

Creation

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Date: 05 February 2023

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[0:00] over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry mine. The thought that the Lord Jesus Christ looks at the whole world and says, That's all mine.

And that my will be done in all of it. And I'd like to sort of explore that thought over the next few weeks in various ways.

He said it in Dutch. It was in 1880 at the opening of a university. But I think it translates very well into England in the 21st century.

The claim is that Christ is Lord not only of the believer's heart in my personal space and in the assembly of the church in the cave that we're in, as it were, but he is also Lord of the high street, the football pitch, the concert hall, the record industry, London Road, Houses of Parliament, the artist's studio.

He is Lord of all. And that, I think, is a very key idea to fire us and motivate us in praying and in living the Christian life and in serving the Lord.

[1:17] So I'd like to persuade us that rightly understood, this means that Christians should have a very positive approach to all sorts of activities in what you might say ordinary life as distinguished from just being, you know, prayer meetings and Bible studies.

And in thinking about this, let's pray, shall we? Lord, help us as we think about these things together, that we may think rightly and in a way that pleases you and a way which equips us to live in this confusing world.

Amen. Amen. Amen. I'd like to think not just in the level of sort of rules and regulations, but in the level of approach, how Christians approach things.

Or you might put it like this, how Christians, the mindset of the Christian, the Christian mind. Let me get my Bible. We're going to look at Luke. I'm going to look at a number of verses, so to be quite quick.

Luke 10, 27. The way we think about things, the Christian mindset, if you like.

[2:29] In Luke 10, 27, Jesus asked the guy, what is written in the law?

How do you read it? And the chap replied in Luke 10, 27, you shall love the Lord your God. I'm right, and it's the lawyer that says this. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

And this is Jesus saying to him, you have answered correctly. And you notice that in there, the totality of humanness, which we'll hopefully think of next week.

He's not saying you're made of these five components. He's saying that if we want to sum everything up about being human, which is everything that the Lord wants us to love him with. Soul, heart, soul, strength, mind, everything. And it does include the thinking bit.

[3:35] So it's right for us to cultivate our thinking. There's a quote, I guess, I think it was John Stott in the 1970s, that the student said, when I go to church, I want to take my head off and leave it at the door.

And that is not the Christian way. Christian isn't just sort of all heart. There is, it's every part of us, as it's detailed there. So I'd like us to sort of equip ourselves to think.

I went over to my daughter's last, was it last week or the week before? And I'm just trying to think what it was I was trying to do.

I was trying to, I've forgotten what it was. I was trying to cut something, I might cut something or undo something. And I didn't have the right screwdriver.

And I couldn't get any purchase on what I was trying to turn. And I was just sunk, really. You need the right tools to get to grips with any particular issue.

[4:39] And when we're thinking about spiritual things, we need the right tools. And the tools come in the shape of ideas, words, tools for thinking, so that we can undo things or we can separate something from something else, so we can say this is that, that's that, that goes there, this goes there, and begin to sort things out.

And I've got three sort of tool words, theological words, creation, world, and then I've got three words there, providence and common grace.

And I'd like us to start this series by getting these tools out, having a look at them together, trying to work out what we can use them for, and hopefully as we go on through, we'll be able to get these tools, these theological tools working.

So, let's think about creation. Would you like to turn to Genesis chapter 1, which is a good place to turn for creation? It's at times like this, I wish I hadn't lost my old Bible, because my old Bible had all sort of neatly lines and underlinings and things, and now I'm floundering a little bit.

Genesis 1, from verse 1, let's see, how far shall we go? Up to verse 13, let's just take that bit.

[6:22] Genesis 1, verses 1 to 13, would somebody volunteer to read that for us? Just sitting down where they are, nice loud voice. Anybody? I'll do it. Maria? In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Now the earth was powerless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, let there be light.

And there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness had called night.

And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day. And God said, let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.

So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it.

And it was so. God called the expanse sky.

[7:24] And there was evening, and there was morning, the second day. And God said, let the water under the sky become one place, and let dry ground appear.

And it was so. God called the dry ground land, and the gathered water he called seas. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, let the land produce vegetation, seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.

And it was so. The land produced vegetation, plants bearing seed, according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it, according to their kinds.

And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the third day. Thank you very much. Now, I don't want to sort of spend too much time on this, but I think we're familiar with what we have here.

