# WE NEED GREEN SPACES

*Posted on April 6, 2020 by Eddie*

So, while fully complying with the relevant social-distancing advice, get outside for some exercise. Marvel at the leaves starting to grow on the trees, listen to the birdsong and enjoy the last of the daffodils (the tulips will be along soon). Your Heavenly Father made all this and he called it good.
**Category:** Observations

Apparently, if people do not follow the government guidelines about social distancing, the government may feel compelled to bring in much stricter guidelines which will more or less prevent people from going outside at all. This is fine for those of us who have gardens, but it is a real problem for those who live in city centres or in blocks of flats. Access to nature is a mental health issue, people need to be in contact with the wider creation if they are to stay healthy. And, ultimately, I would argue that it is a theological issue. We were made to care for and enjoy the creation of which we are part.

It is often said that the Bible story starts and ends in a garden. I'd also add that one of the most sacred events in the whole narrative also takes place in a garden, Gethsemane. Now, I don't think that the point of this is to promote gardening as we understand it - I'm far from convinced that the biblical gardens had much in common with today's roses and lawns.

I actually think that rather than focussing on the gardens, it would be accurate to say that the biblical story starts with creation and ends with a new creation. Not only that, but throughout the story, particularly in the Old Testament there is a stress on the way that people are tied to their land which cannot be ignored. The Bible shows that we are part of God's creation, with a responsibility to care for and manage the rest of the world that God has made. Made in the image of God, we have a responsibility to build on the work that he started and (dare I say it?) to improve it.

Since the fall, our relationship with creation has become, at best, ambiguous. We've filled the oceans with plastic and we are wiping out species (which only God can create) at an alarming rate. But, our impact is not all negative. Anyone who has marvelled at the beauty of dry stone walls on the moors in the North of England knows that human work is capable of remarkable artistry. Likewise, the landscape of the Lake District which I love so much is the creation of thousands of years of farming.

At this point, I expect that someone will object and say that creation is only temporary and that we shouldn't be concerned about things that are fallen and which will pass away. Our focus should be on higher, spiritual matters. To which, I reply, that human relationships as we know them are temporary and very much broken by the fall, but no one suggests that we shouldn't concentrate on them. The point is the Bible depicts us as rounded, holistic beings who need contact with creation, with other people and with God and we should not ignore any of these aspects.

Those who think that Christianity is only about spiritual things are in for a bit of a shock when the new creation is revealed and they discover that they have to spend eternity with a body.

The point is that Christianity is not about disembodied souls. It is a an earthy religion, which delights in the realities of God's creation and eagerly looks forward to the day on which all things, human relationships, our interaction with the whole of creation and even our relationship to our creator will be renewed and fully restored. In the meantime, even in a fallen world, our contact with wider creation is important to us - it is part of who we are created to be.

So, while fully complying with the relevant social-distancing advice, get outside for some exercise. Marvel at the leaves starting to grow on the trees, listen to the birdsong and enjoy the last of the daffodils (the tulips will be along soon). Your Heavenly Father made all this and he called it good.