

In the Beginning

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Date: 27 June 2021

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Well, this morning's a special service because it's, you know, it's not every day that we're outside, maybe once a year. So I wanted to preach on something a little bit different, something kind of special and fitting to the occasion.

And as I kept thinking about what that might be, I kept coming back to, I think I'm going to preach about creation from Genesis chapter 1. And I've never preached a message from Genesis chapter 1, but I thought if I was ever going to do it, it makes the most sense to do it outside when we're in the midst of what God has created.

So here we go, Genesis chapter 1. First, let's begin by just taking a moment to look around. I want to encourage you to look at the trees.

Look at the leaves. Listen to the birds. Imagine the roots of the trees down in the soil.

Look at the green blades of grass poking up. Think about those fields that you saw on the way in, some of them with beautiful yellow flowers, some just looking green and lush.

[1 : 11] Look at the sky. The clouds hanging. The sun shining through the trees. Consider for a moment that the sun is a massive ball of fire, a star burning over 93 million miles away from us.

And its light makes the difference between us being able to see everything around us or not being able to see anything at all. Think about the heat from the sun.

We're probably going to feel it a lot this week. But think about what it would be without that. It makes a difference between us being warm and alive or us being freezing in the cold of space, not able to grow anything.

Feel the wind, the breeze. All over the surface of the earth, the wind blows. Sometimes it's a gentle breeze like now. Other times it's a blasting gale.

In Davidson, sometimes it feels like it's more a blasting gale. But today it's a beautiful day. Without the wind, what would it be?

[2 : 30] It cools. It dries. It helps things move about on earth. It brings the clouds with their rain. It's an amazing world that we live in. A massive habitat floating around in the dead void of space.

And yet we have oxygen to breathe in abundance, water to drink, heat, light, plants for food. Where did this amazing place come from?

Genesis 1.1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Long ago, there was a day when the earth that we feel beneath our feet right now wasn't there.

There was a day when the sky that we see up above wasn't there. When the sun, the moon, the stars that we see at night weren't shining because they didn't exist.

But in that day, God was there. He existed. And it was He, God, the Lord, Yahweh, who created all of this, the universe as we know it.

[3 : 50] I love the way that it says it here in Genesis 1.1. It says, God created the heavens and the earth. Which is a beautiful and poetic way of saying that He made everything.

From our vantage point, that's all there is. There's the stuff that's above, the heavens, and there's the earth. The place where we live and below. Everything. The earth, in all its beauty, with all its wonders, this home of ours, and the heavens way above and all that it contains.

Stars, galaxies, all of it had its beginning when God made it long ago. And what we're about to read this morning is a little of how it happened.

I'm going to read the first 19 verses of Genesis 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless 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.

[4 : 59] 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 He called night. And there was evening. And there was morning. The first day. And God said, Let there be a vault between the waters.

To separate water from water. So God made the vault. And separated the water under the vault. From the water above it. And it was so. God called the vault sky.

And there was evening. And there was morning. The second day. And God said, Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place. And let dry ground appear.

And it was so. God called the dry ground land. And the gathered waters He called seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let the land produce vegetation.

[6 : 01] 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. And God said, Let there be lights in the vault of the sky. To separate the day from the night. And let them serve as signs to mark sacred times.

And days. And years. And let them be lights in the vault of the sky. To give light on the earth. And it was so. God made two great lights.

The greater light to govern the day. And the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the vault of the sky. To give light on the earth.

[6 : 56] To govern the day and the night. And to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening. And there was morning. The fourth day. Amazing, isn't it?

Personally, I don't have much experience making earths. Or designing habitable planets. So when I read this. I'll be honest. I have at least two to three questions.

About every single sentence. Why did God do all of this in four days? Just what did it look like and feel like on earth during each of those four days?

Unless God tells us at the end. We may never know. Because the truth is. None of us human beings were there. Yet. And yes, I do believe that they are 24 hour days.

And there was evening. And there was morning. The first day. And there was evening. And there was morning. The second day. And there was evening. And there was morning. The third day. And so on and so forth. Six times God says it.

[7 : 58] The Hebrew word means day. And it can be used figuratively to mean a particular time. As in the day of the Lord. Or a general time. As in in those days.

But obviously it means a 24 hour day here. Because that's the only kind of day that has an evening and a morning. That's the whole point of creating light. And separating it from the darkness on the first day.

It's to have that first evening and morning. It's to begin that light and dark cycle. That will become one of the basic unchangeable foundations. Of all life on earth going forward.