[8:37] We have six days, and then a seventh day, which is open-ended. One, two, three, four, five, six.

And before he does this, it's formless and empty. So there's no structure, formless, and there's nothing filling the structure.

It's empty. And perhaps just worth spending a few minutes just to remind ourselves the characteristic way that God works as creator.

So from the text that was read, we've got the thing about light here.

And then we've got the thing about waters. And then we've got the thing about water and land.

[9:46] So these seem to be spaces. And then in the next three days, so there's a structure. And there's the next three days, they're going to be filled with things. And we try not to go into too much detail.

Would anybody like to just sort of almost randomly pick out from that rich text that we had read, some of the striking words or perhaps repeated words or key words, just to give us a flavor of what's going on here.

Let there be. Let there be. Thank you very much. And does God write this? How do we get those words? He speaks it. He speaks it, doesn't it?

So the let there be is a spoken thing, which tells us something about the characteristics of God, that he's a speaking God.

This is a very important thing about God. He's a speaking God, which interestingly, we're made in his image. And we're speaking creatures. Monkeys don't speak.

[10:53] I mean, they might go, or something like that. But they don't have conversation. So God is a speaking God. Yeah, thank you. So that's anything else. God called. God called.

So this is give us the verse for that, Steve. Verse five. God called the light day and the arts he called night. Yeah, thank you very much. So he he names things.

Yeah. Naming. OK, thank you very much. And later on, Adam names, doesn't he? He's brought. He brought the different animals.

I think of the Dylan song. Man gave names to all the animals. In the beginning. In the beginning. Like that. Yeah. OK, so naming. Yeah. Other things. Pardon? God saw. God saw. Oh, yes. He sees things. And what does he.

[11:55] So this is God as assessing. Observing and assessing. And what sort of things does he. Could you give us a verse for that? What. How does it connect to anything? Yeah. Give us a verse.

Bill. Thank you. That's verse four. So he sees.

And he. This is really a judgment call, isn't it? He judges. And God is a seeing. Judging God. He says this is good. He judges things to be good.

Thank you very much. I'm sorry. Thank you. Yeah. Thank you.

So there's a sort of effectiveness. An infallible effectiveness to his word. I think if you were old fashioned.

[12:52] We'd say effectual. But let's just say effective. A little bit like. Similar to the words of Jesus. When he says to Lazarus. Come out. And the words don't fail.

Do they? They achieve. You know. Our words aren't quite like that. You know. If you say to the washing up. Clean yourself. It doesn't work.

But God's word is different. It's powerful and effective. Yeah. Thank you very much. I'd like.

Anybody like to just tell us. What's characteristic of God's. Action.

In each of those. What sort of things is he doing? I think that word is repeated. Is that separate?

Well I was going to say separate. Yeah. What he seems to do.

He seems to go. Like that. And separate darkness from light. And then go. And then separate the water underneath. From the water above. And then go. And separate the water from the dry land.

[13:52] So it's a sort of ordering process. And where there was no form. He brings form. He orders. And puts things into an order.

Separates things that were all in a muddle. This is this. It shouldn't be over there. This is this. That is that. Separate them. And put them in their right place. And there's a sense in which.

This. Um. Ordering of creation. Is um. So important. In. God as creator. And this is what we see.

Trying to be undone. In the same sex marriage thing. Isn't it? Because God's put an order. Of male and female. And uh. Said what marriage is. It's when these two opposites.

Come together. In marriage. And. That's how it is. That is the order of creation. And when. By legislation. Or voting. Or popular opinion.

[14:50] People say. Oh no. We'll. We'll put it in a different order. Then. We just. Damage ourselves. Because. That's not the order. That God's put into creation. So this idea of ordering things.

Is. Is a very key thing. And. I'm going to. Take us. To. Psalm 24. And perhaps.

We'll sing this. If I've. Remember to find the music. Psalm 24.

Would. Somebody just read us. The first couple of verses. The earth is the Lord's. And everything in it. The world. And all the living in it.

For he founded it. Upon the sea. And established it. Upon the water. Thank you very much. That great. Statement. A bit like. What Kuyper was echoing.

[15:47] The earth is the Lord's. And the fullness thereof. Everything in it. So. It was formless and empty. But he fills it. With all sorts of things.

