

# Made to Flourish

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, everyone. So nice to see you all this morning. So as Tom was saying, we are continuing our series in the book of Genesis. So a couple of weeks ago, we started our series in Genesis, where we saw a couple of weeks ago, God, through his word, introducing himself to us as the creator of the universe, who was there before his creation, who was in control of his creation, who is pleased with his creation. And we noted a couple of weeks ago that out of all that he made, he places ultimate value, ultimate delight in us, for we are made in his image. And that value, that delight is proved at the cross.

When God himself, who has always existed, God the Son who's in control of all things, when mighty God himself gave his life on the cross for us to fix what was broken by sin. Well, this morning, we're going to pick right up from where we left off a couple of weeks ago.

So that means this morning, we're going to be looking at Genesis chapter 2, and we're going to pick up at verse 4, and we're going to look down to the end of chapter 2. So Genesis chapter 2, verses 4 to 25. And in these verses, really, in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis chapter 2, we get an amazing glimpse of what we, his image bearers, were created for. In these verses, we get a glimpse of what we were made for. So Genesis chapter 2, verses 4 to 25.

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth, and no plant had yet sprung up.

For the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no one to work the ground. But streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.

[ 2 : 30 ] Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now the Lord God had planted a tree in the east, in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

In the middle of the garden were the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden. From there, it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon. It winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good.

Aromatic resin and onyx were also there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris.

[ 3 : 40 ] It runs along the east side of Eden. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

The Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky.

He brought them to the man to see what he would name them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals.

But for Adam, no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. And while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs, and then closed up the place with flesh.

[ 4 : 59 ] Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She should be called woman, for she was taken out of man. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Lord, we thank you for your word this morning, your precious living word.

And as we look at it together now, as we think about it together, we look to you for your help and your encouragement. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, about a year ago, myself and Amy got two tiny little cuttings off a plant from someone.

And we got two pots, and we put one cutting in each pot. Now, the pots were about the same size, and we got the soil from the same place, so both cuttings got the same soil.

[ 6 : 11 ] And I think over time, I can't say this for certain, but I think over time, we gave both of them around the same amount of water. But we put one pot on the windowsill, and we put the other pot on a shelf on the wall.

And it's truly incredible to see the difference between the one that was in the light of the windowsill and the one that was on the shelf.

On the wall. Now, I took this picture just the other day, but you can see here the difference between the two. What a massive difference it is. You can see that the one on the shelf on the wall is not doing so well, but the one in the light of the windowsill is absolutely flourishing.

Well, somewhat like this plant on the windowsill, in the light of the windowsill, we see in Genesis chapter 2, we see in the Garden of Eden that we were created by God to absolutely flourish.

In Genesis chapter 2, we see that we, his image bearers, were created to flourish. We were made to flourish.

[ 7 : 35 ] God did not create us, his image bearers, for us to fail and for us to falter and for us to struggle. Sin and the fall, of course, will come in Genesis chapter 3 and that would affect this flourishing, that would affect this growing in every way.

We'll come to that next week, but in Genesis chapter 2, in the Garden of Eden, we see that we were created to absolutely flourish.

God made us to flourish and to flourish in more ways than one. First in Eden, we see that we were made to flourish in relationship with God, in relationship with our Creator.

So a couple of weeks ago, we saw in chapter 1, verse 27, that God made us in his image. He made us male and female in his very likeness.

Well, as we noted a couple of weeks ago, we are made in his image not in the sense that God has a body like us, because he doesn't. Rather, we are made in his image in the sense that he has made us with eternal souls.

[ 9 : 01 ] And he has made us with eternal souls for what? To have relationship and fellowship with him. And we see evidence of this in Eden.

In the Garden of Eden, in chapter 2, we see evidence that God made us to be in relationship with him. He made us to be in fellowship with him.

He wants us to be in relationship and fellowship with him. For example, in verses 16 to 18, we see in the Garden here that God spoke to Adam.

He spoke to Adam. He communicated with him. He told him what he could do and what he couldn't do. And we must see here that when God is speaking to Adam, really God is speaking to mankind. He's speaking to mankind through Adam. So God is telling, if you like, mankind what they could do and what they couldn't do. They could eat of every tree except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[ 10 : 06 ] But the thing to see here is God is speaking. He's giving direction. He's giving responsibility. He's in relationship with Adam. He's in relationship with his image bearer.

He spoke. Well, to add to that, looking at chapter 3, verse 8, we also get the sense that in the Garden, God walked with Adam and Eve.

Of course, we know that God does not have legs, but this is pointing to his closeness to them in the Garden. This is pointing to his close presence with them in the Garden.

So God did not connect with his image bearers in a far out, far away sense. No, I love the song titled In the Garden, which is really talking about the Garden of Eden.

it says, he walked with them and he talked with them, for they were his very own. In the Garden, mighty God walked and talked.

[ 11 : 15 ] He was in close relationship and fellowship with his image bearers, with Adam and Eve. And in the Garden, this relationship with God flourished.

