

# God our Good Creator-King

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[0:00] Please can you turn with me in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 1. Just a reminder that if you want to scan the QR codes on the screens, you can pick up the sermon in different languages if that is helpful to you.

As we think together about God, our good creator, king. But before we get to God's creation, I imagine winter for many is a season where the jigsaw puzzles come out.

My local charity shop makes a promise that every jigsaw that comes in second hand have no pieces missing. And I'm yet to pull the trigger and trust them enough to actually buy one.

But picture with me just for a moment the frustration. If you were to go to a charity shop to pick up a new jigsaw this winter season and you open the box only to discover that some of those crucial edge pieces can't be found.

And now you recognize you've got no border and you've got no structure with which to work in. Or as you get on in the jigsaw, the pieces are jumbled up. You thought you were making a beach scene, but you keep finding pieces of snowy mountains and it's a bit confusing.

[1:16] Or worse still, you open the box and as you turn over the pieces, you discover that the picture in no way is going to match what's on the front of the box.

You have no guide to put those pieces together. Do you know that's how some people feel about life? Some people struggle to find purpose and structure.

There are so many people who are not clear how to make sense of the various pieces of our lives.

There are many people who are muddling on day to day with no clear guide about the big picture.

No answer to the big questions. Why am I here? Who am I? Who made me? Where is all this heading? Genesis 1 helps to put the pieces together.

We thought last week, in the beginning, God. That reveals the big picture. That the world that we live in is a world made by an eternal creator.

[2:25] Now we're going to think some more about the fact that he made it with order and goodness. And next week especially, we'll recognize that we are made to relate to him in the world that he has made.

So that to understand Genesis 1 to 3 is to find the picture to help give shape and structure and sense to our lives.

So this week what we're going to do is we're going to look at days 1, well not all of day 6, day 1 to 6a of Creation Week. As I said at the beginning, we're going to leave it on a cliffhanger.

We're going to spend all of next week thinking about what does it mean that we are made in the image of God. If you know people with questions about image and identity, next week would be a great week to bring someone to church.

But this week what we're going to see is that God's creation displays his order, it displays his goodness, and it displays the fact that he is the king who rules. And it does that for a very particular purpose.

[3:23] So that you and I would worship him. So let's think about the goodness of God's order within creation.

So just a little word about the writing style of Genesis 1 from verse 3 to verse 31. Scholars call it exalted prose.

Now that's important because two things become clear. It is making true claims about the world that we live in, but it's using language for a particular purpose. It's wanting to invite in us as readers and hearers a sense of reflecting and wonder and worship towards this creator God.

And one way that the language does that is through the order that we find within chapter 1. There is order, first of all, in the structures. Maybe we are familiar with this, the big picture of days of forming and days of filling.

So days 1 to 3 we find the forming of light and dark. Then day 2, the sea and the sky. And then day 3, there's the land and the plants that are formed.

[4:39] And then on days 4 to 6, there's filling. That's when we discover the sun, the moon and the stars.

Then day 5, the fish and the birds. And then on day 6, animals and people. And we'll get there next time. So we're presented with here are three locations.

And here is God providing inhabitants for each of those locations. There is a clear order. And that's important. The order is further emphasized, isn't it, in the repeating patterns.

You would have heard them as Sarah read the Bible for us. Look at day 1 with me. Just day 1 is a great example because it's got all the patterns. Verses 3 to 5.

So look at how the verse begins. And God said, let there be. In this case, let there be light. So a command is announced from the king. And immediately we discover, and there was light.

[5:46] What God commands happens. God brings things into existence. And there is perfect, immediate fulfillment.

There is no struggle when God creates. The next pattern, verse 4. God saw that the light, it was good. And we're going to come back to that.

But here's this idea of, here is God the artist. Just for a moment, stepping back. To admire the masterpiece that he is in the process of creating.

Another pattern we find in verse 4. He separated the light from the darkness. And this reminds us that the world that we live in is not chaotic. That God created and set limits.

That's part of the order he establishes. You know, the sea can go here, but no further. Because there is the limit of the land so that people can live on the land. Verse 5.

[6:45] There was another pattern. God called the light day and the darkness he called night. And again, to name something was a sign of authority over something. This is a kingship term.

God has rights over it. And then that closing rhythmic pattern.

And there was evening and there was morning. The first day, the second day and so on. The division of time into days. And again, we're presented with a picture of God.

The workman, the craftsman. Six days he will work. On day seven, he will rest. That pattern then given to us. And we'll think about that in a couple of weeks when we get to Sabbath.

