

Created in the Image of God

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[0:00] Please turn your Bibles to Genesis 1, 26, 31, the sermon text for today. If you need a Bible, you're welcome to take one off the back table and keep it as our gift to you.

Then God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, and let them have domain over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and have domain over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You should have them for food.

And to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food, and it was so.

[1:14] And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning the sixth day. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Heavenly Father, we come to you one more time. And God, I just ask that you would be our teacher today.

Holy Spirit, would you illuminate this word that you spoke through your servant Moses so many years ago, and yet it is perfectly relevant for today?

Would you speak through it? Would you show us Christ? Would you show us who you intend for us to be by your design? God, would you let faith arise in this place?

And would you transform our hearts and our lives, Lord, increasingly into the image of Jesus Christ? We pray this in his name. Amen. Well, quite prophetically, Francis Schaeffer, in 1972, before the internet, before household computers, before smartphones, if you can even imagine a world like that, he wrote these words in his book, *Genesis in Space and Time*.

[2:32] He says this, As a Christian, I can look at the most complicated machine that men have made so far or ever will make and realize that, although the machine may do some things that I cannot do, I am different from it.

If I see a machine that is stronger than I am, it doesn't matter. If it can lift a house, I am not disturbed. If it can run faster than I can, its speed doesn't threaten me.

If I am faced, this was 1972, if I am faced with a giant computer, which can never be beaten when it plays checkers, even when I realize that never in history will I or any man be able to beat it, I am not crushed.

Others may be overwhelmed intellectually and psychologically by the fact that a man can make a machine that can beat him at his own game, but not the Christian. Now this is all before the artificial intelligence revolution that we're experiencing today.

And you know, today, in a world where AI content generation is replacing human jobs, and where AI companions are replacing human friendships, how do we differentiate ourselves from what Schaeffer calls in 1972, the machine?

[3:43] How much more pressing has this question become over the last 50 years? Now it might strike the world as impossible to strike us this morning as obvious, and that is that the answer to this question is found

in God's Word.

Even in the very first chapter of the book of the Bible, written over 3,000 years ago by Moses. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever, Isaiah 40, verse 8. Now last week we began a series in the book of Genesis covering all of chapter 1, looking at God's very good creation. And we saw how the entire narrative flow of Genesis 1, it culminates, it climaxes, in God bringing forth mankind.

We are the crown of His creation. He saved the best for last. Now this week we're going to be taking time to linger here in these crucial verses. And so the title of today's sermon, Created in the Image of God.

Now I had Allie read verses 26 to 31, but we're really going to be focusing in just on verses 26 through 29. And here is the first thing that we see in this text.

[5:04] God created humanity in His image. Look at your Bibles, look at verse 26. God says, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

And in verse 27, So God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them.

Now we're supposed to see here a dramatic contrast with everything else that God created beforehand. If you look in your Bibles, look at verses 11 and 12. On day three, God made plants, each according to its kind.

That phrase is repeated there three different times. Each according to its kind. Each according to its kind. And then on day five, look at verse 21. It says again that the livestock were created each according to their kinds.

Every winged bird according to its kind. I'm sorry, the sea creatures and the birds. And that, and day five. And then in day six, if you go down to verses 24, the livestock and creeping things according to their kinds.

[6:11] And He made the beasts according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds. And then we get to the second half of day six. And it doesn't say that they were made each according to their kinds, does it?

It says that they were created in the image of God. That phrase is repeated three different times with the complimentary phrase after our likeness.

To be made in the imago Dei. This is the Latin phrase for the image of God. The imago Dei. It means, friends, that we are patterned after our Creator. Now what does this mean exactly, to be patterned after our Creator?

Well, it doesn't mean that we are Him or that we are exact replicas of Him, you know, like Jango Fett's Clone Army in Star Wars. It's more like, well, it's more like we're His children and He's our Father.

Now this doesn't mean that God has a body like ours. We're not supposed to conceive of God as this body. We're told in Scripture that God is spirit. We're told in Scripture that God dwells in unapproachable light and that no one has ever seen Him.

[7:21] And yet, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, took on a human body when He came to redeem us from the fall. And He revealed for us in the clearest display what the heart and the character of God is like.

Now what this means for us is, you know, reading through Genesis 1, if you want to know what a particular animal is supposed to be like, go look at the other kinds of animals, the other animals in its kind.

