

Mark 2:1-12

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Preachers: Chris Matthews, Matt Coburn

[0:00] Well, good morning.

Just want to add to Pastor Greg's announcement as the children's ministry. If you are a member and you'd like to come to the meeting on Thursday, we will provide childcare.

So please, if that is a barrier to you thinking about coming, please do plan on coming and join us for the meal beforehand, and then there will be someone to watch your kids during the meeting.

And also, there are agendas on the back table. If you are a member and would like to know more particularly what we're talking about, that is available for you, I believe.

Is that right, Esther? So if you want those, they're on the back table. One of the fun things about being a father is watching your son grow up.

[1:01] My son Eli is five, almost five. He'll be five in two weeks. And he's at a really, really fun stage of life. When I ask him to help with something, he just lights up.

He stands up straighter. His chest kind of puffs out a little bit. And he will literally run around the house getting the things that he thinks we need.

Some of it's useful. Some of it's not. But getting the things that he thinks that we need to do the task at hand. And it is really fun to see him as he finds a place in my world, in our world, where he can help, where he can contribute.

He loves it. And it just fills him with pride and fills him with a joy. And it energizes his life. And I was reflecting on it this week because I was thinking, I don't know how many of us, myself included, feel this way every day.

We don't describe our day-to-day life as this great opportunity to jump into good works, to help the world, and to do something profitable. Instead, what do we do?

[2:19] Well, often we call it the daily grind. Whatever are the tasks at hand, what do we need to get through today? Whether it's laundry and wiping noses.

Whether it's assignments and preparing for exams or writing papers. Whether it's projects at work, getting the to-do list done for your boss.

Whether it's all the activities that fill your day. Often these things are not seen as these great opportunities. But instead, they're a daily grind.

We think, how do we get through this one? And then how do we get through the next one? And how do we get through the next one? And deep in our hearts, we ask ourselves a question.

Is this what we were created for? Is there anything greater? Is there anything more than this? One of my favorite poets slash songwriters in the last 15 years, and this is going to date me for some of you, but if you're familiar with the band Switchfoot, wrote a great song.

[3:39] It's probably their breakout song. This is partly what they wrote in this song. Fumbling his confidence and wondering why the world has passed him by. Hoping that he's bent for more than arguments and failed attempts to fly.

Dreaming about providence and whether mice and men have second tries. Maybe we've been living with our eyes half open. Maybe we're bent and broken. We were meant to live for so much more.

Have we lost ourselves? And I wonder if you feel that way today. I wonder if you feel, as you wake up each morning, is this all that I've been made for?

And you know, sometimes we don't feel that way. Sometimes we wake up in the morning and we just think, what a great day. I can't wait for all the things. But as I was reflecting on it, it seems that this question arises more commonly in particular circumstances.

Sometimes it's when we've reached the top. When we've accomplished all the things we wanted to accomplish. When we've won the Super Bowl. When we've done all the things.

[4 : 50] When we've finally gotten married. Whatever the thing is that we've set our hearts on it and gone through all the work to do. And then we think, is this all? Is this all there is?

On the other hand, on the other end of the spectrum, there are times when we ask the question when we feel like we are getting crushed under the heel of life. Where every day is simply an attempt to survive.

To try to get through to the next day. And not be totally overcome. And overwhelmed. By the tasks of life. Often we think, is this all?

And thirdly, I think there are times when we ask this question when what we're working for will be very costly. When continuing to pursue the thing that we're grinding out for suddenly will cost us a lot.

And we ask, is this worth it? Is this what I was made for? Is it worth continuing on this track? This career track? Is it worth pressing through in this relationship? Is it, well you can't really get out of parenting.

[6 : 00] You're kind of stuck there. But when it's really costly. These are the times when these questions rise up in our mind.

And I think when we ask this question, when we feel this existential angst, I think there are two things that we can do. There are two ways that we respond. One is that we run, we try to anesthetize our hearts from the fearful reality of asking that question.

We run to little things to give us a little pleasure, a little distraction, a little entertainment, a little something to avoid the pain of facing a life where we're asking, is this really worth it?

Or, the second thing is, we take up the charge of the existentialists of the 20th century who said, there is no meaning out there. Don't even try to find it.

The only meaning is what you make of it. And so we set ourselves to the task of making our lives meaningful. And we become driven, purposeful people. But we're desperately trying to infuse our life with a meaning, with a purpose, with a grandeur, all on our own.

[7 : 18] And yet I would posit to you that neither of these strategies ultimately work. And they leave us with the same question. Were we made for something more?