All these repeating patterns we find within Genesis 1 are saying to us, our world was made by God with order, not chaos that is careful planning, that is absolute control.

[7:48] Here's another way in which we see the goodness of God's order. It's in the species that are mentioned. Now, of course, Genesis 1 is not a science textbook.

It's not claiming to be a science textbook. When the first hearers were listening to Moses, the questions that they were asking about the world were not the same questions that we ask in the 21st century.

You know, maybe we ask questions about the age of the earth or the time periods of each day. That wasn't the principal concern of the Israelites. They wanted to know who is the true God?

Where did all this come from? And Genesis 1 helps with that. But there's also elements of the beginnings of science within Genesis 1.

And it is significant, if you're ever interested, to read the history of science. You'll understand that the history of science in large part began with Christians because they read passages like Genesis 1 and they understand certain principles.

[8:49] that if God made the world with order, then we can expect order and coherence within the world. So we can do science. We can expect to find patterns.

But it's interesting to see in Genesis 1, isn't it, the classification systems that emerge here. For those of us who are interested in botany, God said, God doesn't just make one kind of tree or plant. There is a multitude. There's diversity. And that's part of the beauty, isn't it? He does the same with marine biology. In verse 21, God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with

which the water teems.

He does the same with ornithology. Every winged bird according to its kind. And then for those who are studying veterinary, there's zoology.

God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And for the Israelites, and for us as well, we understand certain things.

[10:05] When we plant a particular crop, we plant some wheat. And we know that if the conditions are right, it's going to grow and produce more wheat. If we keep cows, if there are male and female cows, baby cows will be produced.

So there is order, there is predictability, there is diversity, there is beauty within God's created universe. What is it telling us?

It's teaching us things about our world, but I think fundamentally it's teaching us about our creator.

We are not here as the products of random chance.

We are here because there is a God of power, and organization, and wisdom, and beauty, and goodness. The picture of creation in the beginning was one of peace, and harmony, and beauty, and clear order, and all of it directed by and dependent on God.

We sang a little bit of Psalm 104. Psalm 104 has 34 verses celebrating the world's a wonderful place, God made it, and it's beautiful, and it's good.

[11:20] But it concludes with verse 35, which begins to get us to the problem of why we don't always see order and beauty in our world. Because it introduces those who are wicked, those who reject God, those who turn their back on God's grace, and that's where disorder comes from.

That's where the scarring in the universe comes from. And we'll discover as we get through the opening chapters of Genesis that human beings, made in the image of God, made with free will, freely chose to rebel, freely chose to depart from God's created order, not content to enjoy life under His good rule.

And that's what the Bible calls sin. And sin is what stains God's masterpiece. And sin is the reason why we don't always see order and peace in our world and in our hearts.

But just to say this also, how does that, when we think about the whole story of the Bible, how does the good news of the Bible offer hope when we see that kind of chaos and disorder in our world and in our hearts?

It gives us hope as we understand that God knew from eternity past. The same God who planned the galaxies is the same God who planned for the cross of the Lord Jesus.

[12:48] He planned that His Son, the Lord Jesus, would come, the perfect image bearer, the only one who would ever live a perfectly ordered life, surrounded by the chaos of sin.

Jesus always loved, always obeyed, always sought the glory of God. That's what we were made to do, but we don't. And in His death, there is forgiveness, that the stain of sin is removed with the promise that as Jesus rose and returned to heaven, He will return one day.

And at His return, this world will be restored to perfect, eternal peace, order, and harmony. No more of the fighting that we see, no more of the brutality that troubles us, no more anxious hearts, no more guilty consciences.

So as we search for order and peace and harmony in our life or in our heart, the Bible will say to us, God says to us, you need to know me.

You need to come to me through my Son, Jesus. You need to place your faith in Jesus to find your longings made, to find Him as Lord and Savior.

[14:10] Well, that's the order. But let's think about another theme that clearly emerges from Genesis 1, and it's the idea of the goodness of God that we find in His world.

I was out on Brunsfield links early this week, and I got talking with a neighbor, and he, like me, was standing admiring the view.

There was Arthur's seat, the sun was shining, the trees were kind of dappled in different colors of light, there was a beautiful clear blue sky, and it was one of those moments of awe.

Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of God, and the skies proclaim the work of His hands. If you saw pictures of the Rora Borealis, or if you got to see them with your own eyes, we know this is true.

