

And God Said

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- [0 : 0 0] And you can open back up to Genesis chapter 1. That's where we're going to be this morning for the sermon. The book of Genesis, it means beginnings.
- It's a book of origins. It's a book that tells us who we are. You know, in order to know where you're going, you have to know where you came from.
- And so Genesis is important. What does it mean to be human? What story am I a part of? Why are we here? And it might not answer all of your questions here in the first chapter.
- God, in his providence, did not tell us about dinosaurs in Genesis chapter 1. But it does give us enough. It gives us what we need in order to live as his people.
- It lays the necessary foundation for life in this world. And I don't know what it's like in Scottish churches, but in American churches, if I ever preach, if anybody ever mentions Genesis 1, everybody's first question is, it's their reflex, how long were the days?
- [1 : 0 5] Right? Tell us about the science of it, right? And I'm not saying that those are bad questions or things that we can't weigh into and think about theologically and scientifically and talk about.
- All I'm saying is I'm not going to talk about that all this morning. And here's the reason why. It's because if you go through the Bible, any place where it's reflecting back on the creation, the first reflex is one of praise.
- This is what we get, Psalm 8, verses 3 to 4. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you've set in place, what is man that you're mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?
- Revelation 4.11. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power. Why? For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.
- The reflex we should have when it comes to a passage like Genesis 1 is one of praise and wonder and worship to ascribe worth.
- [2 : 1 5] Remember? So let's pray first and then we will look more closely at this passage. Would you pray with me? Oh, Father, we come before you as your creatures, eager to hear you speak.
- Your word went out and brought forth life in Genesis 1, this passage that we just read. And we ask that it would go forth now, and as we hear it, it would bring new life into our hearts.
- And we ask this in the name of our Creator and our Redeemer. Amen. All right, here's the word for the day. You ready for it? You really ready?
- Your word for the day is a number, and the number is septillion. Can you say that back to me? Septillion. Septillion. Septillion is one followed by 24 zeros.
- Okay, so for reference, billion is one followed by nine zeros, right? Trillion is one followed by 12 zeros. So septillion is a big number.
- [3 : 1 7] It is very, very big. There are one septillion stars in the observable universe. That's what scientists tell us. That's the number.

That's what we've pegged it at. Septillion. That's very large. In case you didn't know, that's what I'm here for. There are only 5,000 stars that you can see with the naked eye from planet Earth.

And of those 5,000 stars, you can actually only see 2,500 of them because the planet Earth blocks the other 2,500 on the other side. And in order to see those 2,500 stars, you need to get out of the city.

Get away from the city lights. No moon. And what you can see with the naked eye is amazing. I remember one time I was on a missions trip in Peru, and we were driving in the pickup truck, and literally for miles, the only lights were the headlights of this pickup truck.

And I was in the back of the pickup truck with a couple friends, and we were looking up, and I looked at these 2,500 stars. I grew up in Miami. I thought there was like 10 stars in the sky.

[4 : 29] It was breathtaking. Because you see where we are in our galaxy in the Milky Way, where it stretches across, and we're at the end of it. And so when you look up, and you see these stars dotting the sky, I mean, it was like the sky, this dark sky was on fire with these tiny stars.

And being at the end of the Milky Way galaxy, you kind of see that milkiness of the galaxy stretching across the sky for 2,500 stars.

And now because of telescopes and space exploration, we can observe one septillion stars. You know, the sky that the biblical writers would look up at would be like the one I was describing in Peru.

That's what they would look up and they would see. How much more should we praise God? 2,500 to one septillion. Isaiah 40, verses 25 to 26.

To whom then will you compare that I should be like him, says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these. He who brings out their starry host by number, calling them all by name.

[5 : 36] He's named all of them. Callum. Ailey. They're all Scottish names, I'm pretty sure. By the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

Septillion. It's kind of a silly big number in some ways. It's kind of too big for us to really grasp. So maybe an analogy would be helpful. I brought something with. All right. Just for a second. Guess how many in your mind.

Guess how many little pieces of rice, little grains of rice are in. It's a one kilogram bag. If it matters, USA long grain rice. How many do you think?

You ready? I don't know. Maybe somebody's going really high. Somebody's going really low. There are 50,000 grains of rice in this bag. Okay? 50,000.

