

# The Creating Word

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning, Church. Would you open with me to the Gospel of John? That's page 833 in the Pew Bible. This Advent season, we're slowly unpacking the first 18 verses of John's Gospel, this famous prologue that comes to its climax in verse 14 when John says, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That's what Christmas is all about. The Word, the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ becoming flesh for us.

But just who is, who is this Word? That's what the opening verses of John's prologue try to show us. Last week we saw that, in the first two verses, last week we saw the Word's relationship to God.

And what we saw was that from all eternity, the Word was with God, and indeed in the mystery of God's triune nature, the Word was God. And that meant for us something very profound. It meant that, you know, there's no God that we might try to find or know or discover behind or apart from the Word.

It's not as if we can sort of get behind the Word to find the real God. No, if we want to know God at all, we must know Him through the Word, through Jesus, the One who became flesh on Christmas morning.

This Word, John said in verses 1 and 2, is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the timeless One who enters time for us. But if that is the Word's relationship with God, what about the Word's relationship with creation, with everything else? When we think of God, we must think of the Word made flesh. But what about when we think of creation, of stars and oceans, of forests and flowers, of sharks and sunsets? What about that? And what about when we think of us as humans?

[ 1 : 5 6 ] What's the relationship of this Word to us? Well, let's take a look together. Let's read John chapter 1. Now, we're going to focus on verses 3 through 5 this morning, but I'm going to pick up in verse 1. That might not be on the slides, but you can see it in front of you in the pew Bible. John 1, 1 through 5.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Let's pray together. Oh, Father, as we come now into Your Word, we pray that You would come, Emmanuel, and reveal Yourself to us. Oh, God, help us to see Your wonder and Your majesty and Your power, and help us to know Your grace and love this morning in a more rich way as we behold You, the incarnate Word. We pray this in Your name, Jesus. Amen.

Amen. So these verses show us three things. They show us three things about the Word's relationship to creation. First, John's going to say that all things exist because of the Word, and then all things thrive because of the Word, and last, all things might hope because of the Word. So all things exist, thrive, and can hope because of the Word. So let's start with verse 3. All things exist because of this Word. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. Now, John here is sort of saying basically the same thing twice, isn't he? He sort of says it positively at first. All things were made through Him, and then he sort of says, just in case you didn't get that, I'm going to turn it around and say it negatively. Without Him was not anything made that was made. Just as in Genesis, where everything came into being, everything that came into being did so because of God's spoken Word, and remember in Proverbs 3 and 8, where wisdom is the personified means by which all exists, so here God's Word, now revealed to be the person of the Son, created everything. And you know, this is actually a pretty common theme in the New Testament. This isn't something that's sort of an innovation by John, that the pre-existent Christ created all things is found throughout the New Testament. Consider Colossians chapter 1 verse 16. For by Him, that is

Christ, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him. Or think about 1 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 6, where Paul brings out the Trinitarian work of creation. He says, for us there's one God the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, again another name for the one true God, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist, Father and Son at one in the work of creation. Again, we saw the same thing in the book of Hebrews, in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 2 that we read earlier, where the writer of Hebrews says, in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.

[ 5 : 22 ] Now, you'll notice that John isn't interested so much here in telling us how the Word created all things, or how long the Word took to create all things. Rather, John wants to drive home the point that no matter your view of how or how long, whether it took the Word six days, or whether it took the Word 13 and a half billion years, the Word, the pre-incarnate Son, is the One who made all things.

Now, what difference does this make? Well, you know, if we believe that all things exist because of the purposeful intention of a personal God, if all things were made through the Word, the Son of the Father, then that means the universe is not an accident, but a gift.

Think about it. You see, if matter simply is, if all things exist just because they do and are a product of blind time and chance, then life is just an accident.

But that's a deeply unsatisfying view of the world, isn't it? I mean, don't we start to ask a lot of questions in light of that? After all, why is there something and not nothing?

And why is this something seemingly perfectly calibrated to bring forth life? And why are there some living things in this universe, namely you and me, who seem to have such an indelible sense of transcendence, of right and wrong, of beauty and goodness, of reason and truth?

[ 7 : 03 ] That no matter how hard we tell ourselves we're just the matter, we're just the product of time and matter and chance, that sort of sense of the transcendent, it never goes away. We go on loving, and we go on reasoning, and we go we go on caring about justice all the same, even though if we were just the product of time and matter and chance, all those things would be an illusion.

You know, it's funny, it's easy to say that all of life is just an accident. It's much, much harder to actually live that way. But what Christianity holds forth is that creation is not an accident, but a gift.

Think about it. The triune God did not have to create the world. God, Father, Son, and Spirit existed from all eternity in perfect love and glory.

If you want to see a little glimpse of that glory and love that existed before creation and eternity, read the first five or six verses of John chapter 17.

