

A Perfect Home

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Preacher: Mark Chew

[0 : 00] Good evening, everyone. Well, let me pray for us.

Father, help me to speak well for your glory, and help us all to consider your word carefully, that we might be changed by it for your son's glory. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, this is a continuation of our series in Genesis. We're going to do it from Chapter 1 to 11 over the next couple of months or three. And so this is our second one when looking at Chapter 2.

I wonder what you think when I mention the word home, and I've got a little icon there for you. What images and memories come to your mind? So for some, it may be the smell of mom's lamb roast.

Or, more likely if you're Asian, her seafood curry laksa or dumplings. It may be the sound or smell of the sea if you grew up by the beach.

[1 : 12] Or perhaps the idea of the whole family being together again. Maybe at Christmas or Chinese New Year. Three or more generations all together. Some of you, I know, will have more than one home.

The one you live in, but also the one you grew up in, where your parents live. Maybe even in another country. And those of us from overseas often have this impulse, don't we?

To recreate our home of birth. So just take Box Hill, or Footscray, or Richmond. Richmond. But even Richmond, of course, that's not a Vietnamese name, is it?

It's actually English. It's a suburb in London. And so is Doncaster. As I'm sure Eric would know, a good Yorkshireman. It's in South Yorkshire.

Same with Canterbury, Camberwell. These are all English names that, when the English first came to Australia, they named these places to actually remind themselves of home. And so consciously or unconsciously, we're driven by this search for home.

[2 : 20] It's a powerful force, isn't it? The need to feel secure, to have a place to belong, and to enjoy life. So where I wonder, do you call home?

And if you are still looking for one, how do you find it? Well, let's look at Genesis tonight to find out. Well, because after God created the universe, in this chapter, he creates a home for humanity.

And in this chapter, he defines what we need to find a home. Now, as far as the book of Genesis goes, when we read chapter 1 last week, there was a bit of an introduction, a prologue.

And the rest of Genesis is actually divided into distinct sections, which I've got on the slide up there. Each section starts with the Hebrew word, toledot, meaning generation or account.

And so in chapter 2, this is how it starts, in verse 4. It says, this is the account, to mark the start of the section, this is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

[3 : 26] And so if in chapter 1, what we encountered was a transcendent God, that is a big God who stands outside creation, in chapter 2, we see an imminent God, that is I-double-M-A-N-E-N-T, that is a God who is close to us, who is operating within creation.

He's being present to build a home for humans. And this home is in the garden. And I want you to notice the contrast between the world at large and the garden.

So when the world was first created, it's almost a hostile place, uncultivated, uninhabitable. So in verse 4 to 6, just notice the number of gnomes that are there.

And no shrub had yet appeared on the earth, and no plant had yet sprung up. For the Lord God had not, or there was no rain, sent on the earth, and there was no one to work the ground.

But streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Now all that changes when God forms the man. And we see that there is an affinity between the man and the environment.

[4 : 34] So the word, actually, Adam in Hebrew, for man or human, is actually very close to the word Adama, or ground, in Hebrew. Adam is taken from the dust of the ground, the Adama, just as the trees will grow out of the ground, as we see later.

But Adam is also distinct from the environment, because God breathes into him the breath of life, and he becomes a living being. But instead of casting him into the big world, as it were, verse 8, God plants a garden and puts him in it.

Now if you ask my wife, and no doubt some of you are keen gardeners, planting is a very deliberate activity, isn't it? It takes great care and attention if you want to plant.

And here we see God doing exactly that. He plants all kinds of trees, and we read that it's not just good for food, it is actually pleasing to the eye. That is, God is not just concerned with human survival, and in the middle of the garden, he puts the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And both of them symbolizes God's presence, reminding Adam that the garden is here because of God. He's alive because of God.

[5 : 55] And in the Bible, home is always where God rules, and where he is the provider. Now so abundant is this garden that we now read in verse 10, that its riches flow into the rest of the world.

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden, and as it does, it separates into the four headwaters, and brings life to the land around Eden, and to the rest of the world.

So having described this beautiful picture of Eden, God then now, or the Bible then now describes, or reveals three things about this home. Three things that show what makes Eden a home for Adam.

And they're right there in the middle of the chapter, between verses 15 to 18. So in verse 15, God gives Adam a purpose. 16 and 17, he sets out one prohibition, and in verse 18, he reveals one remaining problem, which he then goes on to solve.

Adam's purpose is to work and care for the garden. So he's a farmer, and I think that includes caring for the animals, because he goes on to name the beasts and the birds.