So if each grain of rice in here represented a star, right? That would be 20 times more than you can see with your naked eye. Okay?

[6 : 35] Like if each one was a star, 20 more than you could see up in the sky. And there are 400 billion stars in our Milky Way, just in our galaxy amidst all the galaxies in the world.

So you know what that means? You would need 8 million bags of this rice to equal, for each one was a star, to equal all the stars just in our Milky Way.

I did some research. I looked it up online. It's on the internet. It has to be true. If I were to stack all of these up, and I'm not just saying like stacking one on top of the other. I'm saying like making a huge mound of them, those 8 million bags of rice, it would be taller than a Monroe.

I think I'm using that. That's like 1,000 meters, right? Like 3,000 feet. That's how big it would be. Just stacks and stacks of bags of rice. That's the number of stars in the Milky Way. To get to one septillion, you would need 125 trillion of those Monroes.

It's big. Let's go small. Eye drops. Guess how many molecules are in 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 drops of water.

[7 : 56] Guess how many molecules are in that? One septillion. A septillion. What our passage tells us is from the biggest to the smallest, they all exist because God spoke them into being.

And this passage tells us then too that he knows you. And he's calling you to respond to him. Three points from this passage.

The first is the God of creation. Second is the goodness of creation. And then lastly, the good news of creation. The God of creation. The goodness of creation. And then lastly, the good news of creation.

I promise. No more math. The first thing that we're drawn to when you read Genesis 1 is the chief character in this chapter. And you know who it is?

God. The Hebrew is Elohim. Now that's interesting because it's not until chapter 2, verse 4, that he's referred to as Yahweh Elohim. The Lord God.

[9 : 01] The Lord is his covenantal name. But first, what we're just introduced to him as is God. The creator. The transcendent one. The one who speaks and what wasn't now is.

In case you didn't notice, there's this ease to everything that God is doing, right? As he creates. Each day it begins with the same phrase.

And God said. And what happens? Just effortlessly. And there was. God said. There was. It was so. There's nothing against which God, Elohim, must struggle.

And what we learn then in Genesis 1 is a much needed word in a world full of idols. And it's this. It's just Elohim. And there is no one else.

He's not only the God of creation. He alone is God. There's that section on day 4. It was a little bit longer than the other days. I don't know if you noticed. Verses 14 to 19. It's about the sun, moon, and stars.

[10 : 01] And there's lots of repetition. And it's to this. It's what commentators say. It's to hit home the point. These are just creation. They're not the creator. You might skip over it.

But, you know, we say Genesis. The original audience is probably Israelites coming out of Egypt. They just came out of a world full of idols and other gods.

Ones that they would be tempted to worship themselves. You know, maybe make my life a little bit easier by paying some homage to Ra, the sun god. Right? They would say, oh, maybe we should do something.

Maybe we should give a scribe some worth. Some value. Some worship to him. Maybe we want Ra, the sun god, to bless us and to make his face to shine upon us.

And Genesis 1 says, no. No, the only one who's actually going to bless is the creator god. And, you know, it's not just the ancient Israelites, but us too.

[10 : 58] We struggle with worshiping the created over the creator. This is what Paul talks about in Romans 1. Right? We want to worship the created over the creator. Our world, it's still full of false deities everywhere in many different countries.

And in Scotland, we might not call these things Ra or Molech, but we endow ultimate worth and give our worship to and sacrifice for created things.

Now, there's this thing that we struggle with in Western society called greed. And this is the simple point. Do you see how petty and illogical sin-like greed is when you start with Genesis 1 and the God of creation?

Worship the creator and give that ultimate worth? Worship the creation and give that ultimate worth over the creator? No way!

How futile, how foolish. We sang this just a second ago, Psalm 33. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars.

[12 : 06] He puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be.

He commanded, and it stood firm. And so there is one true God, Elohim. He is the creator. He is the author. And his claim over all things is absolute.

As the author of all things, then here's by way of analogy, you know, people like to argue about different literary characters. So, I don't know, pick some author. J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter.

You don't get to go to her and be like, hey, Harry is this type of a character in your books. She wrote the books. She gets to say what he's like, right?

That is her prerogative. One of the most influential books written ever on literary theory in the mid-20th century is this book that I haven't read because I'm not smart enough, but I read about it and people said it was.