God needed nothing to be utterly perfect, utterly happy. God was all that in himself and will be forevermore. So the act of creation wasn't coming from a place of need or dependence or loneliness in God.

[ 8 : 23 ] The act of creation was not necessary at all. It didn't have to happen. It was a sheer gift of God.

Sheer grace. Now, if the universe is an accident, it puts us in a posture of despair, doesn't it? Perhaps at times, defiant despair, shaking our fist against the nihilistic nothing that we've thought we are.

But it's despair nonetheless. But if the universe is a gift, it puts us in a posture of gratitude. gratitude. We did not have to be, but God in his infinite love willed it to be so.

And because of that, we can live not in despair, but in thanksgiving and gratitude. And you know, here's the beautiful thing. As Christians, the object of our gratitude has a face.

I mean, look, you can go on your smartphone and look for 101 different gratitude apps, right? Matthew McConaughey can read you a nice story to put you to bed and tell you to be thankful for the universe.

[ 9 : 41 ] But as Christians, we actually know the one that we ought to thank. The giver of this great gift of all that we see of creation of ourselves is God the Son, the Word, who became flesh and dwelled among us.

He made it all. And so the proper response to verse 3 isn't just praise of the Son's mighty power and majesty that he's able to create all things.

The proper response is also personal, heartfelt gratitude that he has. That he has created all things, including you.

Your life is not an accident. It's a gift. But John doesn't just want us to see that all things exist because of the Word.

He goes on to say that all things thrive because of the Word. Look again at verse 4. In him was life and the life was the light of men.

[ 10 : 47 ] You know, part of what John's saying here is that the universe is not a sort of cosmic crockpot. You know? Anyone here like to use crockpots for holiday cooking?

Yes. Well, what's the beauty of a crockpot? You just fix it and forget it. You throw in the ingredients, you turn it on, and you walk away. And the thing just makes itself. But is that creation?

Is that God's relationship to the world? No. Verse 5 tells us that the Word has remained intimately involved with all he has made.

Not just creating things, but sustaining and enlivening things. The Word, because he is one with God, shares the self-generating life of God, dependent on no one.

And he sustains all things. Remember what we read earlier in Hebrews 1? Hebrews 1.3, he's the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

[ 11 : 47 ] And he upholds the universe by the Word of his power. That is his powerful Word. Or again, in Colossians chapter 1, verse 17, he's before all things, and in him all things hold together.

He spoke the universe into existence, and then he goes on enlivening this creation in all of its manifold beauty. In him was life, John says.

Do you remember the creation account in Genesis 1? How on each successive day of creation, especially days 4 and 5 and 6, creation through God's Word just teems with life.

Plants and birds and fish and animals and not just one or two, but there are all kinds thriving and flourishing in their vast array, and God delights in the diversity of it all and calls it good.

But the Word doesn't just enliven, the Word enlightens. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. humanity arrives on the scene at the end of day 6 in the creation week of Genesis 1, and humanity shares not just the life of this creative Word, but upon them shines his light.

[ 13 : 10 ] They are God's image bearers, set apart from creation to resemble God, to represent God in the midst of creation, and also to reflect the praises of creation back to God.

So the Word is creation's life and light. He enlivens all things, and he enlightens all things. All things thrive because of the Word.

Now we can apply this in many, many ways, but consider maybe two things this morning that this means for us as Christians. First, it means that the pursuit, the pursuit of the arts and the sciences is a properly Christian thing to do.

As we consider creation teeming with life, wonderful in its complexity and beauty, and as we feel as humans drawn to understand its depths and unfold its beauties to discover meaning and to make meaning, in all of this, we're not pursuing something apart from God in Christ.

Indeed, in faith, we're drawing near to God in Christ. For He is the one in whom this life and light find their source. Whether it's delving into the intricacies of molecular biology or composing a symphony, the pursuit of the sciences and the arts are for the Christian means of worshiping the incarnate Word, in whom is the life of creation and the light of humanity.

[ 14 : 37 ] these need not be God-less pursuits, but God-saturated pursuits. So if we believe that all things don't just exist but thrive because of the Word, then as Christians, we will pursue the arts and the sciences as a properly worshipful thing to do.

But second, if all things not only exist but thrive because of the Word, then that means we must pursue Christ. in all our pursuits. If He is life and light, if Christ is not just the enlivener but also the enlightener, then ultimately we must seek to know and understand not just the gift of creation but the giver, the Creator Himself.

If we desire life and light, if we desire enlivening and enlightenment, then knowing Him must be our highest aim. And when anything else takes His place, we've fallen into idolatry.

You know, it's very interesting when you look at just the history in the West anyway of the last few hundred years, you see that so much has been driven by these twin pursuits. A desire for life.

So you have the romantic movement that's seeking life and creativity and emotion and depth and yet doing it in a way that's without God. and then, of course, you have the enlightenment which is seeking understanding and reasoning and trying to throw off the shackles of tradition and religion, seeking light and yet doing it apart from Christ.

