

# News of the World

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St. John's Shaughnessy Church in the mechanics and the how and the scientific questions of creation but in the who and in the whose we are.

And I want to look with you just a Genesis one and to think together about how the creation story overturns the way we think and the way we live in three areas.

And the first has to do with God himself. God himself. And one of the remarkable things about our human arrogance is that we are tempted to think that we create God.

[ 3 : 21 ] And the Bible turns that completely upside down and says God is the creator. And this first chapter in Genesis turns that idea upside down in two ways.

First it tells us that God created everything. If you look through those early verses you can see from the heavens to the waters to the earth.

The seas, the mountains, the rivers, the sun, the moon, the stars, the forests, the animals and we humans. God made it all.

And it wasn't a struggle for God to make it. God didn't have another God with whom he was fighting. He didn't have a lover's quarrel with his wife or mistress.

But Genesis 1 teaches us that from the smallest subatomic particle to the largest constellations of space all of it came from God's creative word.

[ 4 : 20 ] And in that first line the word that is used for create is a unique word and it is used only ever of God. It is only God who can bring into being that which is not.

It simply means that nothing that exists exists to itself. We owe our existence to someone else. Nothing is before God.

Nothing is beyond God. Let me illustrate. Here is a lampstand that I made on my father's lathe a couple of years ago.

It's my first attempt at lathing. And while my sons have used it as a weapon I'm telling you it is a lampstand. And I took a piece of olive wood that was lying around Dad's workshop and I put it on the lathe and I turned it and chiseled it and then smoothed it and took about a day.

And I don't think it's too bad actually. I'm just a little bit proud of it. But I didn't create it in the biblical sense.

[ 5 : 28 ] I didn't make the tree or the tools and I needed some help in fashioning it and crafting it. And I think as humans that's about the best that we can do.

We can take what God has made and we fashion and we craft. Only God creates. Or as the Apostle Paul said God gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

And Christians have traditionally had a Latin phrase for this they call it creation ex nihilo creation out of nothing. It's perhaps more accurate to say that creation comes from God.

He created everything. And that is why as you read through this chapter seven times we read at the end of each day God saw what he had made and it was good.

And on the last day he says it was superlatively good. In other words what God made perfectly fulfills the purpose for which he made it.

[ 6 : 37 ] It satisfies his desire. It corresponds to what he intended. God made everything with deep purpose in mind. And that means that the world in which we live has meaning.

And the meaning isn't ours to decide and ours to define the meaning comes from God's purpose. God created everything. The second thing that turns our understanding upside down about God is that God created everything by his word.

If you've read through this chapter you'll know that each of the seven days begins with this phrase and God said. And each creative event comes about as God speaks.

And when he speaks it means there is a radical difference between him the speaker and the thing that is created. Which incidentally is a flat contradiction of any idea of pantheism.

The idea that the world and God share the same essence. No, God has spoken the world into being. And the interaction between God and his word God and his world I'm sorry is through his word if you will the place of continuity and connection between God and his world is through his word.

[ 7 : 55 ] That has tremendous power and a wide range of implications for us. Give you an illustration. One of the most common ways of thinking today is to imagine that God is unknowable that we need to take steps to search for him and find him and we need to use all our skills and spiritual techniques to refine and define God and in the end it's not really possible to be sure about anything to do with God anyway.

But if God's connection with his world is by his word we are not on an altruistic long search for God. God is searching for us.

He has spoken and he continues to speak and if we don't know him it means we must be ignoring his words. It's terribly important for the way we relate to God.

You see the fact that God creates by his words means that words can carry truth and truth about God. It means that when God reveals himself it is real and true.

And sometimes you hear people say well I relate to God better on the ski slopes or canoeing or on the golf course. When I'm on the golf course I can see and feel very spiritual.

[ 9 : 18 ] My experience of the golf course is the opposite but that has to do with my golf more than anything else. You see the fact that God relates to his world through his word means that we live in a personal universe that the ultimate is the person.

person. And the way we relate to God is the way we relate to persons. So just imagine you and I were trying to become friends and as a great magnanimous gift of my friendship I gave you my little lampstand and I started to speak to you but instead of listening to me and speaking to me you took the lampstand and became fixated on that and ignored what I said.

