

In the beginning: Seeking a Future

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[0 : 00] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your great glory our supreme concern.

We are to share the creed together in our services. This year we've been sharing the Nicene Creed, it being the 1700th anniversary of that Council of the Church which came up with the Nicene Creed. I hope you all appreciate that sharing something like the creed reminds us that we're part of something bigger. Bigger than ourselves, bigger than just Craig Lockhart Church. We're part of the whole church, the one holy Catholic church. It's just good to remind ourselves that we're part of something bigger.

Next Saturday we get the chance to pray for something bigger for the Church of Scotland and the National Church's work in our nation.

[1 : 23] The Church has asked for a National Day of Prayer next Saturday and so we're going to have the Church open from 10 o'clock till 12 o'clock. Come along, drop in, join in with a time of prayer here and we'll have tea and coffee through in the Centenary Hall as well.

But it's good to remember that we're part of something bigger than just ourselves and just our own congregation. The Nicene Creed perhaps points us to the past but this morning our reading points us to the future.

The future has been called the undiscovered country, both by William Shakespeare and by Captain Kirk. Whether the future is a future beyond death or a future yet to come in this life, for us today it remains undiscovered.

Part of our human condition, our human experience is to seek a future. These past weeks we've been reading from Genesis 1 through to Genesis 11.

We've travelled from the beginning, before there was time, when God was. And at chapter 11 we reach perhaps the end of the beginning.

[2 : 55] And in all these chapters we are seeking a future. In the beginning there is God. One God.

The only God. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great big God of the Bible. There is only God and only this God.

This one God creates everything. And he declares that it is very good. It serves his purposes of grace and glory.

It is very good. This is true of all humans. We are created in God's purpose good.

This is true of all creation. All of it. Trees and flowers and mountains and rivers and elephants and dogs and the furthest stars and galaxies and everything they contain.

[3 : 58] It is all created by this one God. And it is good because he says it's good. But not for long.

Just a few chapters in and our father and mother rebel against this one God. Rejecting his purposes of glory and grace.

Choosing their own way rather than his. And we all tied as it were to Adam's apron strings. Follow on behind.

We choose rebellion. We choose rejection. We turn away and we hide from our God and our father. Alienated from our God.

Strangers. Outside the garden. Our long story of human history is of our seeking a future in which we can come home.

[5 : 01] In which we can once again come into the presence of our father. All of those verses in these opening chapters of Genesis.

So and so had a son and he had a son and he had a son and he had another son. And he had a son with a difficult name. And he had a son. And on and on and on. All of these verses are all looking forward.

Seeking a future. Looking down as it were upon a creation which has fallen from his very good. Separated from his people. When only living together with his creation is what our God calls good. We find that our God is also seeking a future.

A future in which his creation is renewed and restored. A future in which we are reconciled to him. This is our story.

[6 : 09] This is our song. God's story is that he makes a future for us.

He comes to seek our future with us. And to bring us safely into his future.

This is our story and our hope. After the flood. And today it seems a bit strange to talk about after the flood.

It feels like we're still in the middle of it. But we're not. After the flood. Noah and his family come out from the ark. They multiply.

And they fill the earth. Of course. They were only one people. They had only one language. And they all had the same words.

[7 : 17] And they spread out. They moved from place to place. It turns out. That migration is not a new thing.

And might not actually be a problem at all. What do you think. The children of rebels. Would do. What do you think. People who have rejected their God. Would set themselves. To fill in their time with. What will their future be.

Well they said. Come. Let us build ourselves a city. And a tower with its top in the heavens. And let us make a name for ourselves. Lest we be dispersed.

Over the face of the whole earth. Well that's one way. Of making a future for yourself. Make a name for yourself.

[8 : 18] That will be remembered after you. Do something noteworthy. So that in the years to come. In the future. Someone will say.

Remember so and so. He did such and such. You might even have a tower. Or a building named after you. Until cancelled culture comes along.

And changes the names of all the buildings. And all the streets. And all the squares in our towns. And so we forget the story. Of where we've come from.

