

Genesis 2:4-25

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. Those of you who haven't met, my name is Dave, one of the elders here at Shoreline. This morning we're going to be in Genesis chapter 2, starting in verse 4.

I invite you to turn there with me. If you don't have a Bible, we'd very much love to give you one. We're not Shoreline Community Bible Church for nothing. They're in the back table there next to the offering box, and we would love to get you one of those.

They're already bookmarked to today's passage even. As you all were sharing today from the Scriptures and thinking through how that had affected your lives, I thought two things.

First of all, maybe it was redundant for me to come here and preach to you. And secondly, that it was incredible how much what you were sharing aligned with today's passage.

Sometimes when we come to the creation account and we see Genesis 2, there are a couple movements in the text and a few distinct sections there. They have this feeling like they're kind of separate from each other.

[1 : 1 6] The Lord makes Adam, then he makes a garden, then we got this thing about marriage at the end of the chapter, and they don't seem to really fit together. Maybe we have three separate sermons on three different topics.

And I'd like to show us just briefly this morning that these three themes, these three sections of the text, they cohere very tightly.

And they talk about one message that many of you shared this morning from the Scriptures. And that message is simply this. God is near. God is near.

and then attend to the Lord's word. Father, you are a good and wonderful God. Thank you that you have given us your word that we might know you, that we might see you. And Lord, as we seek your face in the scriptures today, pray also for our children and our children's ministers who are looking to that same goal, Lord, that you would be very present to us and that our hearts would be very attentive to you. So Lord, I pray that in these quiet moments, the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts might be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

In Genesis chapter 1, we beheld the Lord in his majesty. We saw his power, his sovereignty. He spoke and our world happened. In Genesis chapter 1, we beheld the Lord God Almighty.

[3 : 3 0] We saw him seated in heaven on his throne, commanding the cosmos. And today in Genesis chapter 2, we're seeing him in a very different light. Sovereignty will be paired with intimacy.

In chapter 1, we saw that God is big. Here we will see that God is near. When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up for the Lord God had not caused it to rain in the land and there was no man to work the ground.

The mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. Then the Lord God formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

And the man became a living creature. Think back to Genesis chapter 1 if you were here with us two weeks ago. How did creation happen? The Lord spoke and it came to be. It was as if he was sitting in heaven and declaring the universe into existence. But this is very different. This looks nothing like that. It's as if he knelt down and shaped Adam with his own hands like a craftsman.

Reminds us of the words of the psalmist, I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Everything else in creation seems to have come the way that Genesis 1 presents it out of nothing. Creation ex nihilo, as the theologians will put it.

[5 : 1 0] But Adam is made not from nothing but of something, from the dust of the earth. And why does scripture go out of its way to point this out to us?

It's easy, I think, for Christians to hyper-spiritualize ourselves and forget the physical. It might be that we follow that great American philosopher, Yoda, who, poking Luke Skywalker with a stick, said, and I'm not going to try his voice, right?

Luminous beings we are, not this crude matter. To think of ourselves as souls trapped in bodies, just pulling the levers in a disconnected body.

But that's not how the Bible talks. That's not what a person is. In fact, Adam, if we look here, he's a body before he has a spirit. And so, we are very connected to our bodies.

And our bodies affect our souls and our spirits. Our spirits affect our bodies. Mental stress will give you an ulcer, right?

[6 : 25] Physical exhaustion, it will wear you down. Not just physically, but it will, cadets, right? When you're physically exhausted, your ability to process information, you sit there looking at your textbook and you say, I know that I am smarter than this.

But you just can't figure out. You read the same sentence three times over. Same thing. On the other side, physical exhaustion prevents you from processing your emotions well.

I think the parents of infants probably know that best. Your exhaustion will diminish your will and power and strength and desire to fight sin in your life.

Neglecting our spiritual life will make us physically lethargic. Even eating lots of junk food, right? It won't just affect your body, but it will make you, it will give you mental lethargy, right?

We are bodies and souls. We don't divide the two. And the Bible is actually quite clear on that.

Psalms 88 captures the link between body and soul with some very heavy language.

[7 : 40] I think it's worth our time to think about it. It gives voice to the linkage between our spiritual and physical selves, all bound together.