[13 : 03] So, I'm relaying that information to you. It's called Mamasus by a guy named Eric Arbach. And in that, what he does, he begins his book by comparing Homer's The Odyssey with the Bible, specifically Genesis 1.

And he comes to this conclusion in comparing the two. He says this, The Bible's claim to truth is not only far more urgent than Homer's, it is tyrannical. It excludes all other claims.

The word of the scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historical reality. It insists that it is the only real world and it is destined for divine autocracy.

This guy wasn't a Christian, but he understands literature and he got it. Genesis 1 doesn't give you the option of making Elohim one of many gods. It doesn't paint a picture of a god who's uninterested and far off and doesn't care about his creation.

He is close. He is creative. It doesn't open up the possibility of pantheism, divinizing the material world. It is all created. There is one deity.

[14 : 11] There is one center of power, one source of all life. And in Genesis 1, God doesn't just create, he sustains all things.

While separate from his creation, he binds himself to it, to his work. So Matthew 10, Jesus says, Are not two sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father?

Or as John Calvin said, If God should but withdraw his hand a little, all things would immediately perish and dissolve into nothing. In other words, translation, there's no cruise control setting to the universe.

So not only is God the creator alone, only mentioning other gods to show that they're nothing, not only is he so powerful that he can speak things into existence, not only is he the author laying claim to ultimate truth, not only does he sustain all things through his tender providence, he also reveals himself through his creative work.

Right? Psalm 19, the heaven, they declare the glory of God. This guy named William Van Gemmeren, he says this, God has brought forth the cosmos and in so doing has made himself known.

[15 : 25] The God of creation desires to be known. And his creation is not only to be enjoyed, but also serves as like a road map right back to the creator.

And the first thing we learn about God is not that he is redeemer, but that he's the creator. Have you accepted God as creator into your life? Before we're moving on to the next point, let me apply this quickly.

First, let me ask this. Do you think the God that we just read about and the one that we've talked about, this God of creation, is content with some little aspect of your life, like on Sundays, like there's this soulful part of you that he really, really cares about and the rest, whatever, you get to do whatever you want with it.

Or does he lay claim over all things as the sovereign one? Is this type of God that we're talking about and reading about, is he equivalent to an assistant that you invite into your life to help you get a little bit better, you know, practice some self-actualization?

Or someone who you bend the knee to as Lord? I hope the answer is obvious, right? This is why we pray your will be done. And this means then we submit to him in all things.

[16 : 47] I'm not trying to be legalistic about this, but we submit to him in how much we drink and eat, not wanting either to be a Lord for us. How we speak and think, we submit to him in.

We realize from Genesis 1 that for those created in the image of the God of creation, speaking is a very powerful thing. Your words are powerful.

It's not a flippant thing that you do and, oh, it's just something I said. God's the one who speaks in creation. Life comes. And we can speak words of life or words of death.

Second thing. Second point of application. Praise him. Worship him. Praise the creator.

This is what we sang about in Psalm 148. I want to read it for you again. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise him in the heights. Praise him, all his angels. Praise him, all his hosts.

[17 : 46] Praise him, sun, moon. Praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord. For he commanded and they were created.

And he established them forever and ever. He gave a decree and it shall not pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures in all deeps. Fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his words.

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds, kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth, young men and maidens together, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord.

For his name alone is exalted. His majesty is above heaven and earth. It's the first thing that we encounter is the God of creation.

Second thing I want to look at then is the goodness of creation. Again, you just take your cues from the Bible, from the text. Repetition really matters. Did you notice the repetition in Genesis 1? God saw that his creation was what?

[18 : 51] Good, right? Verse 4, verse 9, verse 12, verse 18, verse 21. Go past our text. Verse 25 and 31 in chapter 1. And there's this invitation in our passage to see God's creation the way that he does, as good.

And when God says that his creation is good, it's not like he's doing an MOT inspection and like slapping a past sticker on him. Like, on your way, creation, you're good. Well, he's enjoying it.

What are we to do in response to our text? Well, the first thing is we adore our creator, the God of creation, as we said. But here we also see to enjoy and exult in his creation.

After all, that is what God is doing as he creates. We should not call something bad that God calls good. And thus, we shouldn't demean, abuse, or take for granted God's creation.