[7 : 09] Now it may seem strange to connect work with home, because most of us think of home as a place or retreat from work, don't we?

It's a place to rest. And I think that's true, but as we saw last week, rest is actually related to work. There's rest only if there's work.

And actually, if you ask people, and my dad unfortunately was one of them, who struggle to find work, home sometimes actually becomes a prison, because they're cooped in there with nothing to do, without any aim or purpose.

And we all need a purpose in life, and work gives that to us, even though work shouldn't define us as people. And so I take the home to be bigger than just the place or the house in which we lay our heads.

It incorporates our place of work too. And in the ancient times, work and home were actually sort of next to each other. And if you think about it, a lot of what drives global migration today arises because of people's search for work.

[8 : 21] And when they find work, that's where they set up home. Suddenly, I'm in Australia because my parents came out here for work. And I spent two years in London because I was going there to work.

Now, God gives us work, not because he needs us to work, but because he himself is a worker. And because we're made in his image, we are made to work as well.

He didn't need for us to name the creatures for him. He could have done it himself. But as we see in verses 19 and 20, what he does is he brings the animals to the man.

And it is the man that takes the lead role in actually naming them. And the amazing thing is that whatever the man names the animals, God goes along with it.

It's such a great responsibility that's being entrusted to him. And sometimes I wonder whether God has regrets about doing that. What does he think about us calling this animal an art vark?

[9 : 41] And how about this other one? Sorry, this slide thing is a bit... Armadillo. And this one?

A dugong. I mean, some of these names are pretty strange. But this one I like, the fourth one. Anyone guess what this is? A fish, yep.

There's a particular name. Actually, I personally think that it's more appropriate to call this a thumb sucker. But anyway. But, I mean, this is a bit of a joke, but there is great freedom, isn't there, in what God has given us to do.

And this applies not just in naming things, but across all areas of life as well. So, for example, God could have chosen to compose every song in this world. And yet he gives us the freedom to do it.

And unfortunately, some things like heavy metal music does arise. But, I know some people love it. But, you know, God could have just composed it.

[10 : 43] He could have invented the car or the plane or computers. But, no, he allowed us to do it. He allowed us to do it so that we could get the same joy out of creating or inventing that he did when he created the world.

To have the satisfaction of looking at something we've created, like the Apple iPhone or something, and go, wow, this is good. Well, let's, all this goes to our head, all this God-likeness, as it were.

Adam, and for Adam, God places one prohibition on Adam. And that's our next point in verse 16. And that prohibition is a command not to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now, this tree is not about intelligence in general. It's about morality. That is, the knowledge of good and evil, not just general knowledge. And it's the only prohibition that Adam is given.

He's actually free to eat of anything else in the garden, including the tree of life, I take it. Life under God is actually full of freedom.

[11 : 59] People often think that it's stifling to be a Christian, but no, actually, we're given great freedom to exercise responsibilities. This was the same with Adam. But he was given this one prohibition because to eat of the forbidden fruit is to actually reject God's rule.

It's to say that we want to be the ones to define what good and evil are. But as humans, we can't do that, can we?

Because it's God's character that defines what's good and evil. Whatever God is, that's good. Whatever he isn't, that's evil. And this is actually hardwired into our world, into creation.

Whatever God does reflects who he is. And so, when God creates this world, this world reflects his character, even his moral character.

God's character. And so, if Adam rejected that by eating the fruit, he would be going against God's created order. In fact, he would be going against his very own nature because he was created to reflect God.

[13 : 10] So, no wonder that God says that the result is if you eat of the fruit, you will surely die. And next week, we'll go into see what that means in more detail.

Now, up to now, everything that God has created has been good. So, last week, day after day, it is good. And then it was very good at the end of the six. But there's still one thing that is lacking in this world.

And he states that in verse 18. One thing that we still need in order for a whole to be created. And so, he says in verse 18, it is not good, in stark contrast to what's gone before, it is not good for the man to be alone.

This was the one remaining thing that Eden lacked. And God was going to solve it by providing a suitable helper. In other words, God was going to create relationships. And in order to create relationships, he has to create more humans.

Because it takes more than one human to have a relationship. Now, often people seek relationships, and I mean generally, not just boy and girl, but generally, between friends even.

[14 : 23] They do that because they're lonely. So you want friends or you want a husband or wife because you want to feel loved, you want to feel wanted. But I want you to notice that actually that's not God's concern here.