And. That's his. The earth is the Lord's. And everything in it. The mountains. The seas. The trees. The birds. The islands. It's all his.

And to his glory. So let's. Let's. Just break off. And sing that. If we can. I think it's. Psalm 24. I wrote down Psalm 24. In my notes.

But. Let's just hope. That I got that right. Oh. I was going to sing. The earth is the Lord's. And everything in it. But. Let's just see. The earth is the Lord's.

And everything in it. The world. And all that. Has been made. Would somebody get me some water. So that I can. Clean this please.

[16:46] Or a squirty thing. Oh. I'll just. Now then. When we start to use. The word. World.

We. Fairly. Quickly. Encounter. An issue. Thank you. Yeah. Thank you. So please could we turn to 1 John chapter 2.

Thank you. Perhaps the way to introduce coming into these texts in 1 John is to say that we have creation in Genesis.

Then we have something else that happens very soon after. Big thing that happens after creation? Fall. Yeah, sin enters the world.

In English theology, we use the word fall, meaning to go like that, fall. In French theology, we would say le rapture, meaning the split.

[18:27] And actually the idea of a split is probably more like what the Bible says, that some things that were joined together and harmonious get split. But we use the word fall, so we're English speaking.

So we'll say creation, fall. And of course the whole story of the Bible is creation, fall, redemption, isn't it?

We've been expelled from the garden and the long-term plan of God through Jesus Christ is to restore like it was meant to be originally.

So it's like a big episode of the repair shop. It's not a bad analogy because when they bring stuff into the repair shop, you've seen this program.

In case you haven't, let me just tell you, they bring something they found in the attic. You know, it was an old telescope or something like that. And it was used by great-grandfather when he explored the Andes or something.

[19:36] So it has a lot of value. But it's all, the tubes are all bent. The lenses are broken. You can see what it's meant to do. You can look through it, but it doesn't work at all as it should.

And the repair shop, they say, do you think you can do this? And J-Blade says, well, I don't know whether we can do that. Can you think you can do that? And so the rest of it is they lovingly, carefully put it back together.

And here is the thing restored. And the person comes back in and they say, have you managed to do anything? Well, I think we might have done. And they're, oh, it's so wonderful.

And that's really the story of the Bible, isn't it? That humans have been ruined by the fall and the Lord Jesus lovingly, at great cost to himself, ensures that people are put back together and everything is going to be beautiful.

No more sighing or sorrow or mourning or tears. Sin is no more in the future kingdom. Right. Which I think helps us to understand this use of the word world.

[20:48] Chapter 2 of 1st letter of John, verses 15 to 17. Anybody like to read that for us, please? Chapter 2, 15 to 17.

Yep. Thank you very much.

Hold that thought. Chapter 3, verse 1. Shall I just be ruthless and ask somebody?

Mark, could you read 1 John, chapter 3, verse 1? Our grace is the love of the Father has loved us on us, that we should be called children of God.

And that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it does not know Him.

Thank you. Use of the word world again there.

[22:03] Verse 13 of that same chapter. Ruth, could you read that? Verse 13. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

You might as well read the next verse as well. We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. Thank you.

So another use of the word world there. And 4, verse 4. I think that's right. Yeah, 4, verse 4. Angela?

Thank you. Thank you very much.

And there's another use of world in verse 5. I'm going to put those references up so that you can just look back at them. Would you like to find two other people and try and work out what this world is that he's talking about?

[23:13] Because we've just sung God made the world. It's all His. It all belongs to Him. And that's a great thing. And here in these verses, it says world is the very opposite of what God is.

And so could you just find two other people and work out from those verses what is meant by world here? I'll put the verses up on the board.

The doctrine of creation says that in terms of the lordship of God and Savior, here's people on the globe and here's trees and rivers and mountains and islands and rabbits and blah, blah, blah.

And he made all that. And when it says do not love the world in 1 John chapter 2 verse 15, does it mean do not love mountains, rabbits?

No. Okay. Right. So it doesn't mean that. So anybody like to start us off with what? It's a negative use, isn't it, here?

[24:37] It's a negative thing. So what is the meaning of world, do you think? Any ideas from the text that you read?

He said the world is ephemeral. Oh, right. Well, that would be really helpful. I knew what ephemeral meant. Okay.