[ 16 : 14 ] You know, if art is only for art's sake, if science is only for science's sake, then both become an endless labyrinth, an empty echo chamber.

But if these are pursued for Christ's sake, then they can be swept up into the worship of our Creator and God can then use these human pursuits to advance His healing of the world.

And that brings us to our last point. All things exist because of the Word. All things thrive because of the Word. But lastly, all things may hope because of the Word.

In verse 5, John writes, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Of course, at first, this seems to be simply an allusion to Genesis 1, right? And God said, let there be light and there was light.

But in the context of the entire prologue and in the context of John's whole gospel, we realize that John has more in mind. The light shining in the darkness is not just an allusion to the Word's work in creation, but to the Word's work in redemption.

[ 17 : 31 ] After all, all things are not the way they're supposed to be. Are they? The triune God created all things in love to participate in His life and light.

But is that what we see in the world? That's not how things are now. Instead of a world filled with gratitude and generosity, we see a world filled with grasping and taking.

Whole economies driven by profit and greed and consumption. Instead of a world filled with life and light, we see darkness and decay, senseless violence, human arrogance, and little, if any, hope.

It seems like creation is simply winding down like a top, spinning its last few rotations, ready to topple. Now, for many in the ancient world, this was just the way of things.

Good and evil, light and darkness, they were just two equal opposite forces, eternally at war, neither one bound to win. It was a pretty bleak view.

[ 18 : 40 ] But the biblical view is much, much different. Creation's not the product of two equal but opposite forces, battling it out. God is God and he has no rival.

Evil is not some eternal principle but the deprivation, the twisting of God's good creation. It's a rebellion against God. And so, what does the creator do?

He created everything. He would certainly be within his rights to uncreate it, right? In judgment to simply let the top spin and fall.

God but instead, the creator chooses again to say, let there be light. When the world was yet uncreated, God spoke and there was light.

Now, when the world has fallen and headed back to darkness, God speaks again and says, let there be light. light. But this time when the light shines in the darkness, when the light comes, that light that shines in the darkness wouldn't be a created light from sun and moon and stars.

[ 19 : 53 ] But it would be the uncreated light, the word, God the sun, the creator entering creation to redeem it.

the one who made all things becoming one with a thing to redeem us. You see, if God has created the world through his sun, through the word, then all things may have hope.

Why? Because God has sent this same sun into the world to save it. He did not leave the world to collapse into its own darkness but rather went himself into the darkness.

And because he is the creator, the darkness cannot overcome him. But you know, as we'll see in the following verses of John's prologue next week, you know, this hope that the creator brings, that the word brings, this hope doesn't come into our lives automatically.

Tragically, you can choose to close your eyes to the light. You can choose to stay in despair and darkness. But you don't have to. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

[ 21 : 07 ] The light shined in the darkness so we don't have to remain in darkness. So we can come into the light. But how do you make that move? How do you step out of darkness into light?

How do you enter into this hope? Well, first you have to admit that the darkness isn't just a problem out there, sort of out there in the world, but it's a problem in here as well.

Later in John's gospel, Jesus says, this is the verdict. Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light. Because their deeds were evil. If you're going to come into the light, you first have to admit the darkness of your own selfishness and pride.

But second, you have to see what this word, what Jesus has done for you. Specifically, you have to see that there was a moment actually in Jesus' life when he allowed when he allowed the darkness to overcome.

As Jesus hung on the cross in Mark's gospel, it says, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. The light of the world in that moment was covered by darkness and the light was extinguished.

[ 22 : 20 ] You have to see, friend, that Jesus died in darkness to pay for your sins so you could be forgiven. If you're going to come into the light of hope, you need to see that Jesus loved you that much and died for you.

But third, you need to see that ultimately the darkness did not overcome him. All the gospel witnesses proclaim that Jesus rose again on the third day and as the light of a new day broke, so the light of a new age dawned.

Jesus says in John 12, I've come into the world as light so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. And if you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and you put your trust in him, then you can be sure that your sins are forgiven and your hope is secure.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. And the darkness will not overcome you because you're united to him, the incarnate word, the creator, the risen son of God.

So when we say that the word became flesh and dwelt among us, we're saying nothing less than that the creator entered creation for our sake.

[ 23 : 36 ] All things exist because of him. All things thrive because of him. But now, because of his incarnation, all things may have hope because of him.

let's pray. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we praise and thank you this morning for making us.

And we ask for your forgiveness this morning that there have been many ways in which we have not thanked you as we ought. but Jesus, we thank you that despite our ingratitude and despite our sin, you came nonetheless and shone your light into the darkness.

The darkness has not overcome it. You are the victor, Jesus. And we praise you. Help us to praise you this Advent season as our life and as our light.

Amen. Amen.