

Genesis 1:1-25 PM

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 January 2025

Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 00] Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening, in Christ's name, Amen. And please, yeah, grab a seat, folks, grab a seat. It's nice to see you all. If you're new, my name is Aaron, I'm one of the ministers on staff here, I'd love to say hi afterwards.

I'm a little bit fluey, so if my voice starts to get, starts to fade towards the end, I'm sorry. Okay, so we're beginning this nine-week sermon series today called The Story of God, and the series is going to look at the astonishing things that God has done for us.

And the way we're going to do this series is a bit different to how we normally do these kind of things, because typically here, we work through a book of the Bible, you know, we look at a book like James, and we kind of preach every single verse in a row, right?

But with this series, we're going to look at the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, and we're going to pick specific passages that tell the big story of God.

And my hope is that as we reacquainted with the really big picture of what God has done for us, we'll love Him more, and we'll want to live for Him more.

[1 : 15] So we start with Genesis, and we're just going to crack on here. So Genesis 1, 1, chapter 2, 3. Before we get sort of really into the details, I want to kind of state the obvious, though.

You heard it read from Harlan here. Genesis is a bit tricky for our modern minds. So I reckon a typical non-religious person would read this and go, well, look, this is just, I mean, this is just nonsense, isn't it?

Like, it just sounds like a fairy tale. It makes no sense scientifically. I mean, you're talking about creation. It doesn't make any sense, really. You've got kind of like this, the light, but then the sun's not created for a few days after that.

It's just, it sounds like mythology, right? Which I can, I'm sort of sympathetic to people thinking that. So I just want to make a quick observation about the passage before we start.

The first chapter of Genesis. The first chapter of Genesis.

[2 : 31] Genesis. So it's about the creation of all things, so we know that, right? But it's mostly about who did it. This is key.

It's about who did it. It's not about how it was done. So we shouldn't try and get this chapter to answer questions about dinosaurs and evolution and was it a literal seven days and how does this fit in all.

The passage is not interested in those questions. It's obviously not a scientific document. Coming to it and saying, well, it's not scientifically accurate.

It's like reading the instruction manual for a toaster and saying, well, that doesn't, that doesn't rhyme. Like, that doesn't rhyme at all. That's a terrible haiku, you know?

Like, it's, you're asking it to do something it's not trying to do. Genesis 1, it's more like a song or a poem. But it's not just a song or a poem as we understand it.

[3 : 29] But in the sort of the taxonomy of literature, it's kind of in that kind of area. It's a whole other genre altogether. It's a creation narrative. It's a genre that doesn't really exist anymore.

But the key to getting it is seeing its focus. It's about who did the creating, not the sort of the science-y sort of stuff. And if you read that with that in mind, you'll see it's pretty clear what it's trying to do.

If you read it quite closely, you'll see that God, that all the verbs have God as the subject. God said, God said, God saw, God saw, God saw, God blessed.

The focus is on God doing or saying something. And that's what this whole series is about, right? It's about the actions of God in the world. Okay, so I hope that was helpful. Now into some details.

And the way we'll do this is we'll break it up into a few sections. So we'll have a crack at verses 1 to 25 first. This is all about God making everything except people. So it's that first section there.

[4 : 28] And the question we want to ask ourselves is, what does God do and what can we learn from this? Okay, so first, what does God do? Well, he creates. And that's the essential message of Genesis 1. There is a creator of the universe.

And this God is so powerful, he just has to speak and things are made from nothing. He just speaks. Let there be light. Let their lives sprout with vegetation. Let the earth swarm with living creatures.

He's spoken and happened. This means that the universe has a source, a creator, a king. And the implications of this are huge, obviously. Today, I think the prevailing and celebrated ideology of the world, I think, in the West anyway, is that I am my own God.

I'm the captain of my own ship. I have complete authority over my body, over my actions. I'm the moral authority over all my decisions. And Genesis 1 says, no, there is a God and it's not you who has the final word on what's right and wrong.

Now, we could sit with this idea for a really, really long time, but we've got to keep going here. So, what else can we learn from this, verses 1 to 25? I think the second thing to talk about is the goodness of God in his creation. So, if the first thing is that God is the creator, this powerful creator who just speaks things into existence, but is he good?

[5 : 49] I think today we're quite accustomed to people in the world who have lots of power, but are actually not very good, who are bad. So, we ask ourselves, is this God, is this powerful God good? And the passage says, yes, and we know this because of the things he makes.