What are we supposed to do when we see goodness in the world? Now, we know something of this as a natural instinct. When we hear great music, we are drawn to praise the composer and the performer.

[15:19] When we eat a great meal, we are drawn to praise the cook or the chef. Genesis 1 is designed to help those first Israelites and us today to understand who is it that we should praise for the beauty that we see all around us, whether that's in the world on a grand scale, or whether it's just as we see something beautiful in the people around us.

I came across this from Thomas Aquinas as he was reflecting on creation. I appreciate this. He said, God brought things into being in order that His goodness might be communicated to creatures and be represented by them.

And because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produces many and diverse creatures. God wants us to look around with eyes to see His goodness in the world that He has made.

So we're going to consider, just for a few moments, the implications of the repeating phrase, it was good. We hear it again and again.

God creates and God declares it is good. The first thing it says to us is that God created the world with beauty and with care.

[16:39] Maybe we know something of this making satisfaction. Do you ever step back from a piece of work and you say, that's good. If like me, you really know very little about DIY, you might even get that kind of satisfaction when you put in a light bulb and you switch the light on and it comes on, you think, that's good.

Maybe you agonize over a piece of work, you finish an assignment and you're happy with it. You turn in, you think, that's a good piece of work. You're playing some music, you're playing on the sports field and everything just seems to go well.

You can reflect and say in a moment or afterwards, hey, that was good. That's what God does in the essential, ultimate way. God did not throw the world together in a haphazard way.

Where I come from, we have a saying, it's good enough for sky. Which basically means, it's not wonderful, but it's alright. And that's kind of the attitude from where I came from.

But that's not how God creates. That's never how God creates. Think about the attention that God gives to the details of each individual snowflake.

[17:58] the diversity of plant or animal life. Or those great visions of his beauty if you saw the aurora or you look at Arthur's seat.

God looks at all of that and he says, that's good. Because he created with beauty and care. And unlike our works, there is never a moment where God is frustrated, where God has to rip it up and try again.

There are no failures or plan B's. When God creates, he creates good and only good. Something else that's important is that God was pleased with his creation.

I don't know if that's something that we reflect on. That when God looks at his world, it's not like, perhaps, your childhood report cards or your report from your teacher.

Do you know what you could do better? Or if you have that sense of frustration between, in my head, I know exactly what I want to create or produce, but when I come to do it, it never quite looks as good as the image that I have.

[19:05] You know that frustration of the gap? God has no frustration. His perfect mind creates a perfect world. And God is perfectly pleased with his creation because it reflects his wisdom and his goodness.

And that's the third thing that's so important for us to see and to grasp practically is that something of God is reflected in his creation.

Not all of God, but something of God. Manly Hopkins, the poet, had that great line, the earth is charged with the grandeur of God.

The earth pulses and vibrates with the grandeur and glory of God. And we can see something of his creativity, of his order, of his beauty all around us in the world.

God is the source of all goodness. We can trace his fingerprints in every good gift, in every good of this creation. Now, why is it important that God highlights his goodness in Genesis 1?

[20:11] First of all, it helps to cultivate a sense of thankfulness that leads to worship. Now, that can happen in many ways depending how we look at the world.

We can think big scale. You know, the Goldilocks effect of the universe, the fine-tuning of the universe where everything is just right for human life and flourishing.

Now, that might be what leads us to thankfulness and worship. Or it might just be the goodness of a good cup of coffee or a really nice breakfast or the gift of family, everyday life.

Every good gift comes from our good God. And even though we recognize that our world is now fallen, that there is a measure of brokenness, it still retains aspects, wonderful aspects of the glory and the goodness of God.

More than enough to draw our hearts towards Him. More than enough to see His eternal power and His divine nature. And so the world is designed to help us to worship, to live in God's world without thanking Him for His gifts, without recognizing Him as Creator.

[21:32] it is to play the spoiled child who never says thank you for any gift. But I think it's also important that the goodness of creation is highlighted because it helps us to get our attitude towards creation right.

Because it says to us this world is good. This world matters. But it also says to us this world is not God.

And that's important again for worship. Because the Bible is really clear to worship created things rather than the Creator. Well that's idolatry. And that's what goes against the grain of the universe and that goes against the grain of why we were created.

So we should go bodily creation. But we shouldn't worship it and think well this is it. we recognize that God looked at the world that he made and he saw it as good and very good and at our best.

So should we. And so we should expect and be looking for beauty that takes our breath away and other people who inspire us profoundly.