If you want to know what mankind ought to be like, look at God. And especially, look at Christ. Now perhaps this is why God said here, let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

This has long been understood, even though Moses didn't know it, as an early reference to the Trinity, right? The three persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, in one being, who existed in eternity past. If we can just think about that for a second. Father, Son, Spirit, from eternity past, before space and time that we know He was there. Now it's hard for us to conceive of what that could possibly be like.

[8:36] It blows our minds. What we shouldn't conceive is that this was boring for the triune God. As if apart from the world and apart from the universe, there was really nothing for them to do.

Now Jesus helps us to understand a little bit when He talks to the Father in His high priestly prayer in John 17. Jesus says, And now, Father, glorify me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.

You see there, before the universe came to be, there was a divine relationship of glory between Father, Son, and Spirit. And not only glory, because later in the prayer, Jesus prays, speaking of all of His disciples to come.

He's praying for us. He says, Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am to see My glory that You have given Me, listen to this, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

So prior to the existence of this world, there was a divine relationship of love between the persons of the Trinity.

[9:50] Father, Son, and Spirit from eternity past existed in a perfect relationship in which they glorified one another and they loved one another.

Within that divine personality, there was, and there still is unbroken fellowship, there was communication, there was intimacy. Now suddenly, it ought not sound so boring and static for the triune God to have existed before the foundation of the world.

And what Genesis 1 shows us is that it is out of the overflow of the divine personality. It is out of His self-giving love, His overflowing, life-giving goodness that God brought all of creation, unobligated, unconstrained.

He didn't have to do it. He brought it all into existence and especially mankind made in His image and His likeness. Now, C.S. Lewis comedically demonstrates this from the perspective of a demon in his book *The Screwtape Letters*.

If you haven't read that book, I highly encourage you to read *The Screwtape Letters*. It's about a senior demon named Screwtape who's writing advice to his nephew, Wormwood, a more junior demon who is, you know, seeking to tempt and lead a person into sin.

[11:14] Now, listen to what Screwtape writes. He writes this. One must face the fact that all the talk about His, he's talking about God, about His love for men and His service being perfect freedom is not, as one would gladly believe, mere propaganda, but an appalling truth.

He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself, creatures whose life on its miniature scale will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them, but because their wills freely conform to His.

We want cattle who can finally become food. He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in. He wants to give out.

We are empty and would be filled. He is full and flows over. So God, under no obligation whatsoever, out of His fullness, out of His abundance, out of His divine nature of sharing and self-giving, out of love, He made mankind to be like Himself.

He made mankind, that means, to share and to give. He made mankind to enjoy a beautiful relationship of intimacy with Himself and with one another, to love Him, to love one another with self-giving love.

[12:40] He made mankind to communicate and to fellowship with Him and with one another. Now this is a large part of what it means to be created in the image of God, to have the *Imago Dei*.

Friends, see this morning what honor, what dignity, what worth, what value is inherent to the human race. And not just the human race generally, but to each and every one of you, to each and every one of us.

On you, God has placed His divine stamp created in my image, made to reflect me, made to reflect my glory, made to know me and to make me known.

This is amazing. You, every one of you, are so valuable to the Maker and Creator. Oh, how greatly we need to remember this truth.

You know, when you're staring in the mirror on Sunday morning or on Monday morning and you don't like the face that is staring back, you need to remember this truth. When we're mocked or made fun of by our friends or peers or siblings even, we need to remember that we're created in the image of God.

[14:01] When we fail yet again on a work project or to live up to our mom standard that we're hoping to achieve, we need to remember created in the image of God.

even still, in spite of all our failures, this indelible mark remains created in my image. But friends, we also, we can't stop there, right?

Because the mocking of others and far worse evils are the result of forgetting that not only am I created in the image of God, but so too is my fellow man.

so too is every single person from the moment that life is conceived in the womb until someone's final breath, every single person is made in the image and likeness of God.

The Imago Dei is the foundation for the Christian ethic of love. And this is the second great commandment, isn't it? The first is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

[15:05] The second is like it. It is to love our neighbor as ourself. The Imago Dei is the foundation for that. And you know, Jesus made clear that our neighbor isn't just the guy next door.

It's everybody that comes across our path. Abortion and racism and all forms of oppression would be eradicated if we understood, if our culture understood and lived out the Imago Dei and lesser evils that are still evil bullying, name-calling, stomping on coworkers for career advancement, viewing our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ with condescension or judgment, all of these things and more.

They would be undercut if we saw one another as the image-bearers that God made us all to be. Now, you might ask, I'm like, aren't you forgetting about Genesis 3?