And there was a text for that, wasn't there? Wasn't it in one of those texts? This world is passing away. Doesn't it say there somewhere? Yeah. Pardon?

I've just rubbed them off, yes. It was chapter 2, 15, 16, chapter 3, 1, 13, chapter 4, verse 4. I'm pretty sure that one of those said this world is passing away, doesn't it?

Yeah. Okay. So it's a temporary thing. Okay. Can we go any further? Does it include elephants and trees?

[25:40] Yes. This use of the world word? No. No. What is it? It is restricted to people. People. The simpleness of people.

It is to do with people, isn't it? It's human. Humans without God. Humans without God. Sorry. sorry oblivious to god that's another good word oblivious oh that's a lovely word oblivious let's see if we can use that in a conversation this week oblivious pardon oblivious yes okay oblivious anything anything else yeah I did yes yeah

I was thinking that the world is where creation the road that creation the whole of creation including humans has gone down having turned away from god yeah yeah okay yeah so we could say so we could say sin and we could say it's not just a group of people it's a sort of a pathway no the I think I would like to keep animals out of this I think when it talks about it says the world in chapter 2 15 do not love the world or the things in the world if anyone loves the world the love of the father is not in him for all that is in the world the desires of the flesh the desires of the eyes and the pride of life is from the father but is from the world so I think that there's something specifically human about or sort of conscious but David was saying well it's just those forces that reign against us that take us away from god yeah yeah so you're self yeah we could self another idea that the bible would have as flesh and we're in the realm of human powers human aspirations human drives human planning without god so all those things just push god out of the way and and and now we've got our own system and all the structures and dynamics of that without god this is the world and the characteristics of it are things like in 2 16 the desires of the flesh so it's the things that human beings desire but without any sort of ordering just go for it whatever you you desire the desires of the eyes you remember that

Eve saw the fruit that it was desirable desirable to say for to eat and to make one wise pardon yeah the natural world is part of the fall as well isn't it we live in a fall and the whole thing is so I've used the word that I'm sort of not quite sure whether I meant fallen creation but anyway yeah the the the whole cosmos is affected by human sin and the way and my simplicity I think about it is it's like a a colour photo with all the colour taken out so all you've got is black and white and and our world has changed from what it used to be and what it's meant to be had all the sort of spiritual vitality if you like

I'm speaking roughly taken out of it what we're left with is the world and the flesh and it isn't just it isn't only human in the sense that there's a satanic force behind it the world the flesh and the devil there are there are spiritual forces at work in this world system but so we've got another set of ideas here we've got creation the earth is the Lord's and everything in it and and that is a glorious and a good thing and then we've got the world in this negative sense of the human system I think you know largely a human system but open to spiritual forces without God and all that sort of sin and corruption selfishness that goes on there okay so let's so that's another sort of theological screwdriver spanner to use as we as we go on a bit further so let's just think about this last one here as you can see

[31:17] I haven't been categorical in which word I'm going to use but let's turn to Matthew 5 45 so my question is in a in a creation that God has made which is he saw it that it was good but it's fallen and we now have a dynamic of the world going on what does God think of this so you could sort of cut to the chase and say God says that's it finished I'm going to finally judge I'm going to remove everything corrupt out of my kingdom and just have the perfect stuff left and sometimes people say why doesn't

God do that I think the quick answer is that's what he will do at the end of the world and once that happens there won't be any sort of period in which the gospel is preached in which putting it from the human side people are given the opportunity to repent putting it from the divine side during which God gathers in his elect that day of grace would be finished when God just takes up the harvest throws the weeds on one side and gathers the wheat into his barn but we're not in that day we're in the muddle of this day which is a day of grace and my question is how does God deal in the day of grace and so Matthew 5 shall we take 43 to 45

Matthew 5 43 to 45 Jack could you read that to us please chapter chapter 5 43 to 45 thank you according to this verse why does the sun rise because God causes it and according to this verse why does rain come he sends it it's just worth noticing this is talking about ultimate causes there are other levels of causation

God causes the rain to come by sending a low pressure area and making it meet warm air and then the rain falls he uses secondary causes but the bible says that he is the one sending the rain and this working of God to send things to run the weather system to run the solar system is what theologians would call his providence his running things I mean his providence includes all sorts of things like the way he provides but the great sort of category here is his providence and noticing how does he distinguish between the good and the evil or the just and the unjust in what way does he distinguish in these verses it's a trick question he doesn't he sends his rain on the just and on the unjust he sends the sun on the just and the unjust and so here's another theological term

