Sermon-based Small Groups

_____ of _____

1stPresDowntown

Our Home: Keepers of the Garden

Genesis 2:15

Week of August 9, 2026

This week's scripture:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

1. Opening Reflection: A Topic We've Made Complicated

The sermon opened by acknowledging that creation care has become politically polarizing—weaponized from multiple directions in ways that have left many Christians unsure what to think. Where do you find yourself on this topic? Has your view of creation care been shaped more by Scripture, by politics, or by the culture around you—and how can you tell?

The sermon argued that the church doesn't need to borrow its theology of creation from the left or the right—it already has one, older than every political argument. Did that framing help you engage the topic differently? What does it feel like to approach creation care as a biblical calling rather than a political position?

2. The Original Vocation: Till and Keep

The sermon highlighted two Hebrew verbs at the heart of Genesis 2:15: *abad* (to serve, to honor, to tend—the same word used for worship) and *shamar* (to keep, to guard, to protect—the same word used for keeping the commandments).

What does it do to your understanding of creation care to see it described in the language of worship and covenant faithfulness? Does that feel natural or surprising?

The sermon drew a sharp distinction between the language of ownership and the language of stewardship. In practice, how does the way you relate to the land, your property, or the natural world around you reflect an owner's posture rather than a keeper's? What would it look like to make that shift?

3. What Went Wrong—and Why It Matters

The sermon was honest that the church has not always kept the garden well—that "dominion" has been misread as license for exploitation, and that Christians are often among the least engaged on environmental questions. How do you respond to that honesty? Does it ring true in your own experience of the church?

The sermon asked: what does repentance look like without guilt? It also challenged us to think carefully about how we define "human flourishing" in an age of "more." How would you answer that question? What is the difference between repentance that leads to life and guilt that leads to paralysis—and how do we find the former without getting stuck in the latter?

4. Creation Is Waiting for Us

Romans 8 describes creation as waiting with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God—groaning like a woman in labor, not in despair but in anticipation. Does this description make creation care feel more urgent, more hopeful, or both?

5. Tending North Idaho: The Vocation Made Local

The sermon insisted that our vocation is specific, not abstract—we are called to tend this watershed, these forests, this lake, not creation in general. What is the specific portion of creation that God has most clearly placed in your care? How intentional have you been about tending it?

The sermon named four expressions of faithful tending: voting and advocacy, land stewardship, education of the next generation, and—for all of us—simple attention. The Earth

Care Team and Green Summit in March were offered as concrete local entry points. Which of these expressions feels most natural to you, and which feels most like a stretch? Is there one step you could take toward the one that feels like a stretch?

6. Living It Out

The series has moved this summer from receiving what the landscapes offer—their revelation of God's character—to giving ourselves to their keeping. Looking back over the whole summer, how has your relationship to the landscapes of North Idaho changed? Do you see them differently now than you did in June?

The sermon closed with the contemplative question: "What does it look like for me—in this place, with these neighbors, in this landscape—to till and keep the specific portion of creation God has entrusted to me?" Take a few quiet moments together with that question, then share as you are willing. What is one concrete commitment you want to carry out of this series and into your life this fall?