

The Beauty of God's Creation

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0:00] Good morning, everyone. People have wandered off into the bushes.! I'm super grateful that it's not raining.

I thought it would be appropriate for us to reflect on Psalm 23 together as we start this morning. So if you know the words well, no pressure. I'm not going to be making eye contact going, oh, they don't know it.

But if you know the words of Psalm 23, please say it with me. And if you don't, or you'd rather just view it as a prayer, just close your eyes and think about it.

A prayer and a declaration for us this morning. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

[1:26] For you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows. Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Amen. Amen. Welcome here for this Sunday, July 12th. What a beautiful sanctuary we're in this morning. My name is Kent Dixon.

And it is my joy to be the pastor here today in this very special setting as we have our church in the park. So we're taking a break from our Romans series this morning.

And I want us to reflect on something different today. Our sermon this morning is titled, The Beauty of God's Creation. And we're going to consider what it means to experience wonder and gratitude and to be good stewards.

[2:29] When we step outside and feel the warmth of the sun, hear birds singing in the morning. We can hear birds around us now. Forgive me for this part.

When we watch snow fall quietly from the sky. When we revel in the powerful display of a thunderstorm. Boy, has my nose been pressed to my windows lately.

Or when we stand beneath a sky full of stars. Many people are going camping this summer and enjoy those starry nights. In all of those situations, I believe something awakens deep within us. Something stirs in our spirit. Because creation has a way of speaking to the human soul. The beauty of the world wasn't accidental.

There's a shock for you, or hopefully not. It is God's artwork. His handiwork. The mountains and rivers. The forests, oceans.

[3:31] Animals, changing seasons. They all point towards creativity and wisdom. And the goodness of our creator. The world around us is more than scenery.

It's a gift. And every gift from God carries both joy and responsibility. And if you kill a mosquito, God will forgive you. He might even celebrate with you.

God created the amazing beauty and majesty of this world for us to enjoy. And God calls us to care for creation both faithfully and lovingly.

The first thing I want us to recognize this morning is that creation reveals the glory of God. Have you ever considered the fact that the Bible does not actually begin with humanity?

It seems like often we think that we are the center of the story. And that's true. But the creation accounts, the narrative of early scripture doesn't begin with us at all.

[4:40] It actually begins with the act of creation itself. In Genesis, God speaks light into darkness. He separates land from sea.

He fills the sky with stars and brings life into the earth. And after each act of creation, God calls it? Good. Louder.

Good. Good. Good. Good. Good. Then after creating humanity and looking over everything altogether, he says it is very good. Very good.

I believe the beauty of creation tells us something about God's heart. Have you ever considered that a sunset didn't need to be colorful? To function?

Flowers don't need fragrance. Birds don't need songs, except maybe in the spring, to get the attention of other birds. Yet God made the world overflowing with beauty because beauty reflects his nature.

[5:44] Many of the qualities of creation were created by God specifically for human beings to enjoy. For all the campers and hikers and people who enjoy the great outdoors here, friends of mine, you know this all too well.

Psalms 19 verses 1 to 6 says, The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech.

Night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech. They use no words. No sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth.

Their words to the end of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. Like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other. Nothing is deprived of its warmth. The heavens declare the glory of God.

[6:53] Creation is almost like a sermon, but maybe one of the best kinds. It has no words. The trees preach about life. Running water preaches about refreshment.

The stars preach about majesty. The changing seasons remind us that God is faithful through every chapter. Literally every season of life.

Sometimes we become so busy. Chin people spend an entire day with someone and we look at our watches. Sometimes we become so busy that we stop noticing the wonders all around us.

We rush from place to place without seeing God's fingerprints everywhere. But when we pause and truly look, creation draws us, I believe, into worship.

Many of you have heard me talk about the ways God charges and recharges my batteries. He does that when I'm surrounded by creation and its natural beauty and power.

[8:00] When I'm in the mountains, in our city's beautiful river valley and parks, or even, yes, in a garden center of all places. Michelle and I were at a garden center a few weeks ago looking at trees and flowering plants and Canada Day baskets.

And I noticed something. I could feel my batteries were suddenly recharging there in that moment. I actually remarked to Michelle that I could feel the living things all around us.

And was humbled by God's blessings and how he was filling me, even in that place, because I stopped to pay attention. His created things were there, reminding me of his presence, his care, and his deep, deep love.

I felt joyful and engaged. God's power and love, my friends, are on display all around us. We just need to pause for even one second and take it all in.

The second thing I want us to consider this morning is that God invites us to enjoy his creation. God didn't create the world for us to merely survive in it.

[9:17] And yet, how often do we feel we're doing that day to day? God created the world for us to delight in and thrive in it.

Ecclesiastes reminds us that enjoying the gifts of God is part of a faithful life. There's holiness in gratitude. There's worship in wonder.

Maybe you've thought of this or recognized it for yourself. Jesus often taught outdoors. Besides the sea, mountainsides, at the beach, in fields of grain, under open skies.

He pointed to lilies and sparrows as reminders of God's care. Friends, creation can calm anxious hearts and renew weary spirits.

Many people have experienced God's peace while walking through forests, sitting beside lakes, or watching the sunrise in silence.

[10:27] And it's in moments like these that we can remember that we are not alone. God is still present. He's right here with us. God is still providing.

And God is still sustaining the world that he created. The beauty of creation invites us to slow down and reconnect with our creator.

The third thing I want us to recognize this morning is that humanity was given a sacred responsibility. From the very beginning, God gave humanity a role in creation.

Genesis 2.15 says, The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it, it says, and take care of it.

You see the balance there? We're given authority, but also responsibility. The earth does not belong to us alone.

[11 : 30] Psalm 24 says, The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. I believe humanity has largely forgotten that we're caretakers, not owners.

The earth isn't our property. Sorry, I feel strongly about this. The earth isn't our property to use for our own purposes and to fulfill our own desires.

It's not something for us to use up and throw away. God created the earth to supply our needs and to replenish our souls. And caring for creation is an act of obedience and gratitude.

When we protect the earth, when we avoid waste, when we care for animals, when we plant gardens, when we clean communities, when we use resources wisely, we honor the one who made it all.

The caring for creation isn't merely an environmental concern. I believe it is spiritual stewardship. Even small acts matter.

[12 : 44] Planting a tree, reducing waste, protecting water, protecting wildlife, teaching children to appreciate nature, keeping our communities clean.

These actions reflect love for God and also, I believe, love for future generations. The last thing I want us to recognize this morning is that creation teaches us hope.

Do you need some hope these days? Even in a broken world, creation still carries beauty. Listen to the wind in the trees right now.

A flower grows through cracked pavement. Spring follows the W word. Winter. Rain nourishes dry ground.

And obviously our ground is well, well nourished this summer. They're reminders that God brings life where there was once emptiness. God restores.

[13 : 48] Romans 8 tells us that creation itself longs for restoration. We've talked about this over the past few weeks. One day God will renew all things.

He will renew you and me and all of creation. And the Bible tells us God's story for creation. His plan for it. And it's a story that doesn't end in destruction.

It ends in restoration and renewal. Does that give you hope? Does that give you a little hope? Every time we pause to simply recognize and be thankful for all created things around us.

We're recognizing God's character. We're recognizing God's character. And I believe we are drawing closer to him. Whenever we care for creation, we participate in God's ongoing work of restoration and healing.

Let's close by hearing David's words in Psalm 24, verses 1 and 2 and 7 to 10. Who is this king of glory?

[15 : 16] He is the king of glory.

Amen. I'll see you next time.