And according to God. He started that cycle. That light dark cycle. On day one. Even before he made the sun. And the moon and the stars. On the fourth day. Well why did he do it that way?

As I said. I'm no expert in making earths. Or designing habitable planets. Are you? I have all kinds of questions.

[9 : 04] Why did God make plants before he made the sun? What exactly is that water above the sky? Is that like clouds way up high? Or is that some kind of moisture in the upper atmosphere?

Is that some kind of canopy between space and the earth? As some have suggested. The truth is. I don't know. And we can probably speculate all we want about it. But can we know?

We weren't there. We hadn't been created yet. And maybe that's one of the lessons that we're meant to take from some of these first few verses of Genesis.

I mean think about this. Where did this account come from? It wasn't passed down human eyewitness to human eyewitness. Generation to generation.

There were no human beings during these first four, five days of creation. No, we believe that God spoke to Moses. And told him what to write.

[10 : 00] Told him how he did it. So this isn't just man's perspective of what happened. Nor is it man's attempt to create a creation story like all the other cultures of the world of the day had in their time.

This is God's account of what he did. Of how he made the universe and the things that are in it. Think about this.

Day five, God makes the sea creatures and the flying creatures. Day six, he makes all the rest of the creatures. And only after that does he make man and woman.

Why did he do it in that order? Why not make Adam and Eve on day one or two? So that they could have a front row seat and watch as he makes all the rest of the stuff. Many would say it's because God wanted to go from least to greatest.

To highlight that man is the last and the greatest of all of God's creation. And that's probably true. But I see another purpose here at the same time. Wouldn't it be humbling to open your eyes and become conscious in a beautiful world full of life that you know very well you had nothing to do with the making of it?

[11 : 24] Wouldn't it be humbling? Imagine this. It's not a perfect analogy. But it might get us started down that track.

Imagine that tonight you go to sleep. You close your eyes. And tomorrow morning you wake up. And open your eyes. And you look around. And you're in a brand new house.

And the house that you're in is beautiful. It makes the house that you currently live in look like a shack. It's like your dream house. It has everything you ever wanted and even things you didn't really know that you wanted in it.

Can you imagine? Perfectly furnished and suited to your own tastes and needs? Almost like the person who built it knew you inside and out.

The pantries stocked with all kinds of foods. Many of which you didn't even know that you would love. Until you tried them. Can you imagine just opening your eyes one morning and waking up to that?

[12 : 27] To a home that you didn't build or buy. And was just there from the moment you woke up. Maybe we're now catching something of what Adam felt in his first few hours of life.

Where am I? What is all this? Where did this come from? How humbling. To wake up for the first time ever.

In a home. A world that you didn't even know where it came from. Because all the work of building it. Making it ready for you to live in was done. Even before you took your first breath.

And oh the wonder of it. As you look around at all the beautiful things. As you sink your teeth into that first juicy bite of fruit. As you gaze up at those mysterious lights in the night sky.

And wonder. What are those? How did they get there? Perhaps God did it that way. Not just to highlight that we're the greatest of all creation.

[13 : 38] Perhaps he did it that way also to remind us that we too are creatures. And that we can. We can't even take an ounce of credit for the world that we live in. For everything else that he made.

Let's keep reading. Starting in verse 20. And God said. Let the water team with living creatures. And let birds fly above the earth.

Across the vault of the sky. So God created the great creatures of the sea. And every living thing with which the water teams. And that moves about in it. According to their kinds.

And every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said. Be fruitful. And increase in number. And fill the water in the seas.

And let the birds increase on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning. The fifth day. And God said. Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds.

[14 : 37] The livestock. The creatures that move along the ground. And the wild animals. Each according to its kind. And it was so. 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 God saw that it was good. Then God said. Let us make man in our image.

In our likeness. So that they may rule over the fish in the sea. And the birds in the sky. Over the livestock. And all the wild animals. And over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man.

In his own image. In the image of God. He created them. Male and female. He created them. God blessed them and said to them. Be fruitful.

And increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea. And the birds in the sky. And over every living creature that moves on the ground. Then God said.

[15:38] I give you every seed bearing plant on the face of the whole earth. And every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth.

And all the birds in the sky. And all the creatures that move along the ground. Everything that has the breath of life in it. I give every green plant for food. And it was so. God saw all that he had made. And it was very good. And there was evening. And there was morning. The sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth. Were completed. In all their vast array.