We made for something more than this. And this is the question to which our passage speaks this morning. We are continuing our series in the book of Hebrews.

If you want to turn in your pew Bible, page 1001. We're going to look at Hebrews chapter 2 this morning. We're going to look at this passage and we're going to remember what it is that God has said to us about this question.

And just to remind you of a little bit of the context as you're looking there, chapter 1 of Hebrews was all about Jesus the Exalted One. Jesus who is the final and the best Word of God.

Jesus who has come and who has given a greater and a fuller revelation than that of the angels. In fact, the angels are simply ministering spirits. But Jesus is the final Word.

[8:26] Jesus is the One who has come. And God has spoken to us so that we know who God is through Jesus. And then, the beginning of chapter 2, verses 1 through 4, Nick last week talked about how woven into this argument about the Exalted Jesus is then this grave warning.

So if Jesus is that great, oh friends, let us be careful that we do not drift away from such a great work of salvation that this Jesus has worked for us.

And then, starting in verse 5 of chapter 2, which is what we're going to read in just a minute, he dives back into the argument. But he's not starting a brand new argument, nor is he continuing the same argument.

But he has a second movement in this argument about Jesus and how he relates to God and to angels and to creation. And in this section, particularly, how he relates to humanity.

So let's look together. Hebrews chapter 2, verses 5 through 9. Let's read it together. Now, in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.

[10:03] At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him, but we see him who, for a little while, was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone.

Let's pray together. God, we thank you for your word. We thank you that in it, you have shown us who Jesus is, your best and final word.

And God, I pray this morning that you would lead us and help us as we look at it this morning. God, I pray for your spirit to help me that the words I speak might be useful.

Lord, that you would apply your word to our hearts. Lord, that we might see what a glorious Savior Jesus is. And we pray in his precious name. Amen.

Amen. So as we look at this argument, I don't know what your first reaction to it was. When I first looked at this passage as I started preparing a little while ago was, okay, this is not obvious what this is all about.

[11:18] So let me try and walk you through the argument. And as we walk you through the argument, we're going to see what a precious thing this word gives us. And we're going to see three things in this argument.

The first thing is we're going to see God's plan for humanity in verses five through eight. And then at the very end of verse eight, we're going to see the second thing, which is the problem for humanity.

And then in verse nine, we will see God's provision for humanity. So we're going to see God's plan, the problem, and God's provision for humanity.

So first, let's look at verses five through eight and the plan for humanity. And you know what? This is the answer to the question that I raised at the beginning. What were we made for? In verses five through eight, the author is saying Jesus is connected with humanity and God has a unique plan for humanity.

This is what he means in verse five, where he starts off the argument, for it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come. He's picking up the arguments from before, okay?

[12:26] He's been talking about the angels and particularly if you look back, verse 14 of chapter one, who are the angels? The angels are not the last word, but the angels are ministering spirits for the sake of who?

For the sake of those who will inherit salvation. That is human beings, you and me and all of humanity. And so he's picking up that argument again and he's saying, do you remember?

It's not to angels that he subjected the world, but to humanity. And that's the argument at the beginning of verse five. And he's saying that the world that's being subjected to humanity is not this world now, but it's the world to come.

That is, it's the world when Jesus' reign is fully established, humanity will be the ones who will rule over it. Now, why do I say this?

Well, the author gives us a reason. He goes back and he quotes Psalm 8, which was read to us earlier this morning. And he looks at Psalm 8 and he says, what is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you care for him?

[13:33] You made him for a little while, lower than the angels. You've crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.

And if you remember the Psalm and the glory of it, the psalmist was writing as he stood there and he looked at the heavens and he looked at the glory of God's creation and he felt so small.

And maybe you felt that too. When you go to the Grand Canyon or an incredibly beautiful place, when you go to the ocean and watch the immensity of the waves, when you go to the mountains and you see how great and immovable they are, you feel small.

And yet the psalmist is saying, God, you've made such a great creation. Who am I? What is my place in it? And yet you have actually given me the greatest place because though you made me a little lower than the angels, yet you've crowned me with glory and you have made it so that everything will be under my feet.

And the psalmist there is pulling on a number of different traditions. One of the traditions is that of understandings in the Old Testament times. One is that it was the angels who have dominion over this present world.

[14:49] This was a common view, both at the time of the psalmist and in the first century, where the angels were sort of the ruling spirits over this world, over this present age. It's saying, so humanity was made lower than them for a season.

And yet, and yet that's not the ultimate goal. In fact, going back to Genesis 1, going back to the very beginning of the story, the psalmist is recalling that God has given humanity dominion over all the earth, male and female.

