

Genesis 2:1-2:3 (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: 23 January 2022

Preacher: Rev. Chris Ley

- [0 : 00] Well, in Genesis 1, we're told why God created the heavens and the earth. And tonight, in Genesis 2, we are told why.
- Why did God create the heavens and the earth? Genesis 1 is centrally about who. Who is God? Who are we?
- And now, at the beginning of Genesis 2, we're confronted with the question of why. Why did God bother creating any of this?
- What's the central purpose of creation? What you notice at the beginning of Genesis is the creation account is structured to lead us to this question.
- It takes us through the days of creation toward this ultimate day. The seventh and the final day. So the first six days are a crescendo.
- [1 : 02] They're an arrow. They're a means to an end. And the end, the point, the purpose, the goal, is the seventh day. So let's read what happens.
- Genesis 2, verse 1. In this way, 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 seventh day from all his work that he had done.
- So God blessed the seventh day. And he made it holy. Because on it, God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.
- From this text, we learn the grand purpose of our creator creating creation.
- It's the rest of God. The goal is God's rest. The seventh day, writes a scholar, John Walton, is the climax of the origins account.
- [2 : 07] It's the purpose of the origins account. And the other six days don't achieve their full meaning without it. Rest is the objective of creation.
- In verse 3, God blesses the seventh day, and he makes it holy. Because on it, God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.
- The goal of creation is God's rest. Pretty simple. Amen. Let's sit down. Just one question. What on earth does that mean?
- The key to our passage, and apparently to all of creation, is this word, rest. Rest here does not mean sleep.
- Doesn't mean nap. Doesn't even mean relax. God is not tired from a busy week. He doesn't need to take a nap after all this creating.
- [3 : 12] Rest here means stopping and staying. Rest means residing and abiding. On day seven, God comes to dwell within his creation.
- In the beginning, remember, God's spirit is hovering over the unformed, unfilled world. But now, at the completion of creation, God comes to abide in a formed, filled world that he has made.
- So, think about building a house on empty plot of land. This is something I've never done, but maybe you have. Making a home, I think, requires three major steps.

The first thing you need to do, if you need to form the house. You need to draw up plans. You need to acquire building supplies. You need to undergo the construction process.

The forming of the house is the first step in creating it. And if you look at the creation account, it correlates roughly with the first three days of creation, when God builds and forms the earth.

[4 : 25] But as we know in Vancouver, just building a physical house and having it sit vacant does not make it a home. You need to fill the house.

An empty house is not an adequate home. You need to bring in furniture, appliances, supplies, so that the house can become habitable. It isn't enough to have four walls and a roof.

You need a fridge. More than a fridge, you need food in the fridge. You need a closet. You need clothes to fill the closet. You need bedrooms. But those bedrooms need to have beds in them.

See, filling the house is the second step in making a house your home. And it's what God does in verses 4 to 6. He fills his creation. So, so far, God has formed the earth and he's filled the earth.

And now, there is the third, final, most important step in order to make a house your home. You need to move in. You need to dwell in the house.

[5 : 28] You need to abide in your abode. To rest. To reside. And once you do this, finally, your work is finished.

The house is now your home. It's your headquarters. It's the place from which you can now live your life. And so, this abiding, residing, is what the word rest means in Genesis 2.

God is not snoozing nor sleeping, but dwelling. John Walton again writes, when God rests on the seventh day, he's taking up his residence in the ordered system of creation that he has brought about in the previous six days.

So, the rest of God in Genesis 2 is God himself now taking residence in his creation. The forming and the filling are complete. So, God now moves into the neighborhood.

He dwells among us. Now, this is probably a new idea to you. But the original hearers of Genesis got this. When the Israelites would travel to God's temple in Jerusalem, they would sing songs on the road.

[6 : 41] They didn't have a radio, and so they sang. And one of the songs they sung was Psalm 132. And listen to verses 7 and 8. They sing, let us go to God's dwelling place. Let us worship at his footstool.

Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place. The temple was God's resting place. It doesn't mean it's where he napped.

It meant it's where he lived. Where God was present. The temple was God's home. The psalm goes on in verse 13. The Lord has chosen Zion. That's the Jerusalem temple.

He's desired it for his dwelling place. This is my resting place. For I have desired it. And here I will dwell.

So, rest in the Bible has to do with residence. Not with sleep. So, God's rest has to do with where he dwells. It means the place where God reigns.

[7 : 40] Genesis 2 tells us the purpose of God's creation is so that he may rest in it. God creates so that he may reside within his creation.

Ruling over it. Running it. Enjoying it. And actively present in his world. That's the whole point of creation. It's all about God's rest.

God creates so that he may come to dwell with us. Within his creation. That was always his plan. And that's the purpose of creation. God wants to live among us.

With us. He wants a living, loving relationship with each of us. That's why he made us. And that's why we're invited to dwell within this seventh day reality.

So far in Genesis, there have been six complete days. If you have your Bible open, Genesis 1, six times you hear, and there was evening, and there was morning.

[8 : 41] You hear it after the first day, the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day, the sixth day. This repetition. There was evening. There was morning.

