

# Doctrine of Creation

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[0:00] All right, friends, let's go ahead and begin. Let me say a prayer as we dive in this morning. Father, thank you for this morning. Thank you that we can be here in your house, gathered as your people,!

to consider all of what you've revealed about yourself and your word, so that we might know you, so that we might love you, and so that we might find our deepest joy in you. God, we pray for your help this morning as we conclude our class on the doctrine of creation.

Would you be magnified and glorified as we bring this class to its fitting conclusion? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, well, it is fitting that here we are at the last week on our class about the doctrine of creation, and we're taking up the topic of the purpose or the goal of creation.

In other words, what is the end for which God created the world? Why did God create all things?

You know, we've spent a lot of time talking about the details and the how and the sort of relationship between the creation narratives and science and between different interpretations.

We've talked about the doctrine of humanity and bearing God's image. Now we're taking a step back and asking, what was God's grand design and aim in doing this thing that we've been talking about, creating us in all things?

[1:24] Now before we look at what Scripture has to say about this topic, I thought it might be worthwhile to consider first, why is that question even important or worthwhile?

Does it really matter whether we can articulate the purpose or the goal of creation, or is that just kind of like, you know, curious speculation that you do on a Sunday morning at nine o'clock when you don't have anything better to do, you know, and you've made it here despite the road race? So it's like, oh, let's pontificate. Well, I would suggest that knowing the purpose or the goal of God's work of creation is very, very utterly vital for a life of flourishing in this created world.

You know, imagine being handed the keys to a beautiful new car, but having no idea about the purpose or the goal of what a car is, right?

So rather than driving the car and enjoying kind of going down the highway with the windows down and your hair blowing in the breeze, which is something I've not experienced in a long time, you know, you say, wow, that's a nice, you know, object with space in it.

[2:40] I think I'll use it to, you know, store some old papers and clothes. My closet's a little full, so I'll just put them in that car thing, right? What a loss! What a loss! And in the same way, knowing the purpose of creation, the goal of creation, God's intended end for creation, it will help us live in creation well.

But even more importantly, as we've been talking about the last two weeks, as we've considered the doctrine of humanity, what have we seen? That we humans, we don't just live in and among God's creation, we also are God's creatures, right?

So knowing the purpose or the goal of creation is to know what it means not just to live a flourishing life in God's creation, but as God's creation.

To know the purpose or goal of creation is to begin to see how to live with the grain, as it were, of your very existence, right? Are there any woodworkers here?

None. Okay, so a piece of wood, right, has a grain to it, right? And if you're trying to create something out of that piece of wood and you try to cut it or sand it or shape it against the grain of that wood, it's very difficult.

[4:02] In fact, the whole project can be botched if you try to do that. Rather, if you're a very talented woodworker, you try to work with the

grain of the wood. And knowing the goal or the purpose of creation is to know the very grain of our existence so that we can live in line with it and live a life of beauty.

So I think this topic then isn't just sort of curious speculation. It's about finding our deepest purpose as humans in the world that God has made. So with that being said, as we consider the purpose or the goal or the end of creation, I think the first thing we want to consider as we approach this topic is this.

One, the triune God created the world in freedom.

The triune God created the world in freedom. You know, we might ask the question, was the creation of the world a necessity for God? Did God have to create?

Now, outside of Christianity, that is often taken to be true. That the world is somehow necessary for God. That God needs to create the world, whatever we understand God to be.

[5:27] And usually when that kind of thinking is afoot, two options or two possibilities have often come up. In the first, you know, well, I won't list them here because they're not true.

In the first kind of way of seeing creation as necessary, God is sort of pictured as so, so kind of super abundantly full and rich that he just can't contain himself, right?

He lacks power over his own being so that the world just sort of has to flow out of him, like a stream from a source or like sort of water spilling over the edge of an overfull picture, right?

So that's one way of thinking about the creation sort of being necessary, that God had to do it. The other way is actually kind of the opposite, that God has to create the world because in himself, God is so empty.

God is so poor, right? He brings the world into existence to supply something for himself because he lacks something, right?

[6:32] You know, a popular way of putting that is that God is lonely and needs the world to sort of express his goodness and love. Maybe a more philosophical way of putting that is that without the world, God is only sort of potentiality, right?

And in order to be actual, God has to create the world and become fully God through some sort of process with that which is not God. Now, either of those views fall short of what the Bible teaches us.

Neither of those views is a biblical view of God and God's creation. According to the Bible, creation is not sort of a spontaneous, uncontrolled overflow or emanation of God, nor did God have to create out of a lack or loneliness.