He gave them stewardship over all of creation, all the living things, all of the physical world. And though, and we'll explore this more in a few minutes, though this has been abused greatly, yet there is an original dignity and rightness in what it is that God is doing.

And so he says, what is man that you've made, that you're mindful of him, or the son of man that you would care for him? And the son of man there, I don't think actually refers to Jesus.

It's kind of easy to jump there. But I think based on Hebrew parallelism and just the way that Old Testament writers wrote, it's simply saying, it's another way of saying, what is man? What is mankind, humanity, that is being referred to in that verse?

[16:15] And so the psalmist is saying, God, you have done an amazing thing. I am little in your creation, but you have given me this incredible purpose of having dominion, that everything will be put under my control as I live, and this is the original intent, as I live under you, God, this is the place that I have in your creation and your world.

And this is what he says as he goes on in verse 8, the first part, right? He says, now I'm putting everything into subjection to him. He left nothing outside of his control.

Not even the angels. The angels will ultimately be under human rulership as the humans rule under God over creation.

And this is the argument. And I think it's unbelievable for us. One, we're very democratic.

We don't like kings. We don't like people who rule over us. And we're uncomfortable with the thought that we might actually have to play that role ourselves. And so we have a cultural barrier against wanting to be, having a place of ruling or reigning over others.

[17:35] We just feel uncomfortable with it. And so we have but the psalmist says, no, this is actually your human destiny.

This is your created purpose that God has given to you. Have you ever thought about the Chronicles of Narnia in light of this? The Chronicles of Narnia, for those of you who don't know, is a great series of children's books by C.S. Lewis.

And the first one tells the story of these four children, the Pevensies, who are off on holiday at their, at a large house and they get transported into a new world.

And you know, in their normal world, they're just everyday people. But you know what happens to them? When they're transported into the world, they find out that they are in fact kings and queens.

And as they learn about this world and as they understand this world more, they know, they come to realize that they have this incredible world that they've been given to rule over and to care for under the great rule of the emperor over the sea and his son, Aslan the lion, who sacrificially saves the land by his own death.

[18:51] It's a great allegory. If you haven't read it, definitely do it. But the picture there of these ordinary kids who are transported into a world where they in fact are kings and queens.

This is, in fact, true of us. This is what God intends for you and me. Under God, for all eternity, this is what we were created for.

Think about what that must have meant to the recipients of this letter. We've talked about the fact that the people who received this letter seemed to be facing some kind of persecution, some kind of difficulty.

In fact, the pressure was so great that there were people who were turning away from Jesus and saying, No, Jesus, that's not, I'm not going to continue to believe in Jesus because it cost me too much.

They're facing that third crisis that I talked about earlier, about what am I here for? And they're turning away from Jesus in the midst of it. And if we read it right, and if that pressure is coming significantly from Roman persecution, what good news would it be that you, though you may be killed by the Roman emperor, you are going to reign forever with Jesus?

[20:23] What good news would that be? It would be pretty great, wouldn't it? It would be pretty exciting. We'll come back to that thought in a little while. Let me give one application for this that is actually an aside.

But as I was reflecting on this truth this week, it occurred to me that we actually struggle with this idea of humans reigning over the world for another reason too.

In a post-Darwinian world, we have an assumption, we have a thought that human beings are simply the top of the animal chain and we are simply one more step in an evolutionary process.

And friends, this passage tells us that though it is true that we are a part of the created order, just like the animals, we are in fact, according to the Bible, distinct from the animal world.

we have a dignity and a purpose that is not the same as that for dolphins and dogs and butterflies. They have their own place in reflecting God's glory and we have a stewardship and a responsibility to this creation under God to care for it in a way that we have and always.

[21 : 41] But friends, we are distinct and that has all sorts of implications. That has implications for unborn children.

It has implications for the elderly. It has implications for stewardship of the environment. We need to think about this and to recognize that Psalm 8 and the argument of the Hebrews up to this point is saying human beings have this unique destiny and purpose to rule under God over the world.

What is humanity made a little lower than the angels but crowned with glory and given dominion over all creation?

What a glorious thing it is. And yet, and one of the reasons why you're sitting there looking at me and not standing up and clapping and shouting at how wonderful it is because of the end of verse 8.

Because there's a problem isn't there? The problem is that this glorious purpose that's laid out is so far from our imaginations to know what that actually looks like because we don't see it now do we?

[22 : 58] Look with me the end of verse 8 at present we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him. And this is right isn't it?