Wow. The first four days of creation. Are focused on the big picture of the heavens and the earth. The last two days. Are all about the creation of all the living creatures.

That God filled the earth with. Plants had already been made on the third day. And depending on how you read Genesis 2. Their seeds were in the ground at least. And plants in and of themselves are amazing.

[16:39] How they grow. How they photosynthesize. How they reproduce. The almost endless variety of plants. All different kinds.

But plants are nothing. Compared to the living creatures. That God made. And filled the earth with. On day five. He made the flying creatures.

And the sea creatures. According to their various kinds. On day six. He made all the other creatures. And we hear again and again. According to their kinds. According to their kinds.

Probably this means. That God didn't create. Every single species. That we see today. All at the beginning. Every variety of bird. Every variety of snake.

Probably it means. That God created. Every different kind. Or every family. And. Almost like a. Like a seed. Later. That kind.

[17:36] That family would unfold. And we would see. The diversification of species. From. Those particular. Animals. It's part of his creative power.

And genius. He intended all along. That. That's how it would go. That. As they spread. And filled. The earth. There would be this. Kaleidoscope of diversity.

Beautiful. For all to see. I mean. Just think for a moment. Of the. The different varieties. Of. Creatures. On this earth.

You've got eagles. And you've got ostriches. You've got. Parrots. And hummingbirds. Dolphins. And jellyfish.

Crocodiles. And octopus. Earthworms. And grasshoppers. Salamanders. And spiders.

[18:36] Horses. And kangaroos. Giraffes. And snow leopards. Elephants. And hippopotamuses.

We could go on all day. We never get to the end of the list. And whether God has a sense of humor. Or whether he just wanted to humble. Some of the scientists of.

Of. Of human civilizations. To come. Or maybe he just liked to have. A lot of diversity. He also made a lot of. Creatures that have some. Interesting combinations. And features.

Things like flying squirrels. And flying fish. Birds that can't fly. Like the ostrich. Birds that can swim. And dive. Lizards that can run on top of water. Mammals that breathe like we do. And yet plumb the depths of the ocean.

[19:34] Like the whale. Starfish that just sit there and eat all day. Octopus. That has nine brains and three hearts.

And can camouflage itself. Fireflies that glow in the dark. Crawling caterpillars. That disassemble themselves into a chemical soup.

And then reassemble themselves into a. Pretty much totally different kind of thing. With all different systems. They eat different things. They fly. They have different navigation mechanisms.

How about the platypus. A duck billed. Beaver tailed. Otter footed. Egg laying. Venomous.

Mammal. With stingers on the heels. Of its hind feet. Or how about the peacock. One of the funniest looking birds on earth. At least in my opinion. It's got this huge fan of colorful.

[20:34] Iridescent feathers. That's big enough. And colorful enough. To scare almost all the predators away. It can hardly fly. But it can run up to 10 miles an hour apparently.

Even with that huge fan on its back. God created the living creatures. With such amazing potential for diversity. And variety.

That even today. We still haven't managed to discover. All the different species. According to one source. There were 213 new species. Discovered just last year. In 2020.

According to UNESCO. There are about 150 new marine species. Discovered each year. And that number is going up. Also according to UNESCO.

There's currently a backlog. With samples that have been collected. Of up to 65,000 unknown species. That have not yet even been documented. Or described. They estimate that they've only identified.

[21 : 31] And described 226,000 marine species. Out of maybe 700,000. It's amazing. It all points to the creative power.

And genius of God. Who made the heavens. And the earth. And filled the earth. With all of this. And then there's you.

And me. Human beings. Different from every other creature. On the planet. And we're still marveling.

At how one of us. Can come to be. From seemingly nothing. In only nine months. In our mother's womb. And yet God made the first one of us. In less than a day.

Our bodies. Everything going on inside of us. Is so complex. Generation after generation. Of doctors.

[22 : 29] Researchers. And scientists. Are still discovering. New and amazing things. About how we work. All the time. And that's just the physical part of us.

We all know that we are more than our bodies. There's an immaterial part to us as well. We have a spirit. We have a soul. We have consciousness.

And awareness. And emotion. And memory. Ask a doctor. Or a scientist. Where that part of you. Lives in your body.

They probably can't give you a good answer. King David might have lived. Almost three thousand years ago. But he hit the nail on the head. When he said.

I praise you. Lord. Lord. Because I am fearfully. And wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. He said. I know that full well.

[23 : 28] We don't even have time this morning. To talk about the stars. About the galaxies. About the. Super clusters of galaxies. In the heavens above. Again.