Right? The fall of man. And you're saying that we're still image-bearers of God, but Genesis 3 happened. That's true. It's true.

Right? We're going to get to Genesis 3 and we're going to see how the image of God in us was corrupted. It was tainted by sin and by the fall.

[16:24] And yet, Scripture will go out and show us in multiple other passages that even in our state of fallenness, even though there is corruption, there is still yet a resemblance to God.

And sinful humanity continues to bear a likeness to the God of creation. But the Bible says a lot more, doesn't it?

It says a lot more than that. Because the story of the Bible is not just a story about how the image of God has been corrupted. The Bible is about how the image of God is being redeemed through Jesus Christ.

Is it not? Because God himself came down, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, he came down and he took on the form of a man. Not the form of a monkey, like I said last week, or the form of a fish.

The form of a man and he bore our sins and he bore our iniquity on himself and he went to the cross to pay for those sins so that by faith in his name we might become new creations patterned again after him.

[17:31] Ephesians 4.24 created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Jesus imaged for us perfectly what God looks like and by faith in him we, our image is restored.

It becomes like Christ. So through the gospel we're once again able to accurately bear the image of God. We're accurately able to know God and to make him known.

Now of course this is imperfect. We're going to keep doing this imperfectly in this life but we are being transformed, brothers and sisters, from one degree of glory to the next. And on that day when Christ returns, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.

It's 1 John 3.2. So friends, it's only through Christ, it's only through the gospel that we can accurately live out this creation purpose in Genesis 1.

God created humanity in his image. And here's the second thing that we see. God created humanity male and female. We read in verse 27.

[18:43] So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created him.

He created them. Now what ought to be astounding to the Christian today is that this statement is actually controversial in our culture.

God created humanity male and female. Because that would not have been a controversial statement for basically all of human history until very recently. Though we should be quick to acknowledge after saying that that the impulse to reject God's loving authority is as old as Genesis 3.

So there's nothing new under the sun. Now I want us right now as we think about this idea, I want us to put some principles together that we've been considering last week and this week to understand these six words male and female, he created them.

The all-powerful, eternally pre-existing, triune God. Think about that. The God who, before the foundation of the world, enjoyed love and intimacy and fellowship and was a God of goodness, completely unconstrained then, out of the overflow of his nature, created the heavens and the earth with mankind as the crown of his creation.

[20:05] That God, when he created humanity in his image, he created them by his good design, male and female. Now this means, first of all, that male and female alike are imbued with equal honor and dignity and worth and value by their creator, but male is not female and female is not male.

Male and female, he created them. This really isn't complicated to understand, is it? It's only been complicated by our culture's desire to cast off the beautiful God-given constraints for human flourishing in order to find so-called freedom of self-expression.

As if that is what true freedom is. You know, it's sort of like the Navy aviator believing that true freedom would be for him to be able to fly his plane in the ocean because that's what submarines do.

And so if submarines can do it, his plane can do it. Right? How foolish that would be. No, no, no. True freedom for the Navy aviator is to operate his fighter jet in the place where it was designed to operate.

Right? And it's not harsh or capricious or restrictive or mean or unfair for the commanding officer to require the aviator to fly his plane in the sky.

[21:25] Right? It's actually because the CO wants his pilots to succeed. It's not harsh, capricious, restrictive, mean, unfair, unkind for the creator God to make some people male and some people female and tell them to operate within their beautiful God-given constraints.

You see, it's actually good. It's actually loving. It's actually for their joy and for their flourishing. Now this does naturally raise some questions.

Right? What does it mean to be male? What does it mean to be female? What is masculinity? What is femininity?

These are vital questions for us to be able to answer. Right? And they're not just theoretical. They actually affect every single one of us. They affect how we live out God's design. They affect our children.

They affect what they're aspiring to be, what you kids are hoping to grow up into. It affects you, right? It affects how we as parents and as adults are shepherding and discipling our kids to be what God wants them to be.

[22:39] You know, if your son asks you, Dads, Dad, what does it mean to be a man? Right? Moms, if your daughters ask you, Mom, what does it mean to be a woman? How would you answer that question?

Now let me assure you, there are answers to that question. There are good answers to that question. Answers that we find in the first three pages, chapters of the Bible.

We see them here in Genesis 1 and then especially in Genesis 2 and 3. And so we're going to be delving deeper into this topic. Right now we're just scratching the surface, but for today, for today, I want us to take away from this passage two principles, two key principles which I've really already stated in different words.