It's a psalm of lament, so the psalmist is giving cry out to God of their sorrows. Listen for the connection here between the spiritual and the physical.

My soul is full of troubles. I am a man who has no strength. My eye grows dim through sorrow.

The Lord made us body and soul. One affects the other. We are an en fleshed soul, an embodied spirit.

We're an ensouled body. And so we're not just, like Yoda said, luminous beings trapped in crude matter.

[8 : 42] The Lord made that matter, and he called it good. He called all of creation good. And in the new heavens and in the new earth, we will be not just floating around disembodied spirits, but we will have new resurrection bodies patterned after Christ in his resurrection.

So the scriptures call him the first fruits of the resurrection. And we will then, then be fully human. And so I want to commend to you that it is actually spiritual to care for your body.

God made your body. He made it good. And so go to the doctor when you need to, right? Did you make a New Year's resolution to eat healthier? Follow through on that.

That's a good thing. Ask your community group to help you follow through on it, because it's actually a spiritual thing. It glorifies God to cultivate our physical nature. It honors him. I was thinking about sharing a video with you this morning.

I won't because so many shared such wonderful things, and I don't think that would be helpful to elongate our service this morning. But one thing I will share from an author, his name is David Murray.

[10 : 02] He's a professor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Michigan. He wrote a book called Christians Get Depressed Too. And in that book, he talks about how we have real physical problems in our lives that relate with depression.

And he relates a story. It's a really interesting one. He was talking with a friend of his who's a psychologist. A psychologist, he is a Christian. And he asked his psychologist friend, you know, what do you do with depressed patients?

And he said, well, I always recommend three pills. He said, wow, that's pretty aggressive, isn't it? That's, you know, that kind of confirms our bias. You know, pop a pill and you'll be happy.

He said, here are the three pills. Good exercise, good diet, and good sleep. For many people, that is all they need to break the bonds of depression.

Now, obviously, that's not the only thing that is involved in depression. It's not the only thing, but it is a huge component. And so caring for ourselves physically can have huge spiritual dividends.

[11 : 04] If you are someone who is depressed today in a way that is ongoing and you need help, those things are a starting point. They are not the thick and the thin of it.

They are not the whole of the counsel that the Lord has for you or that a doctor will have for you. So if you need help with that, obviously, it goes past this.

And so I don't want to present small steps as if they are a complete thing. If you need help with that, please reach out to someone in your community group, one of the elders, to your doctor, and get the help you need.

Now, on the other side of that, because it is a good thing, what did we say last week? We told a story about the devil going into a jewelry store. He didn't steal anything, right?

He just switched around the price tags. And those things that had been valuable were now not valuable. And those things that were cheap were very costly. Well, we can do the same thing with lots of things in our lives.

[12 : 03] We can take this good thing, care for our bodies, and make it an ultimate thing. And that has just as many problems as neglecting our physical selves. So now the Lord has stooped down and molded Adam in his own image.

He held him close, close enough to breathe life into him. We need to ask, why? Why? Why? Why did he do it?

And, you know, in chapter 1, he sat on his throne, commanded the universe, and all that fills it to come into existence. But here he draws near. He's so close to Adam.

He's within breathing distance. Nothing like the rest of creation. Why the big change? Because Adam and all who descended from him were made to be near to God.

That's what we are for. You were made for covenant fellowship with the living God. He made you to walk with him.

[13 : 12] He is powerful, yes, but he is near. He is not distant. He is high and he is lifted up, but he is not far away. He rules and he orders all things, but he, in this passage, he like kneels down to be close to his people.

And the rest of this chapter establish two of the biggest themes in all of the Bible, and both point beyond themselves to God, and particularly his nearness.

Both find their fullness in the Lord Jesus Christ. They're the themes of temple and marriage. In verses 8 through 17, the Lord forms the garden for his people.

We read through the end of verse 14 already, so I won't repeat that again. In the creation account, though, what do we see? The creation of this garden.

He's already made the whole universe. And now he stops and he plants a garden. We see in it God's good provision for his people.

[14 : 31] He cares for us. He equips us for the life that he has called us to live. He doesn't leave us to fend for ourselves. And even the way that he plants this garden expresses his nearness to us.