David. David. David. Who lived three thousand years ago. Hit the nail on the head. When he said. Oh Lord. Our Lord. How majestic. Is your name. In all the earth. You set your glory.

In the heavens. The heavens declare your glory. The skies proclaim the work of your hands. And when I consider your heavens.

The work of your hands. The moon. And the stars. That you have set in place. What is man. That you are mindful of him.

The son of man that you care. For him. God's power. God's beauty. God's creativity. God's wisdom.

[24 : 22] God's intelligence. God's foresight is written all over everything around us. Above. And below. And what floors me. And humbles me right to the ground.

Is that he made everything. It says. Simply by speaking. It into existence. Do you hear that in Genesis 1? And God said.

Let there be. And it was. And God said. Let there be. And it was so. And it was so.

And it was so. That's astonishing. I can't do anything like that. I can dream. I can plan.

I can envision something. I can go out and collect. And gather. And buy what already exists. And then build and assemble it into something. But God has the ability. The power to create with his words.

[25 : 20] From nothing. To command things into existence. Out of nothing. And he did all this. Before the first man even took his first breath.

This is why when it comes to the origin of our world. We can only get so far by observation. By inference. Hypotheses.

By science. By deduction. As the author of Hebrews said. Hebrews 11 verse 3. It's by faith. We understand. That the universe was formed at God's command.

So that what is seen. Was not made. Out of what was visible. It's something we understand. By faith. Because the only way to understand it. And know the truth of it.

Is to believe. The historical count of the one who actually did it. And tells us how. He did it. He says. By faith. We understand that the universe.

[26 : 17] Was formed at God's command. Again. Emphasizing the supreme power. Of our God. Making all the things that we see around us. In all their glory.

In all their beauty. Simply by speaking. When there was nothing at all. Before. We have a glorious. Majestic. And powerful God. And all the world around us.

Testifies. To his power. And his goodness. So what should our response be? Well as I've. Already said.

It should humble us deeply. Before God. He is the creator. And we are but a creation. Of his. As David said.

What is man. That you are mindful of him. That you. That you care about him. Who am I. That you even think of me. God. And yet he does care.

[27 : 12] Very much about. Each one of us. He loves us. That's why he. Graciously chose to reveal himself. Time and time again. That's why he sent his son. Jesus.

The God man. To show us the way. To be the way. So it should humble us deeply. Before God. To consider what he has done. In creating everything.

Including us. But beyond that. It should stir our hearts. To worship him. And that word. Worship. It's a serious word.

It speaks of acknowledging. The supreme worth. Of someone. Or something. And in truth. There is only one. Who is really.

Worthy. Of our worship. And not because our worship. Is worth a lot. But because. He is that.

Worthy. He is that amazing. To not give him credit.

[28 : 11] For all that he's done. Is wrong. The response. That we should have. To God. And his marvelous work. Of creation. Is to pour our hearts.

Out in worship. Not just on Sunday mornings. But every day. Not just some lifeless. Lip service. Kind of worship. But some passionate.

From the heart. Kind of worship. As we take in. And see. All that he has made. And all that he has done. The kind of worship. That. He calls us to.

Is the kind that we see. In the psalms. I'm just going to. Read a psalm in closing. Psalm. 148. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise him in the heights above. Praise him. All his angels. Praise him. All his heavenly hosts. Praise him. Sun and moon.

[29 : 11] Praise him. All you shining stars. Praise him. You highest heavens. And you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name. Of the Lord. For at his command.

They were created. Praise the Lord from the earth. You great sea creatures. And all ocean depths. Lightning and hail. Snow and clouds. Stormy winds that do his bidding.

You mountains. And all hills. Fruit trees. And all cedars. Wild animals. And all cattle. Small creatures. And flying birds. Kings of the earth.

And all nations. You princes. And all rulers on earth. Young men. And women. Old men. And children. Let them praise the name of the Lord. For his name alone is exalted.

His splendor is above. The earth. And the heavens. Amen. Praise the Lord indeed. Father in heaven. We thank you that you have given us.

[30 : 10] The true story. Of how our world began. And we believe it. We're in awe. At what you have done. We're amazed.

When we look at the things in this world. That are so far beyond. What we could ever create. Design. Build. And we see the beauty.

That you have put into our world as well. It gets to our hearts. We know that we were made for you. To know you. To have relationship with you.

And so we joyfully give ourselves to that. You are worthy of our worship. And we love you. In Jesus name. Amen.