The first one is this equality of worth. Right? All humanity, whether male or female, and then any other distinctions that we can make, all of humanity is made in the image of God and therefore is imbued with worth, dignity, honor, respect, value.

There is inherent worth to being human. And the second is this, distinction in design. Distinction in design.

[23:51] As part of our God-likeness, He has made us male and female. There is distinction, there is differentiation. creation. Just as God differentiated the heavens from the earth and the day from the night and the expanse from the waters and the land from the sea and the plants from the animals, so He differentiated male from female.

And this is by His good and loving design. And this here, this is the starting point for us answering the questions that I posed just earlier.

You know, sometimes when I'm putting my kids to bed, I'll lean in close, you know, and to my sons, I will say to them, I'll remind them, you are a boy made in God's image just the way He designed. And to my daughter, I'll say, you are a beautiful girl made in God's image just the way that He designed. Even at their earliest ages, we can begin to enforce and reinforce these truths, but we can say much more still.

And we're going to say a bit more in just a few minutes, and then especially again as we progress through Genesis 2 and Genesis 3, we're going to see how this distinction in design, it creates a divine fittedness, a divine complementarity, such that when men live out their God-given masculinity and women live out their God-given femininity, there is harmony and flourishing, and there is a more complete reflection of God's likeness and a greater experience of His blessing.

[25:24] That's going to be where we're headed a bit over the next few weeks, but it's to the blessing that we come now in verse 28, for the text says, look in your Bibles, and God blessed them. So note this third point, God blessed humanity.

Now this is not just a flyover phrase. When we're reading through 31 verses, and God blessed them, we can just kind of keep going and miss this. This phrase is loaded with significance.

And God's blessing becomes one of the major themes of the book of Genesis and really the entire Bible. Now we already saw one blessing of God. Back in verse 22, God blessed the birds and the sea creatures in connection with His mandate for them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters and the seas and let birds multiply on the earth.

And similarly, now He blesses mankind. And it's in connection with the creation mandate that follows that. But before we get to the mandate, what does it mean for God to bless? What does that mean?

Now this is not some dictionary definition. This is Mike Luce's definition here, so take it for what it's worth. The blessing of God is the bestowing of His divine favor, His benevolence, His goodness upon mankind for our ultimate well-being.

[26:43] I think that's what we see God's blessing is in Scripture. And this is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the blessing of Aaron upon the people of Israel. Now these would be words that the hearers of Genesis, the first readers of Genesis would be very familiar with, is the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

How is that for a blessing? That is God's divine favor, His goodness, that Aaron is speaking over the people of Israel. Here in Genesis 1, at the beginning of the story, at the beginning of the history of the world and of mankind, we find the sovereign creator God bestowing upon His creation, and especially mankind, His divine favor.

Now unlike other creation accounts from the ancient Near East, in which the gods created mankind to be slaves and to do all their dirty work, the one true God created mankind divine, to share in His divine goodness, what a God we have.

Now closely following that blessing is what is known as the creation mandate. And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[28:18] God commissioned humanity. He commissioned humanity. Now the first part of this creation mandate, be fruitful, multiply, fill, like that's almost identical to what God said to the fish and to the birds and by implication the land animals as well.

Now we shouldn't see here God's blessing and then the mandate, and God blessed them and then He said to them, we shouldn't see those as separate, they're vitally linked. God's blessing is found in the creature's ability to carry out the mandate and in the carrying out of the mandate itself.

So what is it? To be fruitful and to multiply, what is that? Well, first and most obviously, it involves bearing children, right? Being fruitful and multiplying. And secondly, I think also included here, again we'll see this more in the weeks to come, it's the productivity of working the earth that God created.

Now let's remember, God created out of the overflow of His life-giving goodness, of His self-giving love. And so as His creatures go fulfilling these creation capacities, this mandate, they are going spreading that life-giving goodness, they're spreading that self-giving love to the world.

The earth is being filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, right? That's a theme throughout Scripture. We see that right here. Creatures multiplying, filling the earth, taking that goodness and the glory of God to the ends of the earth.

[29:55] And so we see that God's blessing, it actually increases as the creation mandate is being fulfilled. Also think about this, it is a profound blessing in and of itself for creatures to be able to make more creatures like themselves.

We get to take part in the creation of life. And that is also imaging God, right? God is the one who created life.

We get to image Him in that way. Image bearers producing more image bearers who produce more image bearers. And image bearers of God, think about this, are eternal beings.

We are producing eternal beings. Now obviously this isn't going to last eternally, right? But we are immortal souls. In the creation of life we're producing eternal souls.