I'm not sure whether it's the best one but it's called common grace the grace bit means it's not deserved because the evil don't deserve to have the rain but he sends it to them and the common means he doesn't he just gives it to everybody you know like like ditchling common is for everybody because they all share it so common grace is God giving grace to everybody and he doesn't distinguish between the just and the unjust and God's common grace is at work all over it isn't just the sun and the rain is it it's health and it's gravity it's gifts like marriage you don't have to be a

[36:56] Christian to have God's good gift of marriage you don't need to have to be married in a church to have God's good gift of marriage God is kind to all sorts of people in all sorts of ways very generously shall we look at Acts 14 Acts 14 16 to 18 Acts 14 16 to 18 Acts 14 16 to 18 David McAuliffe could you read that for us hang on hang on hang on where are we verse 16 to verse 18 please chapter 14 verse 16 to 18 thank you very much so in verse 17 where does rain come from from heaven thank you and where do fruitful seasons come from

I guess from heaven yeah and who was behind that and where did he limit it to he didn't and if these people had full tummies at the end of a meal who arranged that God and if they enjoyed fun and watching a duck walk and having a laugh where did that come from from God and what function as well as giving people fun and food and fruit what function did it fulfill beginning of verse 17 he did not leave himself without witness so it has a speaking message quality to it there is somebody who cares about people and gives them stuff not just enough to survive but he gives them full tummies

fun fruit there is a generosity behind this universe and you ought to find out who that is to say thank you you know when you talk like that

I go back to the family in Ethiopia and God is still God yes how do you work that one out yes I think this is not the only way God speaks when Paul was addressing these people he would address them in an appropriate way presumably they did have full tummies and he is saying the reason you got full tummies is because of the God who made everything and you should be worshipping him rather than these idols that is not the only way God in Revelation you have the horsemen of the apocalypse which bring war famine plague division and you have the trumpets which do much the same thing and the message in Revelation is God sent all these things but still people did not repent and did not turn from worthless idols so

I mean God is speaking in many ways he is saying you ought to be grateful you know if you got full stomach you ought to be grateful and I think that's what he says to us western societies you know we by and large have a high standard of living and God is saying to us do you think that you've got that all by yourself do you think you're entitled to that do you think you'll always have that because that's my goodness that's provided that to you you!

you should this world is not right the way people live is not right you should be turning back to the creator and sometimes God whispers to people in their pleasures but I think as C.S.

[42:01] Lewis says he shouts to people in their pain repent and God uses those different methodologies and I mean I'm just going to say that's what scripture says I don't claim to sort of be in charge of that or understand it or sort of justify it so common grace and God's providence and I think we've got three very useful theological tools here to think of creation and then to think of the way the fall has operated in producing this system of the world and that God doesn't just disown the world and cast it all off he will come to that judgment point at some point but in this day of grace God shows his grace and we live in a world full of grace and we shouldn't overlook that all sorts of things around us are the fruit of

God's common grace stand up comedians I mean I know they can use a lot of rude words but they're sometimes very funny and they fill us with gladness and we should say the Lord provides humour and nice food we're quite a foodie place here in Brighton aren't we I don't know whether you can afford all of that but when you've had a nice meal that's from the Lord and it's right to be thankful and everybody else who eats nice food to be thankful too and when you go to the doctor and he manages to something which actually heals you and you go and have a technological hospital op which gives you a new knee or a new whatever it is that's God's common grace and we should be grateful for all those things so let me finish with one verse which is chapter

Colossians 3 16 and 17 and then somebody can think of a song to finish with Colossians 3 16 and 17 Roger could you read Colossians 3 16 and 17 thank you very much just focus on that last bit we live in a world with elephants and hospitals and restaurants and churches this is all but the Lord is there in all of it I had a dear we used to have a coffee morning and there was a dear Pentecostal sister who came along and she said one week she said we've had a healing in our church God is still in business I think amen well that's great but God's always in business if the sun rises God's in business if the rain falls God's in business if we continue to breathe God's in business this is he's constantly a work in his providence and we should be aware of that and we should be grateful and whatever we do should be for his glory not just the Bible studies and the prayer times but everything in his world should be in