Of course, you know, creation, it's not something to be stood far away from. It's something to be cultivated by man, right? Right after what we read, God creates man, and he tells man to have dominion over the earth.

[20 : 03] And some people kind of read that wrong. They feel like it's like putting it in a chokehold. And I'm just going to, earth, I'm going to make you do what I want because I'm made in the image of God. But is that what God's doing? No, it says, have dominion, be fruitful, and multiply, subdue the earth.

But that means to bring forth its fruitfulness. Because those created in the image of God are taking their cues from the God of creation. And what's he doing this whole time?

He's bringing forth the fruitfulness and life from the earth. That's part of what it means to be an image bearer. You're like, okay, but like sin enters the world, right?

Thorns and thistles pop up. Yeah? Yeah. Sin enters the world for us too, but right in Genesis 5 and Genesis 9, it still says even though sin is here, we're still created in the image of God.

And so this is the point then, theologically, that there is an enduring goodness to God's creation. As Paul says in Romans 8, it's the creation that is groaning for redemption.

[21 : 05] Come new heavens and new earth. Be rid of this sin. And just like our future body, it's not a disembodied state. You know, Jesus was resurrected.

Physical. Because he was created. Because God created matter. And so matter matters. That's your future. And so this world, this matter, it matters. And your future, you're not floating on a cloud with a harp, singing psalm whatever, you know.

You are destined for a new heavens and a new earth, a physical creature. There is discontinuity, right? It's a resurrection body. Light. But it's physical. When we lived in St. Louis, Aaron and the kids decided to check a telescope out of the library.

And we didn't know you could do this, but you went to our public library. And it wasn't, you know, it wasn't the best telescope ever, but it was like, you know, it was a pretty good-sized telescope. And I came home one evening after a meeting at church.

And Aaron, I walked in, and Aaron said, do you want to see Saturn's rings? And I was like, heck, yes, I do. Let's go outside. And so we went outside. And we looked. It was this, you know, clear night.

[22 : 14] And we looked. And if you're an astronomy nerd, maybe you know. You're like, oh, that's not a star. That's Saturn right there. And it's so tiny. And we looked through the telescope. And you know what I saw?

I saw Saturn. The planet. And it had a ring around it. Now, here's the thing. I don't know a lot about, like, outer space, but I knew Saturn had a ring around it.

But you want to know what my reaction was when I saw it? By golly, it's true. You can see it. It's really there. I saw it with my own eyes.

And then we looked to Jupiter. And it was just like a glowing dot that was, like, a little bit bigger than if we looked far away. But we looked really close. And you could see four of its moons. And I think there's at least 75 other moons.

I was like, this is so cool. And Aaron's like, yeah, I looked at it earlier with the kids, and I kind of cried. It was amazing. It was amazing. Let me apply this then before moving on.

[23 : 16] Here's your assignment for this week. I want you to go hug a tree. Have you ever been told that before? Or at least do something of that sort, okay?

Like, you're like, what are you talking about? Martin Luther, the reformer, he would say if he was ever depressed and feeling down, he would do three things. One is he would read his Bible more. Two, he would pray more.

And three, he would get out and walk around in creation. Do something. This is the invitation to you. I'm not dictating. There's not going to be any follow-up. Is to do something playful this week.

Wrestle with your kids. Build a pillow fort. Cook that recipe that you've always wanted to make. Bust out your telescope if you have it and pray for a cloudless night.

But contemplate the beauty of your milk mixing with your coffee. It's one of the coolest things. Look out your window and write a poem about an animal that you see running by.

[24 : 18] Or if you're an engineer and all of those things are too fanciful for you, like build something, right? Make it. Have a process. Make it. And in all those things, give thanks.

Receive it with gladness. A great kiss from your spouse. A delicious meal shared with friends. An incredible sunset.

These are all a faint hint of what's to come. And so you receive these things with gladness and thanksgiving. Do you see the amazing possibility for your life when you get these first two points?

The God of creation and the goodness of creation. On the one hand, creation is there and it is to be enjoyed. It is good. And on the other hand, creation is not all that there is. There is a God, right?

And so secularism says the material is all that we have. And Christianity says it's good, but it's not everything. So we can enjoy it, but also we're not despondent if we're lacking.

[25 : 20] If you go without pleasure and comfort. Why? Because you still have the creator. You still have the God of creation. You can learn the secret to being content in plenty and in want, as Paul says in Philippians 4.