That's insane. It's a way that we image God. Now it should be mentioned, and again, this is so obvious, but in our day we are needing to state the obvious.

[31:02] That this blessed mandate here for humanity to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth requires male and female. Requires male and female. Requires male to live out his masculinity and female to live out her femininity and requires them to come together in divine complementarity.

Men need women to produce more humans. Women need men to produce more humans. Male and female, He created them. Male and female. Now our culture doesn't want to admit this, right?

It wants the pleasure of sex to be entirely disconnected from the procreation of sex. It wants one's biological sex to be entirely separated now from one's gender identity.

This defies God's good design that we see right here in Genesis 1. It seeks to separate what God has joined together. And what He's joined together, friends, for the sake of human joy and flourishing.

It doesn't mean thing. He's done. It's a beautiful thing that He's done for our good. We'll talk more about that in the second half of Genesis 2. Be fruitful, multiply, fill.

[32:15] This is where God's blessing is found. Be fruitful, multiply, fill. Now Christians, I hope that as we're talking about this, you're thinking about a second commission of God.

Right? In the Great Commission, what is Jesus telling His disciples to do? To go into all the earth making disciples. Who will make more disciples? Who will make more disciples? The creation mandate, the Great Commission, are inseparably linked now because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In order for us to go spreading the life-giving goodness and the self-giving love of God to the world, we must go proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and in deed.

Be fruitful, multiply, fill. This is where God's blessing is found. But the creation mandate doesn't stop there. That's where it stops with the animals, right?

Be fruitful, multiply, fill. But God also tells humanity this, to subdue the earth and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[33:24] So the second part here, subdue, have dominion. Now this continues to show the place of preeminence that mankind has over the rest of God's creation.

There is intentionality in going from animals to mankind. Now I'm not going to get into this, but I think this completely precludes theistic evolution. If you want to talk to me more about that, feel free to talk to me after that.

That's my line I'm throwing in there. God did not make the monkeys, again, in his image and tell them to rule over his creatures. He told mankind. He created mankind in his image and he told mankind to rule over all things, all the earth.

Now Brad, I think it was Brad alluded earlier to Psalm 8. I read Psalm 8 and this idea that God has set mankind over creation leads David to praise.

He says, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him, yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and you've crowned him with glory and honor.

[34:37] You have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea. You see how he's moving through creation here.

Whatever passes along the seas, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. And so yet another way that humanity bears the image of God is by ruling and reigning over the earth. We are his vice regents. We're his under rulers. We are given authority to govern the rest of his creatures on his behalf. Now this informs how we should think about a lot of things, but in particular two topics.

The first one is stewardship. What is a steward? A steward is someone who manages and looks after what belongs to another. We are stewards of what belongs to God.

This means that we ought to manage and look after creation in the way that God does. How does God look after his creation? Well, we've talked over and over again today that he created out of his overflowing goodness, his self-giving love, his grace, and he did so for the joy and flourishing of his creation.

[36:01] That should be the effect of our dominion. We're not dispatched as tyrants over the earth to exploit and to take advantage and to use for our own comfort.

We're sent as God's representatives for its flourishing. Now, the implications of this are vast. From how humanity takes care of this whole planet to how each one of us exercises dominion in the home and at work.

And that leads me to a second principle. And I just want to warn you that the words that I'm about to say, they might have unintended side effects, okay? That might lead to crying or anger.

You might feel the urge to walk out or throw something at me. But please don't. Okay, here it is.

Work is good. Wow, I get a hot applause for that.

Work is good. Now, this is something else that we're going to develop over the next few weeks. A theology of work starts right here.

[37:09] I mean, God is the first worker. He worked. Now, that word will appear at the beginning of chapter two. God worked over six days to create all things, right?

And then He rests on the seventh day from His work. God is the first worker. And then He commissions mankind as His representatives to be fruitful and multiply and fill and subdue and have dominion.

Those things involve work. And this is all before the fall of Genesis chapter three. Work is pre-fall. Now, some of you that are smarter are like, well, exactly. And now work is bad.

But no. Now work is hard. Now the ground fights us, right? Now we can't see eye to eye with our coworkers. Now our children rebel against our authority, right?

Now we make mistakes that cost the company or the home money. Work is corrupted by the fall, but it is inherently, intrinsically good.

[38:13] And it's part of the way that we image God and live out the creation mandate. Paul calls the Colossians to work heartily. As for the Lord and not for men, you are serving the Lord Christ.