We wouldn't get to know each other. The creation teaches that it is God who decides who he is and how we will relate to him and he created all things by his word and he continues to reveal himself by his word.

So you see creation turns upside down our view of God. Secondly creation turns upside down our view of the world. Of course it's not our world it's God's world and it does this in two ways.

The first is it tells us that creation is good. I don't know if you have thought about this this is one of the most radical and different things about the Christian view of creation.

[ 10 : 44 ] This sets us the Christian view apart from almost every philosophy and almost every religion in the world. Almost every philosophy and religion teach the physical world with some suspicion or even looks at it as deceptive or even evil.

So that the physical world might be an illusion or our bodies the source of corruption and so we practice detachment or we turn aside from the world or try to escape from the world.

That is not the biblical view. The biblical view of the world is that it is good good superlatively good. Again and again and again through the scriptures this is emphasized.

In the New Testament we read these words everything created by God is good nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

The world is not an illusion or a delusion or contamination it is a precious gift to be received with thanksgiving. And secondly Genesis 1 teaches us that creation depends on God.

[ 11 : 59 ] Everything exists because of God's decision. Our world doesn't just keep rolling on by itself it was made by God and it is now held in existence by God.

This world has no pivot in itself and one of the enduring ideas that we have today is that God somehow depends on us.

God's like us and he needs attention and he needs our worship so we'll live a good life and we'll keep our image clean and we'll visit him occasionally or pray to him occasionally and God ought to be very thankful that we do that for him.

You see creation means that there is a radical difference between God and everything else between God and creation. creation. There is no symmetry between God and creation.

Creation can never be equal let alone a rival to God. On God's side there is total and complete independence. On our side there is total and complete dependence.

[ 13 : 07 ] And if God were to withdraw his conscious sustaining grace from us for a moment we would cease to exist.

The reason we are alive is because God holds us in being. We depend on him. And God is involved and engaged in the details of his world.

He's not just a grand scheme God. The Bible tells us that he knit our bodies together in our mother's womb. God tells us that when a hair falls from our head God knows about it.

He knows the number of hairs on our head now and when we go to bed tonight. He knows when a sparrow falls. The God of the Bible is not the God of deism.

Deism is a philosophy popularised several hundred years ago. The idea is that God is a God but he doesn't intervene with his creation.

[ 14 : 13 ] He's a kind of absentee clockmaker that he wound up in the beginning and he's retired to some distant corner. And now the world just rolls on with natural laws looking after itself.

You'll sometimes find deism in Christian churches as well. You'll find it when people believe that God is only active when we see remarkable things and miracles taking place.

And when it happens they will tell you something like well God really turned up. it's the God of the gaps idea. Creation is not a natural machine.

It is not a mixture of chance and necessity and a little bit of God every now and again when things go wrong. There's no such thing as Mother Earth or even Mother Nature which we're going to sing in one of our hymns in a moment.

God of the Bible is involved in every circumstance and every detail. Every molecule moves at his bidding. When our hair falls out it is a natural process and God brings it about.

[ 15 : 19 ] When the sparrow flies it's a natural process and God brings it about. God controls everything. What we look at and see is natural and what we look at and think is supernatural. to believe in the God of creation means to see God is there at every moment of every day.

So creation sets us the right way up about God and about our world and thirdly it sets us the right way up in thinking about ourselves. If you look down at chapter 1 I want to read verses 26 to 28 again.

Genesis 1 26 Then God said let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created them male and female he created them. God blessed them and God said to them be fruitful and multiply.

Fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion. This tells us two very important things about us.

[ 16 : 38 ] The first is we are part of creation. This is one of the most difficult things for us to accept. We imagine that we are the ones who control our own destiny.

me. For the last two years I was given a gift of subscription to a magazine called Wired Magazine.

I confess that to you and I can talk to you about it later. Wired Magazine catalogues the cutting edge of technology and innovation. And the constant theme in all the articles that I've read over the last two years is that no one is going to tell us we have any limitations.

And through computing and through macrobotics and through robotics we will define our future and we will define what it is to be human. And it reminds me of Timothy McVeigh.

on the day that McVeigh was executed he delivered to his warden a poem by William Hendry. And the poem reads in part I thank whatever gods may be for my unconquerable soul.

[ 17 : 49 ] And then the poem finishes with these words. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate.