In the Garden of Eden, before the fall, Adam and Eve were enjoying a truly flourishing relationship with their God because there was no sin.

At that time in the Garden, there was no wrong actions, no wrong motives, no wrong thoughts.

There was nothing to be ashamed of. There was nothing to be guilty of.

At the end of our chapter in verse 25, we read, Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame. There was nothing to be ashamed of.

There was nothing to be guilty of. So here are the first two people in the history of the world and for however long it lasted before the fall, they are living in a world in relationship with their creator, with their God, with none of the effects of sin.

[ 12 : 29 ] Can you imagine just the pure connection, relationship, communion and fellowship that they must have enjoyed with their creator, with none of the effects of sin?

As God's image bearers, we are made to flourish. He created us to flourish in relationship with him. Well, second in these verses, in Eden, we see that we were made to flourish in relationship with each other.

Notice that God did not just create Adam and he did not just create Eve. He did not just create one person and leave it at that. God created no, God created male and female.

He created mankind and he created mankind to be in relationship with each other. Yes, we're made to be in relationship with God but under that we are made to be in relationship with each other and we see in Eden that God did not create us.

He did not create mankind to be giving out to each other, to be fighting with each other, to be bickering with each other, to be nasty to each other, to be in competition with each other.

[ 13 : 58 ] No, in verse 7 and in verses 21 and 22, when God made Adam and then made Eve from Adam's rib, there is a sense that we are not created to be at odds with each other.

No, when God made Adam and then he made Eve from Adam, there's a strong sense that we are cut from the same cloth so to speak. As someone said, we are in a sense made from each other by God to be for each other and not against each other.

And to encapsulate that sense of being made for each other, the word that is used at the end of our verse 20 is the word helper.

In verse 20, we see that God made Eve to be a suitable helper or helpmate for Adam. Well, this word helper or helpmate carries a sense of selfless service.

And this same word here that is used for helper describes elsewhere in scripture how God helps his people. The same word is used elsewhere to describe how God helps his people.

[ 15 : 25 ] Exodus 18, Deuteronomy 33, 7. So this word helper points to being there in a loving, steadfast, selfless, giving way.

That is how the Lord treats us as his people. And that is what God created Eve to be for Adam, a helper, a helpmate, a loving, steadfast support.

And by the way, just in case we get any crazy ideas, this is not a one-way helper system. This is not a one-way helpmate system. With Eve somehow doing all of the helping, with Eve somehow doing all of the encouraging, with Adam kind of sitting under a palm tree, kind of enjoying himself as Eve is doing all the helping and doing all the encouraging.

what we see in God's design, what we see in Scripture is without any shadow of a doubt, a mutual helping, a mutual love, a mutual respect, and a mutual serving, which is a beautiful thing, and it reflects the very heart of God.

Because that's what we see in the Trinity. We see in the Trinity it being modeled perfectly, a mutual serving. and that's God's design for the church, a mutual serving.

[ 16 : 58 ] So despite what some might think, we are not from different planets, men are not from Mars, and women are not from Venus, we are not made to be at odds with each other just to survive each other, Eden shows us that in a wonderful way we were made almost from each other to be for each other, to thrive and to flourish in relationship with each other.

And yes, that is true for husband and wife like we see in these verses, but it's true for every relationship, for friends and family and church life, we are made to lovingly help and to support and

to be there for each other, which is a wonderful thing.

Well, finally, we see in these verses, we see in Eden that we were made to flourish in relation to our surroundings. In these verses, it is clear that God made a wonderful creation, a wonderful paradise for mankind, his image bearers to enjoy.

In verse 9, we read about how God made things pleasing to the eye and good for food. In verses 10 to 14, we see how they had amazing places to explore and to enjoy, even places with gold, with sweet aromas.

As someone said, there is no smelly socks in Eden. They had amazing food, they had amazing scenery, amazing places to enjoy, to explore, and through their surroundings, they also had an amazing purpose.

[ 18 : 44 ] in verse 15, we see that God gave mankind the task of taking care and managing all that God made.

And this task, you would imagine, was enjoyable. I would say it's enjoyable to look after something that is perfect. They had perfect food, perfect scenery, perfect surroundings, and the blessing of taking care of it all.

They had in Eden all that they needed to thrive and to flourish in every way. There was no briars to spike them, there was no nettles to sting them, there was no wild animals that would maybe want to eat them, and what about the weather?

Even the weather, even everything about the weather, was created to allow them to flourish in their surroundings. They had no bad weather to stop them or to slow them down.

They didn't have to cancel, as we say, beach days because of bad weather. They didn't have to cancel Bible studies because of icy roads. And guess what?

[ 19 : 58 ] There was no rain, which is incredible. In verse six, we read that plants were watered from springs and rivers from the ground instead of rain falling from the skies.