And so, church, may we see our God-given work, whether you're a mom or a machinist, whether you're a teacher or a counselor, officer or enlisted, engineer or designer, chemist or carpenter, nanny or nurse, musician or minister.

I think I've covered most of them in this room. Whatever our profession is, may we see this as from the Lord's hand to be used for the flourishing of this world and for the Lord's glory.

Let me say that again. May we see our work as from the Lord's hand for the flourishing of this world and for the glory of God. And I might sound like a broken record here, but we will be developing this theme more still in the weeks to come.

And so here's the fifth and final thing that we see in this text. God provided for humanity. Verse 29. Let me read verse 29. Look in your Bibles.

[39:28] And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit, you shall have them for food.

Some see here that God creates all the creatures as herbivores. And only after the fall do they become carnivores. Another topic that's really interesting, if you want to talk to me about, I'd love to talk to you about it.

We're not going to talk about it now. Here we see God's abundant and generous provision for mankind. And in the verse to follow, he then gives the same thing to all the creatures of the earth. This abundant and generous provision. God made a world that is perfectly suitable, welcoming even, for the creatures that he put to inhabit that world.

The world receives his creatures gladly. It keeps them, provides for them indefinitely. And think about this. For humanity, unlike the animal world, food not only sustains the body, but it's something that we enjoy.

[40:36] And it brings people together in fellowship and family and friends and a company together. Food is amazing. Now, I was going to put a quote in it.

We read through all the Chronicles of Narnia books in the past year and over and over again, C.S. Lewis just loves describing food in different ways. And it just shows you how great food is.

It's just another one of the ways that God is creative and he is for our good and our flourishing. In Psalm 104, which is this beautiful, I encourage you to read Psalm 104. It is a hymn of praise to God for creation and for God's generosity in creation.

The psalmist writes in verses 14 and 15, And in Psalm 145, David writes, What a gracious creator we have, friends.

A God who brought all things into existence out of the overflow of his love and his goodness. He is a God who is for the joy and the flourishing of his creation, especially us, especially mankind.

[42:07] Why then you might object is there so much disharmony, right? Disorder, strife, chaos. If God is truly for human flourishing.

Now again, we're going to get there in Genesis 3. I just want to say the Bible provides the answer to that question. Secularism, atheism, does not. Right?

How could it? How could atheism possibly explain the obvious goodness of the natural world side by side with the corruption and the chaos and the suffering?

It can't. The Bible does provide the answer to that question. And we're going to see this in a couple chapters. But I want to point us beyond the fall of man in Genesis 3. Because when people question whether God is for us, whether he is for the joy and the flourishing of humanity, they are not usually thinking about Christ.

We need to think about what Christ has done. If there is a statement that God is for us, it is the cross of Jesus Christ. Because God, he didn't just leave us in our state of disharmony and corruption and sin, but he came down.

[43:18] Then, Jesus Christ bore our sorrows on himself. He walked this broken world. God, in the human form, choosing of his own nature, under no constraint whatsoever, to bear our sorrows, to experience our temptations, our frustrations.

But then he bore our sin. He didn't stop there. He went to the cross, took our sin on his shoulders, nailed them to the cross, and then he rose again so that we could forever enjoy God and one another.

That is for our human flourishing. The gospel declares, you know, if we ever question, is God really for us? The gospel says, yes. Yes, he is.

You know, as Jesus said to Doubting Thomas, put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side.

Do not disbelieve, but believe. Both creation and redemption attest to the fact that God is emphatically for us.

[44:32] God created mankind as the crown of his creation to share in his love and to share in his goodness and to spread it to the world, to know him and to make him known.

He created us to reflect his character and to rule with his good authority and all of this for the joy and the flourishing of us and for the world and for his glory.

I mean, what a good creator God we have, friends. Please pray with me. Heavenly Father, we worship you as the God that you are a God of grace and a God of goodness and a God of love and a God of power.

And what is man that you are mindful of him and yet you have crowned us with honor and with glory. And even after the fall, which again did not surprise you, it actually wasn't plan B, B, you chose to enact redemption culminating in the life, death, resurrection, ascension of our Savior Jesus Christ.

You are God. You are emphatically for us. You are for our joy and for our flourishing. And Lord, we come to this place from all kinds of trials, all kinds of suffering.

[46:01] We're going to walk out into a blizzard. God, you're for us. You're for us. You're for our joy. You're for our good. Help us, Lord, to believe that. Help us to rejoice in the role that you have given us as mankind.

And let us do it, Lord, for the flourishing of this world for your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.