Six days of creation so far have started and have ended. Evening. Morning. Morning. And now, we enter day seven. And something strange happens.

Or rather, something strange doesn't happen. Day seven doesn't have a morning. And it doesn't have an evening. Day seven has a start.

But in the text, literally, it does not have an end. The rest of God, the moment when God comes and makes his home within his creation, never ends.

Day seven does not end in our text. So perhaps day seven hasn't ended. Perhaps we're still living within the rest of God.

[9 : 42] Now, from this, perhaps, you can deduce something about me. Cards on the table. I am not a literal seven-day creationist.

This means I don't believe the world was created in seven successive 24-hour days. And it's hard to see if you have masks on how angry you are right now. But before you pick up rocks to throw at me, can you just give me two minutes to explain how I get there?

And I'm not going to argue from modern science. I want to show you from Scripture itself. Because we should always use Scripture to interpret Scripture.

So let's talk about the word day in Genesis. If you look at the word day in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament where Genesis is, often it does not refer to a 24-hour Earth Day.

But rather, it refers to some discrete period of time. It means a season, an epoch, an age. The proof of this for us is not far away.

[10 : 42] It's a little further down in Genesis 2, in verse 17. Here God is telling humanity not to eat the tree in the garden. We'll look at that next week. And God says, Now we know that Adam and Eve do eat the fruit of that forbidden tree.

But we also know that they don't die in the literal 24-hour day after they eat it. They're kicked out of the garden. And then they live a very long life.

They have three kids after they eat the fruit. And those kids grow up. In Genesis 5, we're told that Adam lives to be 930 years old.

Which, of course, raises a lot of other questions that we'll grapple with in a couple weeks. So my point is that a day in Scripture doesn't always need to mean 24 hours.

Because it clearly doesn't mean that in Genesis 2, verse 17. Rather, a day can be a Hebrew saying. It can be an idiom that means a period of time.

[11 : 54] So God is warning Adam that if he eats the fruit that is forbidden, he will enter an age, a season, a period, a day that will end in his death. His days will be numbered.

And he will die. So a day in Genesis 2 doesn't mean 24 hours. I posit. If you're still skeptical, hear what Peter says in the New Testament.

This is from 2 Peter chapter 3. Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

God is outside of time. And so a literal day does not need to mean 24 hours in Scripture. And I'm not just saying this to upset you. I'm saying this because it matters.

Because it means that it is indeed possible, and perhaps probable, that we are still living in the seventh day of creation. Why else would the seventh day not have an evening and a morning, as the other six do?

[12 : 55] And that means we are living tonight, right now, in the rest of God. We are living in the age where God resides within his creation.

Our lives are contained in this holiest, blessed day. So Genesis 2, therefore, is telling us that God is here.

He's present in our present lives. And this means that you can have intimacy with the Almighty, enjoying his presence in your present life.

So let me invite you now to live within God's rest. I think that's what the text is doing. God's word tonight tells us that you can live within the rest of God.

You can know God's presence in your life. God can dwell in you right now. Jesus, God the Son, who came to earth, invites us to live in him.

[14 : 03] He says, Come to me, you who are weary and heavy laden, heavily burdened, and I will give you rest.

Come to me, the Son of God, who came to dwell, to rest, to reside on earth, invites us, come to me. Come to the place where God is.

Come to the place where God reigns, and there you will find the rest of God. The security and the order and the goodness of God.

And there you will find restoration, redemption, rescue, recreation, and yes, rest. Notice where we find the rest of God.

Jesus says, Come to me. God's rest is found in him. God dwells in him. God reigns through him, because Jesus is God's Son.

[15 : 05] Jesus came to earth to restore for us the rest of God, to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth, that God may dwell and reign on earth with us forever.

God's ultimate goal is not to sweep all of us up to heaven. His goal is to bring heaven to earth. We believe, and indeed we pray, that his kingdom would come here, because he has come here.

Elsewhere in John 15, Jesus commands his followers to abide in him. He says to them, I'm the vine and you are the branches. Without abiding in me, you will wither and die.

You can do nothing, he says, but with him, abiding in him, resting in him, we will bear much fruit. We're invited to rest in God, to abide in Christ.

We're told when Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit leaves heaven, and rests on Jesus. God's Holy Spirit makes his home in Jesus.

[16 : 15] And Jesus then promises us, that whoever believes in him, will likewise experience God's Holy Spirit, resting on us. God's own Spirit dwelling in us, forming all of us together into living stones, which together will form an eternal house, where God may rest forever.

Do you see? God rests in us, when we rest in Christ. Because the purpose of all of this, was the rest of God. On the seventh day, God rests within his creation.

And now through Jesus, we're invited into the rest of God, as he rests in us. We're promised when we draw close to Jesus, that God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, will come to rest in us.

You're made to house God's Holy Spirit. You are made to be a part of God's living temple, his eternal home. God's longing is to rest in us forever.

It's incredible. And it's offered to us all, because God is good. And because the purpose of creation, is the rest of God.

