominance but to take responsibility.

The call is not to *be* God but to show up on God's behalf.

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Tasks like watering plants—or taking the dog for a walk, or doing the laundry for the family, or sorting the recycling and taking it to the curb—may not feel particularly majestic. Calling our political representatives, showing up where people are in need, strategizing with communities faced with harm to learn what they actually need—these are not typically tasks that get headlines. They are not about a show of force but about the power of lovingkindness.

Who are humans, that God decided to give us the responsibility to care for creation?

Made in the image of God, we stand in as God's representatives, God's agents. The Creator is also the delegator-in-chief, who equips us in our different ways to care for the world we have been given and all its inhabitants, especially the ones who have no voice or vote.