In fact, according to the Bible, God didn't have to create at all. Consider who the Bible presents God to be.

How does God reveal himself in Scripture? Well, God reveals himself as the triune God, right? Father, Son, and Spirit from all eternity.

[7:42] That is his very nature. One God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. And the three persons of the Trinity relate with perfect love, perfect joy, and perfect bliss from all eternity.

There's no lack in God. There's no need for a world apart from the triune God to make God more God, right? God is perfect love in God's self without the world as the Father and the Son and the Spirit exist in perfect love, right?

So God doesn't need the world to be a loving God or to express his love. Yeah, Ivor, did you have a question there? When do the angels come in? Yeah, that's a really good question. Luke, you're the expert on Genesis 1.

When do the angels come in? Well, they are... It depends on who you ask. So somebody like Augustine would say that he takes the creation of the light of day one to be referring to the creation of the angels.

And that's a pretty popular view in the early church. But I think most modern commentators and others would say it just is not mentioned.

[8:58] Yeah, Genesis 1 doesn't mention it. Yeah, that's right. But when Genesis 1 says God created the heaven and the earth, it's talking about

all of created existence, both that which we can see and that which we cannot see.

And then as Genesis 1, as Luke said, kind of narrows in on sort of telling us what we need to know about that creation week, whether that's taken literally, metaphorically, figurative, or whatever, it sort of zooms in on what we kind of...

what the author of Genesis wants us to know about the orderliness and the fullness of creation. Yeah, that's right. But the point is that even without the angels, God is perfectly complete in himself. Perfect joy, perfect bliss. God is the fullness of life and goodness, utterly independent of the world. He doesn't need the world to be God. And the world adds nothing to God.

Huh? Right? You know, imagine walking up to someone who's just fabulously wealthy, right, and handing them like a sugar packet. What has that added to their wealth, right?

[9:59] Give Jeff Bezos \$10. What has that added to his wealth? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I mean, you know, he would blow his nose on \$100 bills.

You know, it doesn't matter to him, right? Now, so given that God is, the triune God, is perfect love and joy in life in God's self, does this mean that creation then is the kind of spontaneous, uncontrolled overflow of God?

God. Sometimes Christians can actually speak that way. But does the triune God necessarily kind of emanate the creation like water spilling over the top of an overfull glass?

Well, think about it. If that were the case, then what would be true of creation? It will have had to exist from all eternity, right? Because if God is just overflowing, then creation must have always been overflowing.

But scripture is very clear that the world had a definite beginning. In the beginning, God created. And regardless of where Christians fall, when it comes to the age of the earth or the age of the universe, all Christians believe that the universe is not eternal, that God brought it into being deliberately and consciously.

[11:16] Besides, I mean, consider, the God of the Bible is not ever subject to accidents or uncontrolled consequences, right? We humans might lose control. We might spill over in anger or in happiness or in sadness.

But God, in perfect love, joy, and bliss, is also perfect in power and wisdom and righteousness. Psalm 115.3 says, Our God is in the heavens.

He does all that He pleases. Right? Or Psalm 135.6, Whatever the Lord pleases, He does. In heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the deeps.

In other words, we, humans, along with the entire created order, are not the sort of accident of God's overflow, but we are the freely and deliberately chosen act of God's will.

The triune God created us in freedom. Now, we see this truth affirmed again and again in Scripture when it speaks of God creating all things according to His will, according to His good pleasure.

[12:27] Consider a verse like Romans, sorry, Revelation 4, verse 11. Revelation 4, 11 says, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive honor and glory and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

Or Psalm 33, 6 says, By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts. Or Psalm 33, 8 through 9, Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him, for He spoke and it came to be.

He commanded and it stood firm. Or again, Jeremiah 10, verse 12, It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom and by His understanding stretched out the heavens.

Or one from the New Testament, Ephesians 1, 11, Paul says that God is the one who works all things according to what? The whims of His necessity.

No, according to the counsel of His will. So, consider first then as we think about the purpose or goal of creation that God did not have to create us.

[13:55] Our being is not necessary and it's not forced. Which means that we are and everything is completely contingent, completely dependent, utterly upon God's own freedom and God's own will.

Acts 17, 24 through 25 says, The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. But, if this means that we didn't have to exist, right? If it was part of God's own free good pleasure that He bring the world into existence out of no necessity, that also means not just are we totally dependent upon God, but it means that we are not an accident, right? that we are the free creation of the deliberate will of God. We are the work of His own good pleasure.

When we say that God did not have to create, but rather that God created simply out of His own will, His own counsel, His own good pleasure, that is not to say that God's act of creation was arbitrary or indifferent, right?