Unlike the rest of the created order, which, when we saw it in Genesis 1, he's devoting his attention to a place. Everything else had been on a cosmic scale.

Now he is near and his attention is focused on a particular place. And he gets involved in details as if he were tailoring it to humanity, like a well-fit garment.

Verse 8 says, And the Lord planted a garden. Everything else God created came by his declaration, but he planted a garden for the man and he had formed kind of like a craftsman.

Verse 8 goes on. In Eden, in the east. This is the first mention of geography, right? Before the Lord was acting on a galactic scale.

[15 : 34] And here he is, well, working locally. He's nearby. It continues. And there he put the man whom he had formed, and out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

And again, after working on a global scale, the Lord invests in Adam's neighborhood. He plays the garden. Excuse me, the gardener.

And he personally invests in Adam's well-being. Now, I said temple. And you see a garden, right? How is this the temple theme?

Well, if we look at the tabernacle, that is God's mobile home, so to speak, mobile temple in the wandering of Israel, and then the temple itself, they are actually patterned after this garden.

And eventually we'll see that our final state with the Lord on the last day will be in a temple that looks much like those temples. And so this theme sets off throughout the entire Bible an idea of

God's presence with his people.

[16:49] Because that's what we see when we see the temple is God dwelling with his people. Veiled, yes, because of our sin. Needing sacrifices, yes, because of our rebellion. But God wanting to be near his people, that is the whole point of the temple.

And the temple is pointing to this. We don't have time to go through every detail of why we would think that the temple points back to this.

I'll just mention a few. Obviously, the temple is the point of God's presence in this world in a unique way. So, too, the garden was a unique place of God's presence.

And then on the last day, the final temple, we will see, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He is near to us. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people.

And God himself will be with them as their God. We find out in Ezekiel that Eden was actually a mountain. Ezekiel chapter 28 will tell us that.

[17:49] It's interesting that the temple was built on Mount Zion, also a mountain. To this day, it's called the Temple Mount. And again, we see in Ezekiel chapter 40 and Revelation 21 that the heavenly city is a mountaintop.

From that mountain flow life-giving water. Here in this passage flows life-giving water to the rest of the world. Psalm 34 describes the temple in terms of a river of life.

They feast on the abundance of your house, that's your temple. And you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life.

In you, excuse me, in your light do we see light. And then again, flowing from the throne of the Lamb is the river of life in the heavenly city.

The tree of life is here. The tree of life is depicted in the temple. It is again found in the heavenly city. Everything is covered in precious stones.

[18:49] Here there are precious stones as if they are spilling out into the rest of the world. Each has a priesthood. The list goes on and on. But what we see is that the temple was designed to remind us of God dwelling with his people in the garden that he fashioned at the beginning of time.

And that he longs to dwell with his people. And that someday he will bring that to a consummation. And so, for generations, the tabernacle and the temple taught God's people that he wanted to live with them.

Until one day, about 2,000 years ago, God walked into the world. In the form of the very humanity he had shaped and into whose body he had breathed life.

And after completing his priestly work, a sacrifice to end all sacrifices, he ascended to heaven where, to this day, we await his coming.

To make this temple theme approach its conclusion, uniting heaven and earth once again. The Lord took the man and put him in that garden.

[20:14] Verse 15 says, That idea that work and keep at the end of verse 15, he put him there to work it and keep it.

Those are the same words used later for the priesthood, interestingly enough. And so we think that this is probably him mirroring what happened in Genesis chapter 1, where we saw the creation mandate, the mandate to fill the earth and subdue it.

God blessed them, said to them, Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, 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. And so we see that this dominion mandate from Genesis 1 is almost expressed again. Fill the earth and have dominion over it, have given way to work and cultivate it, keep it, or guard it. And we believe that the Lord has established a priesthood of all believers.

And this task is actually very relevant to us today. We're going to circle back to that at the end of today's sermon. We also see here a tree.

[21:41] He doesn't do anything with it yet. Now, Anton Chekhov is considered one of the best essayists and playwrights of the 19th and 20th centuries. He had this line that he gave advice to aspiring playwrights.

He said, if you say in the first chapter that there's a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter, it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there.