And he names them as good, a good God making good things. He says, the light was good, the earth, the sea were good, the plants were good, the stars were good, animals were good. It's all good. And the word good here doesn't mean just, like, morally good.

It means beautiful. It means God looks at what he's made and he's enjoying his creation. So, what have we got so far? There's a creator and he's good and he's made a good thing.

What else is there to learn? Not only is God enjoying his creation, he wants to be involved in his creation. The Christian God is not like, you know, at the time this was written, there was all this, you know, Greek mythology, Roman theology.

And the gods in those days of mythology, you know, stared their, sort of, what's the phrase in America? They stared down their nose, is that a phrase? They looked down their nose. They looked down their nose at the humans.

[6 : 54] They weren't really that involved. They were kind of, like, shacking up with each other wherever they lived and they were, you know, killing each other and plots and revenge and, like, soap opera stuff, right?

If we look at verse 2 here again. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Hovering over the face of the waters.

Hovering. The only other place I think the word is used in the Bible is in Deuteronomy. That's to describe this eagle hovering over a nest of hatchlings, encouraging them to fly.

It's this picture of intimacy and love and protection. God hovering over his creation. So we have this created God who's good and he's made beautiful things and he wants to be involved. He wants to be involved with us.

He wants to be involved in the world. What else do we learn? This created God wants his creation to do well.

[7 : 54] Verse 22. God blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply. Fill the waters and the seas and let the birds multiply. That's a blessing.

The blessing says flourish. So God is making a home, a place to be with his creation and he wants it to do really well. We also learn there are boundaries though. There's lots of each of their own kind lines.

You heard Harlan say, each of their own kind, each of their own kind. There is flourishing but it's within boundaries. There's systematic ordering and structure. They're there to create the best opportunity for flourishing.

Okay, so we're doing well here folks. We're getting through it. This is so much stuff to learn here. What have we learned? There is a creator. It's not you. God has made this place, the animals, with intention. It's beautiful.

It's functional. It's fruitful. It's ordered. He wants it to flourish and he wants to be involved with it. It's a first section. And then God does something extra special.

[8 : 53] We move on from verses 1 to 25 to 26. Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness. So there's a lot in there. Let's walk through it. Let us make man.

Man means, Hebrew means men and women. So it's let us make men and women. So straight away we notice a difference here from the previous five days. Previously when God makes something, he just commands it.

He says, let there be light. Let there be an expanse. But here God announces he's about to do it. Let us make man. He doesn't do that before. He doesn't say, let us make plants.

He just does it. We don't know who God's announcing it to. Maybe it's the Trinity. We just don't know. We don't know. There's not enough to go on, make a call on that. There's some kind of conferring going on.

And that marks out this part of creation is quite special. And what's special about humanity? Let us make man in our image after our likeness.

[9 : 49] That's what's special. Nothing else is made in God's image, in God's likeness. These new creatures, us, image and likeness. But what does this stuff mean? Back in the days, kings and queens would put these statues in places where they couldn't be, where they weren't there.

To remind the people that the kings and the queens were in charge of that place. That that place was under their care. So the statue, these images of the kings and queens were there to represent the monarch in that place.

So do you see what it's saying here? We are made as images of God in the world. God has chosen a way to be represented in the world.

And it's through people. We can say it another way. God says, these humans will be my co-agents in running this amazing thing that I've made. But what about this word likeness?

What does that mean? Let us make men and women in our image after our likeness. Likeness. What does that extra word mean? I think it's just a reminder that again, we're not God.

[11 : 02] We're in the likeness of God, but we're not gods. We're a derivation. We talked about this right at the start, didn't we?

We are not God. But we're made in the likeness of God. Now what does it look like to be God representatives in the world? Well that's explained in verses 26 to 28.

Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens, etc. And 28 be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Now dominion and subdue, they don't sound very nice.

But think about it like this. If you have a vegetable garden and you don't tend it, it gets overrun. It's not helpful to people. It won't flourish if you ignore it.

You have to sort of dominate that space. You have to subdue that space in order for it to be fruitful. Later we hear about Adam and Eve. And they were given work to do, even in paradise. And their work was just getting things under control.

[12 : 00] Tending the earth. In order to create the best scenario for life to flourish. So I know they're not fun words, subdue and dominate. But it's just, it's God just saying, one of the things you have to do to represent me on the earth is just make this kind of work.