But everything in the story. Of the Tower of Babel. Is about human effort. It's all about human pride. We have the technology.

To be able to beat clay into bricks. So let's do that. We can use them. To make a gigantic tower. Which will reach up to the heavens. If God thinks he would expel us from the garden.

[9 : 22] Well we'll just build our own way back to heaven. Humans plan. By means of their tower.

Not to be scattered over all the earth. But it's been God's plan. That humanity is scattered. Multiplies. And fills the air.

This is the only way we can care for. And steward all of God's creation. The tower builders. Continue their rejection of God.

They leave him. Out of their planning. Rebellion and rejection. Rejection continues. But the plan of the Lord.

Will be achieved. His purposes of grace. To renew and restore all things. Will be fulfilled. He will make sure. That humans spread over all the earth.

[10 : 21] The Lord confused. The language of all the earth. And from there. The Lord dispersed them. Over the face of all the earth. This is the future.

Which God seeks. For us. Any future. That we plan. And execute.

Without God. Is not his future. It will not bring us. Into heaven. No matter how high the tower is. But thank God.

He is at work among us. The text doesn't say. That God destroyed the tower. It doesn't say. That the Lord was angry. Or that he was punishing anyone.

But the only hope. For a good future. A future together with God. Is God's future. It turns out. It turns out.

[11 : 23] This future. This future. God's future. Is not only for humanity. But for all creation. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans.

For the creation waits with eager longing. For the revealing of the children of God. For the creation was subjected to futility. Not willingly. But because of him who subjected it.

In hope. That creation itself. Will be set free. From its bondage to corruption. And obtain the freedom of the glory. Of the children of God.

Our salvation. Your salvation. And mine. This is what all creation. Is seeking for their future. When creation seeks a future.

It seeks God's future. Depending upon God's work. Depending upon God. To redeem. And reconcile. You and I.

[12 : 26] All creation is blessed. Whenever any person. Is brought home to God. All creation is blessed. When our sins are forgiven.

When we are restored. To our father's home. When we are united to Christ. All creation is blessed. Creation is not blessed.

In our technology. Or our industry. Or our planning. Apart from God. As we surrender all to Jesus. Creation moves closer.

To renewal. And recreation. One transformed life. At a time. When you seek a future. Don't build a tower.

Come home. To your father. If you want to build a name. Build the name of Jesus. Don't try and build your own name.

[13 : 23] But cling to the wonderful name. Above every name of Jesus. Let his name be the only one. That counts for you. And he will build a future.

With you. That renews and restores all things. Down in verse 27.

The phrase. These are the generations of. Looks to the future. As it always does in Genesis. Terah is building a future. Through his family. Avram.

Nahor. Haran. And Lot. And their families. It's interesting to note. That even at this early point. In the story. A problem.

Is built in. Avram's wife Sarah. Can't have children. So how will God build a future there? Terah leads his family away from Ar.

[14 : 23] Going west towards Canaan. Round the top of the fertile crescent. But later on in Genesis we read. The Lord said to Avram. I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans.

To give you this land to possess. Later on in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah prays. You are the Lord. The God who chose Avram. And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans.

And gave him the name Abraham. Terah's move. Together with his family. From Ar towards Canaan.

Is God's plan. If we were continuing into Genesis 12. The first verse in that chapter reads. Now the Lord said to Avram.

Go from your country. And your kindred. And your father's house. To the land I will show you. A promise and hope. Of a future.

[15 : 21] The Lord is seeking a future. And he is building one. For all humanity. For all creation. And he is building it.

With this one family. If. Terah had been able to listen to Gordon's talk earlier.

Terah might well have said to Gordon. But I am just moving home. I am just going from Ur. Towards Canaan. That is just one small thing. Out of the whole history of the universe.

And the Lord would have said. It only needs to be one small thing. But if you do it in obedience to me. Out of that one family moving home.

God's plan to renew and restore all things. Takes root. And begins to grow. Into the Lord Jesus Christ.