And what he's saying is in literature, we don't provide details that distract from the thing we're trying to say. And historical narratives are no different.

You won't read a biography of Martin Luther King Jr. and read all about his breakfast habits, because that's not relevant to the big idea of his life, right?
And the two trees identified here, introduced here in Genesis 2, aren't distracting details. We won't have to wait long to hear this rifle fire.

[22 : 48] We'll hear them next week. And then the Lord says something very interesting. Verse 18.

The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. Genesis 1 was filled with, and it was good.

And he saw that it was good. And he saw that it was good. And on the last day, he saw that it was very good. But here, he says, It is not good. That's very different.

The Christian worldview has an idea of women that is very different than all the worldviews that came before it.

The creation myths of the ancient world, and really up until the Western civilization, which is built on a Christian worldview, saw women as either lesser than men or as a curse to men.

[24 : 03] Here's how the Greeks put it. When Prometheus stole fire from Zeus and gave it to men, Zeus cursed mankind. How? By giving them a woman.

The very first one. He hid fire, that is Prometheus, and stole it from Zeus. Afterwards, Zeus, who gathered the clouds, said to him in anger, You are glad that you have outwitted me and stolen fire. A great plague to you yourself and to men that shall be. I will give men as the price for fire an evil thing, in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their destruction.

So Zeus laughed aloud and made haste to mix earth and water and put in it the voice and strength of humankind and fashioned a sweet, lovely maiden shape.

And he charged Hermes to put in her a shameless mind and a deceitful nature. And he called this woman Pandora. Because all who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread.

[25 : 22] When he had finished the sheer, hopeless snare, Zeus sent Hermes to take it to a human king as a gift. And he took the gift.

And afterwards, when the evil thing was already his, he understood she was a curse. That is the creation story of women for those who do not follow Christ, right?

And obviously there are all sorts of other ones where women are either downgraded or called a curse or called equally in our purely materialistic worldview of the Western world these days are equally irrelevant as men, right?

The universe can't wait to ignore you. Standing against this idea that woman is the problem, the Lord says that she corrects a problem.

When the Lord made her, and you all know this probably by heart, he took Adam's rib, he made a deep sleep come over him, took his rib, and he fashioned her out of him.

[26 : 39] This is a beautiful and encouraging quote I have always enjoyed. Matthew Henry said of it, put it this way, women were created from the rib of man to be beside him, not from his head to top him, nor from his feet to be trampled by him, but from under his arm to be protected by him, near to his heart to be loved by him.

And this marriage is meant not as an end in itself. It's not good for man to be alone.

He has a mission, and a helper is drawn into his mission, and they have that mission together. He was made to work and keep the garden, to cultivate it and guard it with an eye towards expanding it to the whole world, so that the whole world might be filled with God's glory.

And Eve is drawn into that mission, and Christian life is fulfilled, not in the marriage, but in the mission. And in that way, marriage points outside itself to something greater, God's kingdom, his mission.

The first marriage was forged for the benefit of the whole human race, but by serving the spread of God's kingdom. And we see that fulfilled in Christ himself.

[28 : 07] And that's why today, the apostle charges us to live our marriages in that same pattern, that kingdom pattern. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, gave himself up for her.

And we see on the last day that marriage will be not a private thing, but a very public thing.

Revelation chapter 19, the angel who was guiding John through part of his vision said, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

I had the great joy of officiating my first marriage last year. Nope. Two years, well, 2015. And I had the wonderful opportunity of saying to the congregation, we are going to a wedding banquet now. But the bride and the groom, who are wonderful saints and very zealous to see God's kingdom spread, they invite you to another wedding banquet, one that theirs prefigures, one that theirs points to.

It's the wedding supper of the Lamb. Marriage points somewhere. And so this is a truly beautiful picture.

[29 : 31] God is near. He is near in creation. The temple says God is near. Marriage says God is near. It's a picture of life that...

Are we even looking for that? I wonder. Or are we just looking to get by some days? Does it match our reality, that idea that God is near?

I think for most of us, we'd have to say, hey, you know, I haven't really been near to God today. In fact, most days. Maybe it's a rare thing for you to walk near to God on a day-to-day basis.

Why? What's the disconnect? Why isn't that the case? Well, next week, we're going to consider Genesis 3, and it will have our answer for us.