So, God of creation, the goodness of creation. The last thing is the good news of creation. Psalm 119 verse 91 says, All things serve you, God.

One theologian writes, he says this, God commands the waters to bring forth fish and reciprocally the fish to multiply and fill the waters. Likewise, the sky and the birds, the land and the land animals, all parts of God's creation have their covenantal task.

And when God says that things are good, there's a Hebrew word tov. It has a variety of meanings. But here, it seems to be drawing attention to the object's quality and its fitness for its purpose.

It's good, right? So we can assess goodness from how God has created something to be. What is its purpose? And in Genesis 1, do you know what you see?

[26 : 29] His creation is doing his bidding. All of creation, it bends and responds to God's word. And the question that ancient Israelites, the same question we should be asking.

If the wind listens to God's voice and obeys, should not we also? Here's the pattern that you see throughout Genesis 1, and it's this.

The word of the Lord comes. Creation obeys. God blesses, right? The word of the Lord comes. You saw it the whole time. God speaks. It's so. Creation obeys. It does what it's designed to do.

And then God blesses. He says it's good. That's what benediction, what we do at the end of the service, it means good word. It's a blessing. It's speaking. It's saying this is good. This is right.

This is to be enjoyed. This is precious. This is as it ought to be. This has God's blessing, his good word upon us. So the word of the Lord comes. Creation obeys.

[27 : 30] And God blesses. This little thing that called Genesis chapter 3 comes though, right? And sin enters the world. And we know this experientially in our own life. And this is what happens instead.

This is the pattern instead. The word of the Lord comes. We ignore it or we run from it. And then we vainly search for blessing somewhere else, right?

Instead of the word of the Lord comes. Creation obeys. God blesses. The word of the Lord comes. We ignore it or we run from it. And then we're still searching for that blessing. And what we go to again and again, you know, it's just like that long year or that longing.

If you're, you hiked a mountain or you're looking at the sunset, you're like, it's so beautiful. It's like, I want to get inside of it. It's this desire to be as things ought to be. To get that blessing, that good word again.

And so we want to find someone to speak these such words of celebration of us. To tell us we're okay. To tell us we're good. We're loved. We're enjoyed. That's why people search in love.

[28 : 29] You know, they go from person to person. They're trying to find it vainly. To get that blessing, that benediction that they're never going to get. Here's the good news of creation though. For those whose God's word goes to and they obey, disobey, ignore it.

And they search for blessing in other places. The word of the Lord becomes flesh. And it enters into creation. And the word obeys at every point.

And what you see in the word become flesh in Jesus, he goes to his baptism. And do you know what happens at his baptism? The heavens open. And you hear the voice of God say, this is my son in whom I'm well pleased.

What's he speaking? He's speaking a benediction. A blessing. A goodness. Over his son. And what we believe for those who've run away from the word of the Lord.

Is that this word who's become flesh actually suffered and obeyed in our place. And when we come to him by faith, you can receive that same benediction again.

[29 : 45] Romans 8, right? The spirit testifies to us that we are sons of God. Loved like the father loves his son.

This is the promise in recreation for us. 2 Corinthians 4, for God who said, let light shine out of the darkness has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The God of creation who said, let there be light in Genesis 1. He speaks the same words into the darkness of our hearts. And there was light.

Thanks be to God. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we do give you thanks as our creator. We thank you for what you have made. We thank you for what we can enjoy.

We thank you for giving us the gifts and the opportunities to steward your creation. And to usher the praises of creation as your image bears back to you.

[30 : 51] Father, we pray that you would keep us ever from worshiping the created over the creator. We keep this passage in our minds this week. Father, we pray that you would help us to enjoy the goodness of creation.

That as Christians, as followers of Christ, that we would love and cherish your creation like you do. That that would make us stand out and look different in the world.

That we wouldn't shy away from talking about the parts of creation that we love. Because we have a creator God who loves us and gives us good gifts. And Father, in all of that, we thank you for that there's good news in not just the creation, but in recreation.

And that there's a day coming when you will make all things new. And in the meantime, we wait and we say, Lord Jesus, come quickly. And as we wait, would you grow our faith. And in our faith, do not put us to shame.

But assure us of the hope that we have in Christ. We pray all this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen.