

Genesis 1:24-2:3 AM

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Date: 04 August 2024

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[0 : 0 0] If you don't know me, my name is Aaron Roberts. I'm one of the clergy on staff here. So each year in August we have these family services. So the kids stay in the service and we do a short sermon series based on the themes of Bible Camp, which happened just a little while ago. Bible Camp this year was on the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Bible Camp this year was on the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. And it was sensational. And in the play that we have every day, I play the part of leopard number two. And I was extraordinary. I mean, we're literally still talking about it, aren't we? We're still talking about it. It was a week ago. I mean, technically I'm talking about it, but it's still being talked about. What's great about the Chronicles of Narnia is that it really powerfully captures the arc of the Bible, the Jesus story. So Narnia, as you know, it's this enchanted land. It's full of beauty and life and Aslan is its creator, except when the children arrive through the wardrobe, it's a cursed place, always winter, never Christmas. But the curse is broken through the sacrifice of its king. It's a great story. It's a great story because it's the Jesus story. And in our sermon series in August, we're going to follow that storyline, which means we start before the curse. We start before the fall. We start with creation, which is what I'm going to talk to you about for a few minutes here in Genesis 1. And I do have a short amount of time, so forgive me if I sort of skip through a few things. But I have two very simple points.

The first point is this. Point one, creation is good. Point two, people have a job in creation. Point one, creation is good. Point two, people have a job. So point one, creation is good.

Creation is good. This is obviously a really big idea in Genesis 1. In verse 25, it says that God made all the animals and he looks at them and he says, oh, it's good. In verse 31, he looked at everything he had made, the land, the animals, the people, and he says, it's very good. But that word good, what does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean morally good, like, you know, be a good boy, be a good girl. Do you notice that every time God says it was good, just before that, there's this little phrase, a couple of words, God saw. Always says that God saw it was good. Every time. So it's like God makes something, he looks at it, and he's enjoying it.

I have a friend over here from Australia, sitting right there, Tim G. Vanellie, can you give him a wave? Give him a wave? He's a, he's a, no, don't clap for him, don't clap for him. We went to Regent College together, I think 17, 18 years ago. He's a pastor in northern beaches of Sydney. He's over here on sabbatical, studying at Regent, and he's staying with me for about 10 days. In all the years he lived in Vancouver, he never had poutine. And so, I said, mate, let me take you out for some poutine. So I found a place that claimed to have exotic poutine. So I ordered him some exotic poutine, and he's sitting there, this is on commercial drive, he's sitting there, first mouthful, leans back, and he goes, oh, so good. So good.

That's the sense of the word good. It's weird no one's taking notes right now. It's weird to me. But that is actually the sense of the word. God makes something, he looks at it, he's delighting in it. He's made a home, a place to be with his creation, and he's looking at it, and he is savoring it. Let's pause for a moment.

[3 : 54] A couple of questions just to ponder on that. What would it do, or let me say it like this, how would it change the way you think about the world, your relationship with the environment, if you really took on this idea that one of the first things God wants us to know about the physical world is that it's good? He looked at it, and he savored it. Lots of implications there, which we don't have time to get into. Next question, a bit more personal. How would it change the way you relate to your own body if you really believe that what God made in making you was very good?

Friends, your body is very good, and some of us have not great relationships with our bodies. God says, I made you. It's very, wouldn't that be a great truth to sit in for a while?

Just as a side story, I visited somebody in hospital last week, and I don't know how to say this, they're very, very old. Visited them in hospital. Before I went in, they said, look, she's quite deaf. I walk in the door, I walk in the door, and she shouts out, you are beautiful.

So deaf, but eyesight, incredible. Like, eyesight, incredible. No, but honestly, though, like, I had a little spring in my step the rest of the day.

Because maybe like some of you, my relationship with my body is not fantastic sometimes. But it was lovely to hear somebody say that. You're beautiful. Wouldn't it be lovely for you to know that God thinks that your body is wonderful? Okay, again, we don't have lots of time. I'm going to move on. I'm going to move on. So point one, creation is good. Point two, people have a job.

[5 : 52] We have a job in this creation. Right at the start of the Bible, it answers the question, why did God create people? Like, why create people? Why just leave people out of it? You know, because there's a bit of a narrative out there that people just are ruining the world. But why did God create people? The answer is to rule it. To rule it. Straight after creating people, God says, I want you to have dominion over the world. Let's have a little think about that.

Now, our job in the world is to rule. And that is a consequence of being made in God's image. So we have to go there first. So before we get to the ruley part, let's talk about the made in God's image part. So verse 26, verse 26, let us make man in our image after our likeness. Okay, first part of that phrase, let us make man. Hebrew word man there just meaning men and woman. Let us make men and women. So straight away, there's a difference in how God created people from the previous days. Previously, when God made stuff, He just commands it, let there be light, let the earth swarm of living creatures, et cetera. But here, God's first, God first announces that He's going to create something. Let us make man. Now, we don't know if God is announcing it to Himself, i.e. the Trinity or to some heavenly gathering. He's not enough to make a call on it, I don't think. But He does mark it out as this part of creation is special, is unique. And what's special about it?

We find out very quickly, let us make man in our image, in our likeness. That's what's special. These creatures will be made in God's image and likeness. Those are two ideas there, image and likeness. Let's have a think about them. What does the image word mean? It simply means we reflect God to the world. We represent God in His creation. In terms of our own self-identity, that is genius. It's wonderful. The idea that image bearers is genius because it prevents us from thinking too highly about ourselves. And it prevents us from thinking too little of ourselves as well. We really believe this. We don't think too highly of ourselves. We don't think too little of ourselves. Here's what I mean. It prevents us from thinking too highly of ourselves. We're image bearers, which means we're not God. We're image bearers. We're representatives. We're like these mirrors that reflect God to the world. It gets reinforced later in Genesis with more details about creation when it says God formed us from like what? From dust, from dirt, from mud.

You know, we're not made from anything special. We're not made from fairy dust, right? We're not made from the remains of a mysterious meteorite that landed in a desert. We're just made from dirt.

Just let that humble you for a moment. And this is all very connected to the heart of the world's misery, I think. Remember in the garden, we believed the lie of the serpent.

[8 : 55] That somehow God was holding out on us. We believed if we took control, if we ate from the tree of self-determination, we'd get a better deal. We would be our own gods. It was a lie then. It's a lie now.

And it's brought nothing but death in our world. So don't think too highly of yourself. You are not God. You're a creature created by God. So live God's way. Don't think too highly of yourself, but don't think too little of yourself either. No other created thing is an image bearer. Only people.

An amazing sunset. They can tell us stuff about God. And we talked about that right at the start with the kids. But it doesn't bear the image of God. A gazelle, a waterfall, a perfect beach on a deserted island. All glorious things, but only people are image bearers. And that counts for everyone.

The smartest, most powerful to the most destitute. All image bearers. The only qualification you need to be an image bearer is to be a human. So don't think too little of yourself. You've been given a very special job in God's world. Let's move on to this other word in verse 26. Let us make men and women in our image after our likeness. If the image means we represent God, the likeness word means we do that in a God-like way. So what does that look like? And now we get to the dominion piece.

The God-like work we have to do to represent God, to act in a God-like way, is found in verse 26 and 28. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, et cetera. Verse 28. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Likeness means running the world the way God wants it run. That means dominion.

[10 : 55] That means subduing. And I know these words are terrible because when you hear dominion, you probably just think domination. It sounds like, you know, let's just exploit everything because we can, because we're in charge of it. No, it's the opposite. It means create situations where things can flourish, flourish. So you have a veggie garden. You don't just plant and leave it. It's not going to produce as it should. It'll just become chaotic. You remember God in the beginning of creation took something formless and he made the earth and he moved it along from chaos to fruitful order.

That's our job. Our job is to continue that. We've been given charge of the world. We care for creation. We further civilization. We further culture. That's what we're made for. And it's an astonishing honor. And I think we feel it. And I think we know it in our guts. I think kids know it probably more than us. Because if you talk to them, I ask these kids and I said, what do you want to do with your life? No kid, no kid is going to say, you know, I feel a real pull towards tax law.

Sorry if you're a tax, it's good work. Oh, little kids, they want to be like, you know, ninjas and Jedi Knights or something like that. I think it taps into this high sense of call that we feel when we're kids, we want to change the world. I love that. Don't lose that. No matter your job, whatever it is you're stationed in life, you are God's representative. You're made to rule, to bring order in the ways that you can. And that's awesome.

Right. That's actually the guts of the passage. I hope that was helpful to you. To finish though, some of you might be feeling and might be saying to yourself, goodness, I'm not, I'm not, I'm feeling a bit discouraged. I'm not doing a really great job with this whole, all the stuff you've talked about of being an image. I'm not, I'm not doing a great job of that. This feeling is captured in one of other C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia books in Prince Caspian, which I think in order that he wrote them was book two. And towards the end of the book, Prince Caspian has won this big battle for Narnia and he's going to become a king, which is great. And then Aslan starts to tell Caspian the story of Caspian's heritage. And it's a bit of a surprise because his heritage is terrible.

He goes, you know, your ancestors were just, they were just thieves and murderers and drunkards. And as Aslan's saying this to Prince Caspian, Prince Caspian's head just sort of starts to sink.

[13 : 29] And he says to Caspian, gee, I was, I was wishing I'd come from a more honorable lineage. And Aslan says one of the most insightful things in the whole series, he says to Prince Caspian, he says, you come of the Lord Adam and Lady Eve. And that is both honor enough to lift the head of the poorest beggar and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth.

Be content. What's he saying? He's saying to be human, it means we carry a great responsibility. We bear the image of God, all of us. We're to manage creation in the way God wants. That should lift our heads, everyone, because what an honor that is to be given charge of this world.

But we also know that there's ego in the mix. We also know there is greed in the mix and there's pride in the mix there too. That should bow our shoulders. We are diamonds and dust. We're like this amazing switch watch that doesn't quite keep time. So what does God do about all this?

Well, we know there's forgiveness in Christ. There's a great picture of that in communion coming shortly. But not just that. God wants to transform us. God wants to renew us.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul, he writes and he says, by God's grace, we all having unveiled face, beholden the glory of God, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. It's a great prayer, isn't it? Holy Spirit, make me more human. Continue to remake me into the image of God. So that I can live the way you want me to live in your creation. What a wonderful thing to pray, isn't it? Amen.