[22:49] But in those moments we want to be so careful to keep turning to give thanks and worship to the God who made it all. the God who enables us to get even faint outlines of his goodness and glory within his creation and to recognize as we heard from 2 Corinthians 4 that God's goodness was made visible in a profound way when Jesus came revealing the light of God's truth and love and salvation drawing our hearts to him.

Well one last thing to say briefly and that's about the kingship and the rule of God that we find here in Genesis 1. Let me take you back we were here last week to the first people that ever heard this message.

They are in the wilderness they're in the desert they're at the door of their tents here they are little family groups and they're listening as Moses begins to teach Genesis 1.

Recently their family story for 400 years has been of being slaves in a foreign country in Egypt and when they hear the creation stories of Egypt they hear about lots and lots of local tribal gods and they hear about lots of fighting between gods and actually they hear about lazy gods who decided they didn't want to work anymore and that's why people were made.

So that was the creation stories that they were hearing and if you hear that for long enough we wouldn't be surprised to find that the jigsaw pieces became all a jumble and then Genesis 1 is heard a gift from God to bring order to present a beautiful and good picture of the world that God has made and a picture of God as the one and only God and the one true king so that the one that had called them out of slavery is the one that they would gladly follow obey love and worship.

[25:07] And you know those desires are the same from God for each one of us today. And so in the language of Genesis 1 we are reminded of the king who creates.

And so we mentioned this in the pattern let there be verse 3 let there be light or verse 9 let the water under the sky be gathered into one place. This is the king who speaks and his word of power

is effective.

There is no authority that stands against him. His commands are always followed. There is no disorder, there is no struggle, there is no fighting against his will. It's absolute because he is the king and he is the king who creates.

And we said it as well in the order he is the king who names. God called the light day and he called the dark night. Verse 8 God called the vault sky.

For those of us who are interested in football a recent phenomenon I guess to generate more money creative naming rights over a stadium. you know a wealthy organization can pay enough money and then they get to change the name of the stadium as a way to advertise their brand naming rights.

[26:23] The wonderful truth about the universe is that the whole universe is advertising to us a single reality that God is good that he is eternal that he is the creator and he is the king.

He is the one who names because he is the one who has rights over it all. And then finally the king also is proclaiming a really important truth.

Let me take you back to day 4 verses 14 to 19. So remember this is a group who have just been saved from slavery and multiple idols.

They are going to hear in the commandments you know I am God there is no other worship the Lord your God serve him only don't create idols. Let me take you back to day 4.

Lots of detail in day 4. I don't know if you've ever wondered about the details. Why does it get so much attention? Well back in Egypt who were people worshipping?

[27:25] They were worshipping the sun god called Ra and Pharaoh who claimed to be the son of the sun god. And in Egypt they were fascinated by the stars.

this is what controls our fate this is what controls our destiny. And so Genesis 1 is a response and an answer to that.

It puts them in their proper place. Look at verse 16. How are they described the sun and the moon? They're just the greater light and the lesser light.

Worship doesn't belong to them. It is their creator who deserves praise. Notice their purpose. Verse 14. These lights are to serve as signs to mark sacred times and days and years.

They serve the purpose of people and so that people would know when it's right to worship God. Not worship the sun and the moon. And then there's the greatest throwaway line perhaps in the whole Bible.

[28:30] End of verse 16. He also made the stars. Those billions of galaxies and constellations that evoke so much wonder. God made them.

So don't worship them. Our fate isn't written in the stars. Our times are in God's hands. And that's profoundly good news.

Why do we need to remember the kingship of God over creation? Sometimes it's because the world seems so chaotic and we need to return to that great truth.

I was drawn to Acts 14 when Paul's on his missionary journey. He speaks about the God of goodness giving creation to stand as a witness to him in the seasons that we have, in the food we get to eat, in the life that we enjoy.

And that should make us want to know and enjoy the one who rules over it all. And again, it takes us into the wonder of the Bible story of salvation.

[29:40] Because who is Jesus? He is God. He is the Son. He was the agent of creation. And he's also the King who enters into his creation. Jesus who came on a mission to reveal the glory of God, to seek and to save those who are lost in the darkness of sin.

The King who rules in heaven and calls us today to trust him, to enjoy him, to love him, to worship him, to find peace and order when our life is in right relationship with our God.

And Genesis 1 reminds us if we want to fit the puzzle pieces of our life into place to know who we are, why we're here, where this life is heading, we need first to know our God.

And we come to know our God through Jesus, his Son, to know God, our good Creator King.