

Genesis 1:1-2:3

1 When God began to create[a] the heavens and the earth— 2 the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters— 3 God said, "Let there be light." And so light appeared. 4 God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

6 God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other." 7 God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. 8 God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

9 God said, "Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear." And that's what happened. 10 God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. 11 God said, "Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth." And that's what happened. 12 The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

13 There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

14 God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. 15 They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth." And that's what happened. 16 God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. 17 God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

19 There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

20 God said, "Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky." 21 God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. 22 Then God blessed them: "Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."

23 There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

24 God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife." And that's what happened. 25 God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. 26 Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so

that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

27 God created humanity in God's own image,  
in the divine image God created them,[b]  
male and female God created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. 30 To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. 31 God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

2 The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. 2 On the sixth [a] day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

## Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit: Amen.

Today we're beginning our last series of the summer. This means that we're entering the last weeks of summer, so let's all take some time to shed a tear for that. (Sniffle). Alas, time passes – that is the very nature of time – and as creatures created in time, we too must move on. That's why we're going to take these next five weeks and talk about Creation & Recreation. Now, each week we're going to talk about God's graciousness, in one way or another, that points to our identities as Ambassadors for Christ, as those created by God to create goodness alongside God. Created by God to create goodness alongside God. Yeah! That sounds nice. Since I just said it, why will this take five weeks?

Well, the shortest, truest, and most likely to appear in Sunday school answer is this: Sin. Because of sin, God's original purposes for creation that we see in Genesis 1 & 2 become convoluted. That's why we have the story of the flood and Noah's Ark, God working to wash the sin away from the very molecules of the earth. That's why we see the work of God in Jesus Christ bringing not just forgiveness of sin, but redemption of our bodies and restoration of all creation. Sin perverts God's plan, and so eventually we'll talk about re-creation, about restoration of God's plan for us and for the entire universe. To understand what we're restored to, though, we've got to understand creation as it was first made, and so we'll spend this week and next week in Genesis. And today, we'll talk primarily about the cosmos, about the earth on which we live and the universe in which we live, to understand the elaborate, expansiveness of God's creativity. And the key to this is God's reaction at the

end of each creation: God saw how good it was. Creation, in its divinely ordered essence, is good.

This first chapter of Genesis is a poetic depiction of creation, especially the goodness of creation, and it is jam-packed with imagery. We could spend an entire year just preaching and teaching on this passage. Since we've just a few minutes this morning, we'll have to boil it down to a few highlights.

From the beginning, we hear that God created everything that is good. All that has life and breath comes from God, as does the air that we breathe and the food that we eat that sustains all life. God created the weather to support life. When the earth was formless and void of the very elements that form life, the carbon and hydrogen and oxygen that shape our bodies were shaped by God.

Knowing what we know about the scientific formation of the earth, this also means that God created the planets and

asteroids and comets that fling through space, for when these things crashed here thousands of years ago, they brought the necessary building blocks for life here to our planet. And whatever else exists out there in outer space, whether rational aliens or repositories of resources that will help to carry human life further afield than our small blue planet in this intergalactic map, God's responsible for those things too. Everything that is, whether we know about it or not, was created by our God.

But God didn't create randomly or without purpose. This isn't finger-painting in kindergarten. There's an intentionality to the way that God puts the world together. Take a look at this slide, where the days of creation not just build on one another, but relate to one another. God creates light and darkness on the first day so that all the rest of creation can be seen, and then on day four God creates the sun, moon, and stars. The sea and sky, created on day

two, are filled with fish and birds from God's creative voice on day five. The land, created on day three, finds itself full of walking creatures, including us, on day six. God creates space for each of the animals to exist, and more than just exist, to thrive. God creates places of safety and for all of creation to find vibrant life.

There's clearly a logic here, but it's not a cold logic. There's a poetic beauty in the progression of this story as it forms. When God creates, it's like an artist who is also an engineer. God both creates things so that they have the potential to work together and creates beauty that offers joy far beyond simple rationality. God doesn't just create drab grass for food, but orchids and irises that bring wondrous scents to the air, pollen to the bees, and honey for us all. Animals don't just come in muted colors and dull shapes, but from the platypus to the toucan we see God's imagination at work. Even the poetry of this story, how

creation comes to being out of a chaotic, watery storm of darkness, how each day ends with progress and with a simple statement – there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. God ties an artistic bow each day upon the gorgeous engineering of creation. And God saw that it was good.