There was no rain. And I was just thinking about this. This idea might sound better in my mind than it does in person, but if I was ever to invent or invest in a line of umbrellas, I think the perfect name for a line of umbrellas would be in Eden because in Eden there's no rain, and under the umbrella there's no rain.

So I think the ideal name for an umbrella would be in Eden, but isn't that incredible? And no rain doesn't mean things didn't get watered. Things did get watered, but there was no rain falling from the sky.

So in Genesis chapter two, looking at Eden, it is clear that God made incredible surroundings for Adam and Eve, and he made them to flourish in their surroundings.

We are not created to battle with our surroundings. We are not created to struggle in our surroundings. So we see in Eden, we as God's image bearers, we were made to absolutely flourish, to flourish in relationship with God, in relationship with each other, and to flourish in our surroundings.

[ 21 : 38 ] We were made to flourish like that plant on the windowsill, we were made to flourish. So where does all of this leave us today?

Well, these things are all still 100% true for us today. God did not make us to fail or to falter or to struggle in our relationship with him, with each other, and in our surroundings.

No, today the same is true as it was in Eden, in that we were made to flourish. We, as his image bearers, were made to flourish.

God made us to flourish in these things. But the problem for us today is, of course, sin.

The problem for us today is unlike Eden, we now live in a world that is affected and infected by sin in a devastating way, including each one of us here.

[ 22 : 49 ] Since the fall, sin has broken and corrupted each of these things in a devastating way. Sin has deeply affected our relationship with God.

Because of sin, Romans 5.10, mankind are now enemies with God. Sin has deeply affected our relationship with each other.

Because of sin, Galatians 5, what now comes naturally to us are the acts of the flesh, which is a far cry from what we see in Eden in that helper, help mate system.

And sin has deeply affected our surroundings. Because of sin, Romans 8, the world is now groaning from the effects of sin. We now have earthquakes, hurricanes, and all sorts of suffering and brokenness and things like that.

And so, because of sin, instead of perfectly flourishing in these things like we were created for, instead of perfectly flourishing in relationship with God, with each other and in our surroundings, all of these things have been deeply broken and affected.

[ 24 : 15 ] And now, this is our reality. reality. Because of sin, this is now what naturally comes to us. Because of sin, this is now our world, and it's a far stretch from Eden.

Because of sin, Eden is gone, Eden is lost, and this is our day. And really, we could put up far more graphic pictures than these.

I mean, these are tame images to show how each of these things are broken. So, is there any hope for us?

Is there any hope for our hurting and our brokenness in these things? Is there any answer for us to truly flourish in these things again?

Well, incredibly, by God's grace, there is hope. There is one certain hope. Incredibly, by God's grace, there is an answer, one certain answer.

[ 25 : 31 ] We have one hope and one answer for our hurting and brokenness in these things. We've got one hope and one answer to truly flourish in these things again.

And that hope and that answer is, as David said last week, the person of Jesus. It's all about Jesus. Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has made a way for our relationship with God to be made right, to be restored, and ultimately perfected. Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has made a way for our relationships with each other to be propelled by the fruit of the Spirit and not the acts of the flesh, until one day we will all, as God's people, be in perfect unity together again.

And in relation to our surroundings, Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has made a way for us all to go to a greater Eden, the new Jerusalem, forever and ever, where there will be no more brokenness, no more hurting, no more pain, no more tears.

In fact, many Bibles title Revelation 22 as Eden restored or Eden renewed. What a Savior we have, that he would make a way to fix what is broken, to find what is lost, to restore what God once was, when we simply believe and trust in him and accept what he has done for us.

[ 27 : 15 ] As God's image bearers, we were made to flourish. He didn't make us to fail. He didn't make us to suffer. He didn't make us to falter. He made us to flourish in relationship with him, in relationship with each other, and in relation to our surroundings.

He made us to be like that plant on the windowsill, flourishing in all of these things. But because of sin, these things were lost, broken, deeply affected, and so in relation to these things, we all carry hurt and brokenness and pain in relation to God, in relationships with each other, and in our surroundings, we all carry so much pain and brokenness.

But through Christ, there is grace for our brokenness in all of these things.

through Christ, we are forgiven. Through Christ, we are restored. Through Christ, we are being transformed.

Through Christ, we will be perfected forever and ever. And through Christ, we will spend eternity in a better Eden, forever and ever.

[ 28 : 57 ] We were made to flourish in these things. Sin broke that. But we can rejoice, we can take heart that in Christ and true Christ, we can and are and will truly flourish in these things as his precious image bearers.

Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you that you made us to flourish.

You did not make us to fail or to suffer. You did not make us to have pain. You did not make us to die. Lord, you made us to flourish in every way.

And Lord, we thank you so much that even though these things were broken and taken and affected by sin, thank you that you made a way to make all of these things right.

We thank you so much that you gave your life for us so that we could truly flourish in these things forever and ever. help us Lord to look to you and to get our encouragement and our strength in you and help us to know just how much you love us and how much you care for us, your image bearers.

[ 30 : 33 ] I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.