We'll see that all these blessings feel distant because we have separated ourselves from the God who wants to be near to us. Like we said earlier, Adam and all who descended from him were made to be near to God.

[30 : 44] You and I, we were made to walk with the living God. And he is powerful, but he is not distant. He is high and lifted up, but he is not far away.

He rules and orders all things, but he kneels down and holds his people close. We were made to live and to walk with him. But we have broken that, do break that day by day.

We have sinned against this loving and holy God, and the results are banishment, life separated from him, and death. But God knelt down again.

He drew near again to his people. He held them in his hands again and he breathed into them the breath of life again.

And it looks like this. I'm going to comment here on Philippians chapter 2. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

[31 : 52] And so here we see Jesus Christ lifted high and exalted. But he knelt down. He did not remain there, but he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

See, he knelt down to draw close those he made in his own image. And being found in human form, Paul says, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Friends, the king over all kings died. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He died the death reserved for slaves and traitors on behalf of us, we traitors who made ourselves slaves to sins.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

[33 : 09] Friends, at the very beginning, God knelt down and breathed life into Adam. We walked away and we all perished spiritually.

So he knelt down again to offer a life to all who would repent and believe. Friends, that is good news.

So what do we do with this? What do we do with this testimony, this multifaceted testimony to this God who wants to be near his people? Well, friends, we respond in kind.

This summer, we walked through the book of James and we saw this. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. Friends, draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

[34 : 15] It is what you were made for. And so that might look like coming to Christ for the very first time. Might look like picking up your cross and following hard after him.

So if you do not know Christ today, I invite you to come to the fountain and drink without cost. You might have walked with God for many years and be wandering away from him right now. For you, I say the same thing. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Now, when we have been reconciled to Christ and are bought by him and made part of his family, there are still things in our lives that can put up barriers.

You know, I can hug my daughter but she can still push me away. She's still my daughter and I still love her but she can still put up barriers that prevent full fellowship. And friends, we need to take them down.

I don't know about you but when I have fallen into sin, the last thing I want to do is pray. But the only thing I can do is pray.

[35 : 39] it's the only way to get back to God, to confess my sin and draw near to him once more. He will be a very present help in time of need. So it might be confession of sin.

Might need to bring that to the cross. Nail it there. Might be that we need to set aside time again for the Lord.

in his word and in prayer and among his people. You can't be near to God if you don't spend any time with him. And finally, as an expression of that, will you cultivate the garden in the same way that Adam was commissioned to extend the garden to the whole world so the whole earth might be filled with his glory.

Will you invite others to draw near to God? And this week, we know where we're headed next week. We're headed to the breaking of the garden, the breaking of the fellowship.

And that actually might be a very interesting entry point for you this week. To engage in that mission of cultivating this garden temple, this world, here might be a way for you to bless someone by pointing them to the gospel or inviting them to consider it.

[37 : 05] The good news that God has once again drawn near to his people. So if you see someone this week who is actually really aware of the brokenness of this world, who's saying, man, my job is the worst, or who's saying, you know, what has the world come to when they see the news?

Or, you know, they say, I can't believe what's happening in Washington. Or, is there anything more than be born, grow old, die? The world is full of people who know that the world is broken. And if someone is acutely aware of that and maybe expressing that sentiment to you this week, maybe you can offer them a ray of hope when you say, you know what, next week at our church we're going to be talking about what is wrong with this world and what might be the fix. Would you like to tag along with me? It could be something as simple as that. That could be the beginning of a gospel conversation. It could be the beginning of a moment where someone else draws near to God for the very first time.

So, friends, God is big and He is near. He is powerful and He is not distant. He is absolute, yet He knelt down to breathe the breath of life once at creation and a second time at the cross.

[38 : 29] Friends, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you that you made us for yourself, the greatest blessing in all the world to be yours, to know and be known by you.

Lord, give us hearts that seek hard after you. Help us to cast away sin that hinders us from fellowship with you.

Lord, help us to run to you, to seek you out in your word, to bring our hearts to you in prayer. And Lord, may we be the kinds of people who invite others to share in the great blessing, the blessing that you have drawn near to your creatures.

We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.