Make things work. And at various points the church has been sort of good at this and bad at this. But I don't know if you know this. You know it was evangelicals that started the RSPCA. Monasteries invented the whole idea of crop rotation.

There's lots of examples I can give you. The idea of looking after the world. This is reiterated in verses 28 to 31. But we don't have time to get into that. But here's where we're at so far.

God made this really good thing. A home for you. A home to be with God. He says look after it. Care for it. Care for one another. He spoke it into existence.

He enjoys it. He's not detached from it. Like ancient Greek gods. He's involved. We're his co-rulers. He managed the world with them.

[13 : 06] And that's chapter 1. But you'll notice the passage sneaks into chapter 2 as well. So let's have a look at those verses. I'll remind you of just those two verses there.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished. And all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done. And he rested on the Sabbath day.

From all his work and that he had done. And so God blessed the seventh day. And made it holy. That's interesting isn't it? There is a million things to say about this.

I'll mention just a couple. First. It's tempting to think that we people. Are the climax of creation. We are not.

It's the Sabbath. This is the high point of the creation story. Is the Sabbath. Secondly. God rested on the seventh day.

[14 : 11] It doesn't say he rested because he was tired. He rested on the bathroom. He rested on the bathroom. He rests because he's completed his work. And he rests to enjoy it. I think this is the last big reveal on the creation story.

The last big gift to us. Is the story. Is clearly telling us that the work. That you know. Like work is good. God's a worker. Work the land.

We should work. But this is clearly telling us that. Work is not an end in itself. we can derive a lot of meaning from our work and a lot of purpose and it can become so much of our identity and I only know church land he knows church land and it seems particularly a problem for ministers and it can become quite unhealthy the way we think about our work our lives can be driven by just vocational ambition and we can become quite prideful in our work if we've got a really great job a really killer job that's publicly really admired or we can have a lot of shame around our work if we don't think our work on the ladder of jobs is a bit lower we can be ashamed of that so God gives us in creation in these seven days one last gift and it's rest and I'm going to relate to what I just said now it's the last thing he makes and it's a foil to all this unhealth around work I think in the passage it says he does two things he blesses it and he calls it holy which is interesting that's interesting right that's very interesting blesses it meaning he infuses this day with the ability to create life so remember when he blessed other things in creation he blessed them and said be fruitful like you know do something do something great well when God made this day the Sabbath day he also said he blesses it what does that mean it means that this is a day that can be fruitful it can accomplish something it's a day through rest that does something and we kind of

I think we know this it's like it can restore our energy and our creativity and our vision and our strength and our you know our buoyancy and our clarity and our hope it's rest that's life giving but that's not all in verse 2 he says this day is holy what does that mean?

it's the first time the word holy is used in the Bible so other faiths have holy places right?

[17 : 26] like Mecca the holy place for Islam the Ganges you know the holy place for Hinduism paganism has places you know like Stonehenge you know Christians we don't really have a holy place but we have a holy time this day a week that God instituted a time where we slow down and we take a breath and we drink it all in kind of the wonder of it all that God we create such an amazing thing this is what God did and this is what God did on the Sabbath day he enjoyed the fruit of his labour this is what we should do and God takes it very seriously doesn't he?

when we if you if you this homework if you looked up Exodus 20 the 10 commandments like don't murder commandment and the 10 commandments it's like four words do not murder there's another I can't think what the other word is you shall not shall not murder four words it's four words I looked it up four words the commandment that gets the biggest explanation that gets the most words that gets the most real estate is the one about remembering the Sabbath it's like a big it's a big like paragraph that's very interesting isn't it?

on the Sabbath we remember that God is our creator that he is good that this is his world so we pause from our subduing we rest and it's not just a physical rest it's a rest from the idea that we are our jobs it's a rest from the idea that I only have value if I'm productive I have some killer job it's a holy day where we find satisfaction in God alone it's good to remember the words of Jesus who described himself as the Lord of the Sabbath in Matthew 11 he says this come to me all who are weary and burdened and I'll give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I'm gentle and humble in heart and you'll find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy my burden is light it's wonderful isn't it?

Amen through the story of God through the story of God through the story of God through
the story of God through the story of God through the story of God through the story of
God through the story of God through the story of God through the story of God through
the story of God through the story of God through the story of God through the story of
God through the story of God through the story of God through the story of God through
the story of God