I am the captain of my soul. And Genesis 1 says that is a lie. We are part of creation.

We are in nature. We were created in the six days along with the animals. We belong to the earth. Our lives are sustained by this world and they depend on God as creation.

But there is a second thing this chapter tells us about us. which is perhaps more important. The emphasis is not on our lowliness as human beings but on our glory.

We alone in creation are made in the image of God. Nothing else shares this privilege. Not even the angels. And as you read through the chapter which I encourage you to do, when we come to verse 26, it is as though God pauses and deliberates with himself at this momentous time.

[ 19 : 03 ] Let us make man in our own image. We are not just animals. We are not even angels. We are made to be the image of God.

Of all the creatures in the world. Man and woman alone are given dominion over the rest of creation. It is part of what it means to bear the image of God.

God. We are God's agents and stewards to care for his creation. And as part of his creation, as human beings, we are given the responsibility for the ecology of this globe.

It is our responsibility for the preservation of species. It is our responsibility for what's going on in the Antarctic. It's our responsibility for clean water and for care of this world.

We cannot understand ourselves by looking just to ourselves. We are who we are because we are in creation and made in the image of God.

[ 20 : 06 ] And that's why it's no surprise that at the core of our lives we have a deep hunger for God. And we'll talk more about that next week. Well let me see if I can draw the threads together.

Creation has tremendous implications for us. And I just, I'd like to point you in three directions so that you might think more on the implications of creation for yourselves.

I want to speak generally, personally and then spiritually. Generally, let me say this. If God is our creator and this world belongs to him and we belong to him, that has massive moral consequences.

God owns you and me, body and soul. And if our ethics are focused only on ourselves and not towards God, we will miss the point of life itself.

And if our lives are lived for this world and even for one another, but not towards God, we will have tragically missed the point for which we have made. You see, it profoundly affects the way we think and decide about work, about marriage, about pleasure, about ecology.

[ 21 : 29 ] The creation is decisive in our thinking about abortion and euthanasia and human cloning and embryonic stem cell research.

It's decisive in how we think about how to deal with prisoners and the poor and the handicapped and the elderly. It will inform and reform our attitude toward racism and sexism and immigration and human rights.

Take any ethical issue you wish. If we ignore the fact that we are made by God and belong to him and his creation, we will miss God's purpose. That's generally.

Personally, well, I wonder if you would take your bulletin because there is a diagram on the front that I would like to show you. The little box is a picture of what I've been trying to say.

It pictures God's role in creation as a crown. God is our Lord. God is the creator. And the world is the little circle. people and we are placed in creation under God's rule to be his image over the world.

[ 22 : 51 ] And next to it is the words of the text. You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power. Why? For you created all things and by your will they existed and were created.

created. In that text we are taken up into heaven and we see at the centre of heaven a throne and God seated upon the throne and all creation joining in praise.

And why does creation join in praise? It is because God alone has created all things. And I don't know if you've ever thought about how remarkable and wonderful God must be to have made this world.

the dogwoods and the mountains, the stars and the beaches, the killer whale and the funnel web spider and each child.

And I think if you took away God's love and God's kindness, if you took away everything that God had done since creation, if you took away every time he's intervened in history and every time he supported us and all that he has done in Jesus Christ, if he had never done any of that, he would still be beyond worthy of all praise and honour and glory because he made us.

[ 24 : 08 ] I wonder if you give him that glory which is his due. And thirdly and finally, a word about the spiritual connection. I've kept this remarkable part to last.

The Bible tells us the stunning truth that Jesus Christ is God's agent in creation. When we come to the New Testament we read, all things were made through him.

Without him was not anything made that was made. We read that he is the image of the invisible God. And in him all things were created in heaven, on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. to worship the God of creation will inescapably lead us to worship Jesus Christ as Lord.

Amen. This digital audio file, along with many others, is available from the St. John's Shaughnessy website at [www.stjohnschaughnessy.org](http://www.stjohnschaughnessy.org).

[ 25 : 22 ] That address is [www.stjohns.org](http://www.stjohns.org). On the website you will also find information about ministries, worship services and special events at St. John's Shaughnessy.

We hope that this message has helped you and that you will share it with others. which is the service in friends.

This has helped you know. And have been good...

you