His concern is actually to provide a helper. Now, what is the difference? Well, the difference I think is that loneliness is largely self-centered. It's about what I want or what I need.

Whereas, to be a helper is to be other-centered, to say, what does the other need? Now, we can only guess why God didn't solve this problem from the very start, as in create both Adam and Eve at the very start.

But I think the story suggests that God wanted Adam to realize the problem himself. So I see verse 21 and 23 to be set up as a contrast with verses 19 and 20.

So in both sections, God brings something or someone to Adam. In verse 19 it's the animals and in verse 21 it's the woman. But with the animals, Adam names, but in verse 20 does not find a suitable helper.

[15 : 31] Whereas with the woman, Adam names her because he's found his helper. And so he says, I think almost ecstatically in verse 23, she's now born of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She's called woman for she was taken out of man. So the helper that God gives to Adam is just like him, made in God's image and taken from his side.

Now notice that God didn't create a second human and then just divide the work and each of them went off and did their own separate task. No, God actually wanted the woman to be a helper to the man.

Now we're not to take from this that the woman is inferior because elsewhere in the Bible God is also a helper. Rather, I think the emphasis here is that the work should be shared. That there is to be cooperation and collaboration and the enjoying of the work together.

And if we think about our own workplaces, that's what we want, don't we? We hate it when the culture at work is dog eat dog. When at classes everyone's just super competitive trying to outdo each other.

[16 : 39] Why? Because it destroys relationship. It destroys the loyalty that we have for each other and the sense of security. And so relationship is the final thing that the man needed before he could call the garden his home.

And home is where we find our most meaningful relationships, isn't it? That's where we have people we can share our work with and share our lives with. Now when God established the first relationship, he also established the first marriage.

The first helper happened also to be the first wife. And in the context of Genesis, that makes perfect sense, doesn't it? Because part of Adam's work was to be fruitful and multiply.

So he needed a marriage for that to work. He needed a marriage to create a new home where children could be born. And so while we've touched on relationships generally up to now, Genesis 2 also addresses marriage specifically, which the rest of the chapter does.

If you like, God created marriage, I think, to be a specific example of how relationships should work. But one which demands a great commitment and in turn provides a great or deep intimacy.

[17 : 58] Andrew has already accused me of stealing this example, but I liken it to be the sort of thermal mix of relationships. So most of you know what a thermal mix is.

It's this one magic appliance apparently that does everything in it. So there's a picture of it. I'm thinking you can chop, blend, steam, cook, whatever, all in this one thing. And so while you used to have a blender and a pot and blah, blah, blah, over four or five things, now you can just do everything in this one appliance.

And I think it's similar, although not exactly, like marriage. Marriage is that one relationship where all the ingredients, as it were, of relationship takes place.

With the other things, friendships or whatever, there may be three or four aspects. But in marriage, you know, things like commitment, loyalty, working together, trust, all these are rolled into one single relationship.

And in addition to that, marriage has two additional characteristics which are unique to it. And we find them in verses 24 and 25.

[19 : 03] The first, in verse 24, says this, that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh. So the first thing in marriage that is different is that it is an exclusive commitment.

In marriage, the husband and wife are to be faithful to each other and to forsake all others. They are joined together as in one flesh. And he even has to leave his home that he had with his father and mother in order to start a new one with his wife.

Nothing or no one is meant to come between the marriage. And this union is sort of a mirror image, I think, of verse 22. For in verse 22, God took the woman out of man and now here in 24, in marriage, the man is joined back to the woman.

And so the two people may still be separate physically, but relationally, they are to be one flesh. And that's why Paul commands husbands in the passage we just read to love their wives as their own bodies.

Now the second thing that's different between marriages and other relationships is the sexual intimacy. So in verse 25, Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.

[20 : 23] Now I think in verse 24, the word one flesh already has the connotation of sexual union, but it's explicit here in verse 25. Adam and his wife are naked before each other and in every sense of the word, honest, open, with nothing to hide, and there is no shame.

And I think the sexual act then is designed to reflect what should already be happening in the rest of the relationship. All the openness and the trust is as it were expressed physically in the act of sexual union.

Now of course, before the fall, there was nothing to hide for Adam and Eve. They didn't have to sort of think, oh, you know, should I be exposing myself to this or that? No. Without sin, there was no shame.

Now this sort of intimacy is only reserved for marriage because the commitment and the faithfulness that is demanded is only present in marriage. When sex occurs outside marriage, it actually makes a mockery of these values.