You look around in our world and what do we see? We see a mix. We see humanity sometimes doing great things. There are moments of heroism. There's progress in medicine. There's growth in civilization.

There's progress in creativity and in the arts. There's all sorts of things that where we are seeing some good signs and yet and yet how much are we in fact not over the creation.

How much do we see is outside of control and in fact what we see is not order but chaos. Our natural world is beyond our ken.

Our natural world is beyond our control and we continue to be reminded of it as we're in our modern world continue to think that we actually can control it and then we get another forest fire another tsunami another hurricane another blizzard another thing that just reminds me that no this is not yet true.

[24 : 17] And it's not just in the natural world is it it's in our own personal life too. We don't do what we want to do all the time do we?

We don't even have control over being able to accomplish the things that we set to accomplish. We find our emotional life beyond our control at times.

We find our moral compass unable to give us the strength to actually be the righteous people that we're meant to be. And we see it in relationships and we see it in civilizations and societies.

This world is not under the control of humanity or when it is humanity is abusing that power and destroying rather than building.

And the greatest way that we see this is actually in the one thing that no one ever has been able to conquer and that is death.

[25 : 29] Do you notice he picked that up at the end? We'll get to why he did. But one of the things that we do see is that death has control over us.

Because no matter what progress we've made in medicine no matter what good things we've been able to do and nutrition and living well and all of that we still die.

Everyone will die. Everyone will face that ultimate eternity. and it reminds us it reminds us that in Genesis 1 that's not the way it was supposed to be and yet now it is inevitably that way and it will not be otherwise and we've been trying for thousands of years as humans to figure out how to overcome it.

We haven't yet and you know what we never will. We never will. death came into the world because of human sin and rebellion.

Remember how I said that the framework was humanity over creation under God? Most of you probably know the storyline but in Genesis 3 humanity said we don't want to live under God.

[26 : 48] We want to be our own gods. We want to take a dominion that is not ours and to try to replace God with ourselves and in that rebellion everything was broken.

Relationships were broken, relationship with God, relationship with one another, relationship with creation. All of those things were broken because of human sin that is rebellion against God, refusing to honor God and acknowledge him for what he's supposed to be.

and so death came into the world as a right judgment against a rebellion against the giver of life.

When we rebelled against the one who gave us life, he said the punishment will be death. And so the whole world is under this dynamic and so this God-given purpose for humanity that everything would be under him is in fact not true at all because we all die.

None of us will be able to reign forever. None of us will be able to do that. And so we live in this tension, don't we? We live in the tension that we were meant for this destiny, this dignity of being under God over the world and yet now we cannot do it.

[28 : 15] We are incapable of doing it. Friends, just as an aside, this is one of the most encouraging things to me about the Bible is that it actually deals with reality because we live every day with this longing for something that cannot be.

And these verses right here describe why we feel that way. Because we were created for something but sin has entered the world and it has entered our hearts and so we cannot do it, we cannot achieve the things that we long we cannot get to the ideals that we can imagine because God has placed that imagination into our hearts but our sin has crippled us.

And so we do not see the world as it ought to be. We do not see the world in subjection. But friends, this is the good news that the writer to the Hebrews wants to give to us is that that's not the last word, is it?

because in the end of verse 8 he says, we see the world not in subjection. But what do we see?

We don't see the world as it should be, but what do we see? Look with me at verse 9. Let's read it again together. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

[29 : 53] Oh, friends, what good news this is. We see him, namely Jesus, and what is it particularly that he says about Jesus? Jesus is two things at the same time.

Jesus is made lower than the angels and yet crowned with glory. What does that mean? Chapter 1 is talked about the exalted Jesus who is over all and who reigns over all, who is called the Son, who has this exalted place in God's kingdom.

But now we see Jesus not simply in his exalted place, but also in his place of humbling himself and coming and identifying with humanity.

Jesus came to restore what was broken, to restore the fallen humanity. And in order to do that, he must become human. He had to join with us in being made lower than the angel.

And so the word, the second person of the trinity, of the Godhead, who existed from eternity, took on human flesh. He became a human being.

[31 : 07] And so this God man, Jesus, identified with us. And as he identified with us, he then captured a glory that was beyond all imagination.

salvation. Think about it, friends. If you were the creator of the world and you were going to come and rescue your world, how would you come? On a white horse, crowned with glory, with armies of angels at your back, sweeping over the world, executing justice and righteousness, lifting up the downtrodden, casting down the proud and the arrogant, making all things right and new, wouldn't that have looked great.