[17 : 31] I want to finish now, with a really practical question. That was kind of a deep dive. Let's get practical. How can I experience the rest of God?

How can I know God's rest in my life? For some of you, it's been quite a year. It's been quite a 24 months. You probably feel restless and exhausted, and burdened to a breaking point.

So how can we know God's rest in our current pandemic lives? Well, first, we experience God's rest by coming to Jesus.

Come to me, he says, all who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. It's Jesus who offers all of us the rest of God.

So draw close to him. Believe in him. Read the unbelievable story of Scripture about how deep the Father's love for us.

[18 : 33] That he sent his one and only Son to save you, to die for you, to forgive you, to remake you, to dwell within you. That he may be risen from the dead for you, so that you too may rise, and may rest in him forever, as he rests in you.

So we know the rest of God by coming to Jesus as we are in faith. There's also a second way you can know the rest of God.

God gives a command for us that we may experience his rest. The command is a big one. It's called a commandment.

One of the ten commandments upon which all humans are called to live. And the command God gives is this. One day a week, on the seventh day, rest.

Cease from your labor. And soak in the presence of God. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. One essential practice to experience the rest of God in your present life is keeping a Sabbath.

[19 : 43] You are not too busy for a Sabbath. If you feel too busy for a Sabbath, it reveals your dire need of one. It means that right now your life is unbalanced, unsustainable, dangerous.

It reveals that you're not abiding in Christ. Keeping a Sabbath is setting aside a day a week to dwell with God, to rest in him, to abide in Jesus, and by doing so to experience the rest of God.

Failing to do this puts you in mortal danger. Without rest, without abiding in God, we are like a branch cut off from its roots.

We will eventually wither and die. The world is dying for the rest of God, writes Pastor Mark Buchanan. He continues, in a culture where busyness is a fetish, and stillness is considered laziness, and rest is sloth.

But without rest, we miss the rest of God. The rest he invites us to enter more fully so that we might know him more deeply. Be still and know that I am God.

[21 : 11] Some knowing is never pursued, only received. And for that, you need to be still. Sabbath keeping is being still. It's ceasing.

It's abiding in God's presence. It's resting in Christ. And it's totally counter-cultural. It's maybe the most radical thing we could do today.

And perhaps it's the most essential. Take a day and draw close to God. Mark Buchanan again says, Sabbath is both a day and an attitude to nurture stillness.

It is both time on a calendar and a disposition of the heart. It's a day we enter, but just as much away we see. Sabbath imparts the rest of God.

Actual, physical, mental, spiritual rest. But also, the rest of God. The things of God's nature and presence that we miss in our busyness.

- [22 : 17] Okay, maybe at this point you're intrigued. Maybe you're running through your calendar for next weekend and saying, is this even humanly possible? How do I keep a Sabbath?
- For some of us, taking 24 consecutive hours off our labor is impossible. If you do shift work, if you're a student, if you're a parent caring for a young child, 24 straight hours off probably isn't realistic.
- And we don't need to get legalistic about it. We just need to do it. Draw close to God. Take time. If right now it can only be two hours instead of 24, start there.
- I don't take Sundays off. Confession. I'm working right now. I take Fridays off instead. It's fine. I have young kids.
- Being around my house is ten times more exhausting for me than going to my office. So my Sabbath is very rarely 24 consecutive blissful hours of harmony.
- [23 : 22] But regardless, I take the moments I have. I take the time I am given throughout my week to draw close to God. There are many ways to do this.
- I go into nature on my Sabbath. Year round. I take my Sabbath to be in creation. Creation points me to my creator and it helps me abide in him.
- For you it might look completely different. You might walk to your favorite coffee shop or rest in your favorite chair. That's fine. Whatever helps you cease and be still with God.
- On my Sabbath I seek solitude. I'm an introvert. I go on a bike ride or I go kayaking alone that I may be still with no other voices or distractions.
- But for you maybe Sabbath keeping means throwing a dinner party and having friends or neighbors around a table is maybe how you draw close to God and rest in him through seeing and hearing him in other people and that's great.
- [24 : 26] On the Sabbath we should pray. Sometimes I use my own words. Sometimes I use a liturgy. Sometimes I use a psalm. Sometimes I sing the lyrics of a song as both praise and prayer to God.
- On my Sabbath I read my Bible and I often read a great Christian book as well that helps me rest in God. I practice stillness on my Sabbath.
- I make good coffee and I sit in my favorite chair and I just breathe deeply. fully present in that still and sacred holy moment. I try really hard to look upward and not inward.
- And you see viewing the Sabbath this way makes it not be a burden but rather it can be the highlight of life. It's the day where we can be most connected to God and often to others through resting and being still and being totally present.
- It's certainly a discipline to keep a Sabbath but it's far more difficult and deadly to not keep one. Busyness and a constant state of hurry will kill you either spiritually or relationally or mentally or physically.
- [25 : 49] So instead we are invited to draw close to God and rest in him. Come to me. Jesus invites you right now.
- Come to me. If you are weighed down by life, if you're heavily burdened, come and trust that abiding in him, he will give you the rest of God that you were created to enjoy.
- Amen.