Notice what's missing thus far in the story. Hatred. Fear. Doubt. God creates with determined and passionate excitement, taking pleasure in the purpose set forth from the very first creative word. When God creates, before sin enters the picture, all the trouble that we know as creatures – the pain, the violence, the hatred, the greed, the lust, the gluttony, the envy – simply doesn't exist. **We're not created for that stuff.** It's so important to know that. God walks with us through it now, for God's promised never to abandon us and make us walk these journeys alone, but originally in Eden and eventually in eternity, God's intention is for us not

to face those tragedies. And anytime we see that stuff and we say, "Well, that's just human nature," we're denying the creation story. We're telling God that we don't believe the creation story, or more likely, that we just don't trust that story. We see so much of the brokenness in creation, so much of the imperfection, that we struggle to believe this kind of story, that we're created for goodness, with purpose, by a God who loves us.

That's why the last portion of this passage might be the most important. Even before sin reared its ugly head in our lives, God takes time to relish in creation's goodness. With the Sabbath, God created a space for all creation to recall the beauty and purpose with which God created the heavens and the earth. That seventh day, the day of rest, where God takes pleasure in the goodness of the creation, sets a standard for what all of our weeks should be. Every week should include at least one day where we can rest

and reflect on the work that we've done, on how we've done the things God's called us to do, where we can appreciate the goodness of creation in the midst of the chaos of life. More than all that, though, we're called to take time and remember what kind of creation God means for this world. We spend six days every week often being worn down by the illness, the terrorism, the abuses of power at work and in our government, the racism that threatens the lives of our siblings of color, the love of money that marginalizes the poor, hungry, and homeless amongst us. We're called to spend one day remembering that God created us for something different, for something better, for something beautiful, because that one day can change our entire life. Sabbath rest calls us back to that moment when all was complete, when God's vision for creation reigned in beauty and revealed the divine heart for peace, for wondering, for life. And that gives those other six days

energy, purpose, and hope.

God created everything to work together, that's for sure. But even more than that, God created everything to have Sabbath. Beyond work together, even beyond rest together, God creates space for us to be at peace with one another. That's why even the land and the livestock were not to be used on the Sabbath. Gardens and fields and oxen and milk cows need rest too. In our rest, even in a world that's so tainted by sin's presence, we get a lasting taste of Eden's appetizer, those moments where God brought forth all creation in goodness and in peace.

God created everything with a purpose for life as a skilled artist and excellent engineer so that all creation might one day have peace with God and with one another. That's the nutshell theology of Genesis 1. You might have noticed that we didn't spend much of any time today with humanity. And that's on purpose. There's a few

important reasons for that, and one is that we're going to spend the next four weeks on our creation and re-creation. More importantly though, Genesis shows our importance as creatures is tied to the beauty and goodness of God's creation. In fact, according to this passage, the main purpose God gave us is to serve as stewards for God's good creation, as God's representatives in the garden of the world. We exist to care for the rest of creation.

The good that we've talked about today, that we see in Genesis and that we experience in part, at least, throughout our world? That is what we're called to cultivate with our very lives. To understand our role in creation, we must first understand the goodness God imbued within creation, the preciousness of the waters that surround us with life, the divinely ordained beauty of porpoises and penguins and plankton and the plethora of life that we're called to care for, and that is so fragile. We need to know

that these pieces of creation are good because we must see that we're abandoning our posts as God's stewards. The goodness of creation is threatened by our gyres of garbage, by our limitless lust for oil, by our gluttonous pumping of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, for each of these behaviors reveals not a care for a creation, but a carelessness. Each time we do this we devolve away from our role as God's images. We refuse to reflect God to the world that needs God. We will be God's companions in Eden's garden, or instead work to pave paradise and put in parking lots?

We look at this image of Creation to understand what we've been separated from by sin. The purposes for abundant life, the artistic and complementary relationships we have with the sea, the land, the air, and even the light. The purpose for peace across the globe not just between nations, but between species. That's what we're created

for, to become stewards of God's goodness. To plant seeds that bear the fruit of communion with creation. And surely we know where the fruit of communion leads us: to the Cross. To Easter morning. To the defeat of sin and the redemption of our bodies that we too might help to restore creation to Eden's goodness. Amen.

1 – Creation of the Cosmos

2 – Creation of Humanity

3 – Restoration for Creation through the Floodwaters

4 – Restoration for Humanity through Baptismal Waters

5 – Ambassadors for Christ: God's Images (Sent Out, not Cast Away)