But instead, we see Jesus, who has a greater plan by identifying with us and then being crowned with glory because of, did you see that phrase in there?

Because of the suffering of death. So not only did Jesus identify with us by becoming a human, but then having lived a perfect life where there was no sin, we'll see that later in Hebrews if you're wondering, there was no sin in his life, he then was able to step in and be a substitute for all of humanity.

So just as the first Adam failed and rejected God, he comes as the second Adam to live the perfectly obedient life and to restore that which was broken in the first place.

[32 : 51] and so he enters in not just to humanity, but he enters into the penalty upon humanity, the judgment upon humanity by death.

death. And so he suffered death on the cross for us. So that, you see the last phrase in there?

So that by the grace of God, that is, the free undeserved gift of God to the human race, he might taste death for everyone.

That is, everyone without distinction, everyone who comes to him, he dies. Friends, this is great news.

He came to be a human being like us so that we could become a human being like him. That is, he came and he walked the earth and he died on the cross and he rose again so that we too, by faith in him, might also die to sin and be raised to new life with him.

[34 : 05] Jesus is the one who's promised in chapter 1 verse 13 that all things will be put under his feet. Do you see it? Look with me. Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

Jesus is going to come and everything will sit under him. But that's not enough for God's great glory and plan because he wants you and me to be with God in that.

And so Jesus comes and he becomes a human being and dies on the cross and rises from the dead so that we, friends, may be caught up with him. So that we might be restored to that place of reigning with him.

And this is scattered throughout the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 6 verses 1 and 2 rebukes the Corinthian church saying, don't you know that you will judge the angels?

that you will judge the world? This is God's plan for us. Jesus is the, as we will see later, the author and the pioneer of our salvation.

[35 : 18] That is, he's the one who wrote it from the very beginning, but he's also the first one to do it. He's the first one to go through death and rise from the dead so that we might be caught up in his train as he, the king, rises from the grave to take his place, a crown with glory and honor.

We are caught up with him. We are in the procession, the royal procession, and when he sits down for all who are in him, we sit down with him and reign with him.

Friends, what does this mean for us? Well, first of all, it means that only in Jesus will we find the thing that our hearts are longing for.

When we think, when we get that gnawing feeling of, isn't there something more to life? This passage says, yes, there is. You were made to reign with Christ over the world in all eternity, and this is your hope, but also this is your focus, because we will only do it in Jesus.

And so to know Jesus, to believe in him, to trust in him, to love him, to have fellowship with him, is your greatest purpose in this world.

[36 : 59] Remember, to the Hebrews, that meant that as they looked to Jesus, it didn't matter if Caesar won. And to you, it doesn't matter how grinding the grind is.

it also doesn't matter how successful or how unsuccessful your strategies are of trying to infuse your life with meaning on your own.

Because all of those things are nothing compared to what it will mean for you to be caught up in Jesus and in his reign. they don't have the last word.

He frees you from the despair of wondering if there's anything in this life worth worthwhile. He frees you from the performance of trying to do it yourself.

If you'll forgive me a Disney reference, the Lion King, spoiler alert, I'm going to tell you the end. It's been out for a while. I'm not feeling bad about it.

[38 : 14] So you know the story. Simba, the young princeling, is born to Mufasa, the king of all the animals. Mufasa dies and in the story, Simba is exiled by his uncle in shame thinking that he had caused the fault.

And so he lives in this exile for years. And then one night, he has a vision. He has a vision of his father. And his father looks at him.

He says, you are my son. You are the king. And the remembering of this identity and the remembering of this reality gives to Simba the courage to stop living in exile and to pursue his rightful place as the king over all.

God. Just like my son, Eli, I have the privilege of seeing it just a little bit. When I give him a purpose and a role and a dignity, you see him just fill up because that's what he so longs to do.

And it's because he was made to be a child of God as well and to ultimately hear from his heavenly father. I have bestowed upon you a great dignity.

[39 : 44] I have made you a little lower than the angels. But I have crowned you with glory and I will put everything under your feet. And that will be yours in Jesus.

And so to us and to the Hebrews, let us hold fast to this Jesus. Let us not turn away for no one else can give us this royal identity.

No one else can give us this great purpose. Only him. Let's pray. God, we speak of things that are greater than our imagination.

Lord, will you by your spirit open our hearts that we might take hold of the great promise, Lord, the great destiny that you have for us as your people.

And Lord, may we see that it is only in Jesus, only under him and in him that we find this great gift, this grace that you have given to us.

[41 : 00] God, we pray today that you would capture our lives with this purpose. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.