[16 : 24] Great Abram's greater son. Out of all humanity. God picks one person at a time. And calls us.

Calls all of us. You step out and follow me. And your obedience. And my call. Will build a future for you. And for all creation.

This is how God will achieve his mission. Out of all creation. God chose to become. One man.

To be born in Bethlehem. To grow and share our life. To come and die for us. That his body might be broken.

And his blood poured out. Just one person. But that one person. Forgives all of us. And renews and restores all creation.

[17 : 26] As we read these verses. At the end of Genesis 11. About Terah had a son. And they had sons and nephews.

It sounds awful like. Other parts of Genesis. That we've read. Chapter 4. Chapter 5. Chapter 10. Lists and lists of names. And families having sons. Sometimes.

God achieves. His future for us. In wonderful. And unexpected ways. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost. But sometimes. God works. His future for us. In wonderful.

And entirely. Ordinary ways. People having children. People living in families. People moving home. [18:23] From one city or town. To another. People. Obeying God's word. Entirely ordinary.

Yet wonderful. And from these things. God creates. His future. Is that not what we're seeking? When you're seeking. A future. You're seeking. In God's word. That doesn't mean. Read the Bible. And somewhere. You're going to find.

A verse. To tell you. What to do tomorrow. Rather. It means. Read your Bible. And do. What it says. Read your Bible.

Believe it. To be God's word. And submit. To what God. Says to you. And you will find. That God brings you. Into the future. He has planned.

[19:17] For all creation. And prepared. For you. To share a part in. It's as wonderful. And ordinary. As reading God's word.

And obeying God's word. Coming to the table. Of the Lord. We look to the past. And we remember. We come. In the present. And receive grace. We depend. Upon the promised. Future. And declare. Christ's coming. Again.

Our living. As God's people. Today. Depends. Upon the past. All that God. Has done. In the long story. Of his mission. All the way.

From the beginning. All that God. Our father. Has done. Is the foundation. Of our life. With him. Today. Our creeds.

[20:15] Are important. Our sacraments. Are important. They remind us. Of the story. Of God. In which we are called. To live.

Our place. In God's story. Today. Grows organically. Out of God's. Story. Which he has been living. Since the beginning.

Our living. As God's people. Today. Is shaped. For. And by. God's. Future. By redemption. And renewal. God is shaping us.

Into a people. Who will fit. In. To his. Future. God. I wonder. How many times. You've had a conversation.

With a family. And maybe you're talking about. A phone. That can connect. To the internet. Or. The television. That now has hundreds. Of channels. And you see. Something like.

[21:10] It's a good job. Your granny's not here. She wouldn't cope. With all this. And we know. What we mean. In. But we are being prepared.

Now. To fit in. To cope with. Whatever future. God grows. That will be very good. It's starting now. To be prepared. For the end. as we know God's promises of glory and grace as we depend upon them God guides us and nurtures us into his future our living as God's people today is what God calls us to do we cannot today live in the past doesn't matter how hard we try the past is gone we cannot yet live in the future because we're not there yet we can only live today seeking God's future we have a choice we can live today in rebellion and rejection of God we can try to make a name for ourselves we can try to build our own way back to heaven but we know that will never work the future which begins for us today the life that God calls us to live today is cross shaped that's what this table says to us a cross shaped life is what we are called to live the life we live today is informed by God's word he has not left us to guess what we are to do or how we are to live he wrote it down for us in words we can read and understand all of Genesis 1-11 seeks a future and finds it in Jesus all of us in the same way are seeking a future we will only find it in Jesus there is no other name for us there is no other future for us there is no other hope for us than Jesus our saviour Jesus is our future and we can begin today to depend upon him let's pray together Father we are humbled before you we are amazed by the the greatness of your story of love and mercy and we long to be part of that story to know you more and to live together with you be at work among us we pray help us to live today in the light of your story and in the hope of your future shape our lives by Jesus that we all might be more like him bless us in this we pray for your glory Amen