There's no commitment, for instance, is there, in a one night stand. No concept of faithfulness when you're sleeping with a prostitute. With that, sex is all about self-gratification and not an expression of commitment to another.

[21 : 48] And so it's for all these reasons that the Bible holds marriage in very high regard. But I want to say that this doesn't mean that marriage is the only relationship that matters or that everyone has to be married in order to be blessed by God.

I mean, Jesus himself was single and I think so was the Apostle Paul. God is able to bless us through all sorts of relationships, family, friends, colleagues. It's just that in marriage there's just this one relationship that has all these aspects.

But that's not to say that you can't have all the aspects of relationships in your network of friendships and your network of relationships. Marriage has its challenges as well as its blessings just as being single does.

So for those of you who are not married for whatever reason, let me encourage you to seek the blessings in the relationships that God has already given to you.

Don't feel like you're missing out because you're not. but there is also one marriage which I want to get onto which we all can be part of whether we're married or single and that's our final point.

[23 : 07] Now remember last week where I said that God created humans image bearers of God to prepare for the perfect image bearer in Jesus? Well this week in chapter 2 God creates marriage in preparation for the perfect marriage which is the one between Christ and his church and this is the marriage that all of us whether we're married or not can be part of.

People keep talking about marriages made in heaven well there's really only one that is and that is this one the one between Christ and his church and that's Paul's exact point in Ephesians chapter 5 and 31 and 32.

So there he quotes again Genesis 2 24 and 25 the exact same words for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh and then he adds well this is a profound mystery that is hidden until now and what he's saying is that I'm not talking about a man and a woman but I'm talking about Christ and the church Christ leaves his father and is united to his bride the church and all other marriages is actually a picture simply just a picture of that.

Also last week I said that all things were created for Christ in Colossians chapter 1 now we learn that Christ having been given all things shares this with his bride the church and so in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22 it says God placed all things under Christ's feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church his bride which is his body the fullness of him who fills everything in every way and so this is the marriage that we're all invited to be part of we have a perfect husband in Christ as a body of Christ Christ is our perfect husband and unlike earthly marriages this marriage is going to last for eternity now we all lead busy lives don't we we have school we have work we have family and sometimes we find it hard to keep up with all these relationships relationships and many of these are important like family and close friends but tonight I want to ask us to remember that it is this relationship the one between

Christ and his church that is actually paramount and we are part of this relationship all of us here together form the church this is where God dwells by his spirit where he's making a home among us that's the exact picture that Revelation 21 paints in the New Jerusalem so I've got it up I saw the holy city the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared there we go as a bride beautifully beautifully dressed for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying look God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God actually I like the new revised standard version better because there it says see the home of God is among mortals we're in revelations we're in a new city but actually we're back in Genesis 2 aren't we God and humans in the garden making a home now I know some people may struggle to find a place to call home and sometimes that's because we haven't discovered or we're struggling with our purpose in life we don't know what to do with it others may struggle because of relationships we lack family we lack friends or our family relationships are not what we hope for but I want to say that if we truly want to find a place to call home then we need to start actually by living under

[26 : 58] God's rule by trusting in his son Jesus and belonging to the body of Christ now if you already belong to Christ's body then I want to encourage you to build on the relationships that you have here I know we're all busy and sometimes we get overcome by that but please let's make time to build relationships not just on Sundays but during the week as well make it a point to check in on each other to make sure that they're going okay to encourage each other during the week to pray for them or with them if you're part of the youth group then you know make that your priority or if you come on Wednesday night or another growth group make sure you set aside time to go to encourage each other to build those relationships and I know many of you are already doing that and that's great and we'll be able to do more of that over chicken and chips but these are the relationships have a look around you these are the relationships that matter they're not the only ones that matter but they do matter because they will last into eternity and if they do last into eternity then it does pay to invest in them now doesn't it and a final word for those who are married those of us

I want to encourage you to keep building on your marriages to spend time with each other to keep talking communicating building trust learning to forgive being gracious because if you do that faithfully then we testify not just to the goodness of our marriage but to the goodness of the marriage between Jesus and his church and if we do it well God will use our marriages to bless others and to bring them even into the kingdom of God let's pray Father we thank you that you've created us for relationship and we know that relationship has its joys and because we've fallen its pain as well but Lord we thank you that in Christ we have been given all the conditions that are necessary to build lasting fruitful and God honoring relationships so help us to do that with everyone in church with family but also to reach out to others who are still outside your kingdom and to draw them in to this perfect marriage the one between

Christ and his church we ask this because our savior is the perfect husband amen through■