[15:23] It's not as if God's sort of walking along His way, eh, whatever, I guess I'll create today. And then He sort of walks away, right? No, no. God's will to create, though it is exercised in perfect freedom, it's not arbitrary.

It's not sort of an afterthought or an indifferent act, right? Remember how in Genesis 1, God purposefully speaks all of the created order into existence, right?

Genesis 1 speaks of an ordering, a harmony, and an intentionality to God's creative work. And at the climax of that story, when God creates humanity, the triune God explicitly deliberates, right?

Let us make man in our own image. Purpose, intentionality, love, goodness expressed in this act. Psalm 104, 24 says, O Lord, how manifold are your works.

In wisdom have you made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. And of course, when we turn to the New Testament, the deliberate wisdom of God's work in creation is even more unveiled when we see that God the Father made all things through his Son by his Spirit.

[16:38] That creation is a work of the triune God, right? Genesis, sorry, John 1, 1 through 3, 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. That the bringing of creation into existence out of God's freedom is a complete and intentional act of the triune God.

So the triune God creates freely by the counsel of his own will and his own sovereign good pleasure. Okay. So then, we're led to ask, well, what goal did God have in mind then as he did this free act of his own good pleasure?

And that brings us to our second point then. That the triune God created the world in freedom for his own glory.

That the triune God created the world in freedom for his own glory. So, in other words, the purpose or the goal or the end of creation is for God's own glory to resound and redound.

[18:09] God's glory is for God's Now, what is God's glory? Well, you know, we might say that God's glory is his knowledge, his love, and his joy.

To have that which is not God resound and reverberate with the knowledge of God, the love of God, and the joy of God, for the manifold perfection of God to be reflected back to God for God's own sake because God is supremely worthy.

That is the purpose of creation. That's your purpose and that's my purpose. Listen to Psalm 19, verse 1.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The sky above proclaims his handiwork. What are the heavens? And by extension, the rest of the created order.

Ultimately, they are the symphony of God's glory declaring and radiating God's infinite majesty and worth. Every star, a string, in the symphony of God's glory.

[19:29] Okay, but what about us? What about human beings? Well, Isaiah 43, 6-7, talking about God's redeemed people, but of course, by extension, all of humanity, he says, I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, do not withhold, bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, who I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.

God created you for his glory. Which means that you and I are not the center of creation's story. God doesn't exist for our sake. Right? We exist for his sake. God is the center. He's the reason. In other words, God doesn't sort of exist to make much of us.

Right? We exist to make much of God. In that regard, consider Psalm 8, which expresses kind of the exalted place that we humans have in the created order.

But listen to how that psalm begins and ends, and I'll read the whole psalm. Psalm 8 says, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

[20:44] You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants you've established strength because of your foes to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet, you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You've put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You see, the psalm begins in worship and wonder at God's majesty and then sort of utters almost surprise and sort of humble praise for putting humanity in such an exalted position and then it ends where it began, praising God for his majesty.

That whatever glory we have is meant to resound and reflect back to an even greater degree the glory that God is. Turning to the New Testament, Romans 11, 36 says, for from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen. God's not just the beginning or the origin of creation. Not only are all things from him and through him, but God is also the goal and the end of creation.

[22:23] All things are to him. Everything exists to find its end and goal and him for his end, for his purpose to display God's manifold perfections.

His goodness and love. His righteousness and holiness. His wisdom and power. But you know the New Testament puts an even finer point on it than this. Just as the Father created all things through the Son by the Spirit, so all things exist for the sake of the Son.

Listen to Colossians 1.16 which speaks of the eternal Son who became flesh in the incarnation, Jesus Christ our Lord. It says, for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

There's those heavenly beings that we were talking about earlier. God created all them through the agency of the Son. The Father created all those things through the Son. All things, Paul goes on to say in verse 16 of Colossians 1, all things were created through him and for him.

All things were created through him and for him. You were created for Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of the Father.

[23:48] You exist for him. Your purpose is to magnify the glory and beauty of who he is and all that he has done. Now, it's natural when we consider scripture continuing to tell us that over and over and over again, right?

It's natural to raise a few questions, isn't it? When we hear scripture say over and over that the purpose and end of creation is not ultimately our glory or our exaltation or our happiness, right? But ultimately God's glory and God's supreme delight in himself and his perfection, we kind of think at first, wait a minute, right?

I thought we just spent a whole point saying that God didn't need anything, right? That he didn't need creation for anything but here it sounds like God's kind of hungry for his own glory, right?

It sounds like he needs us to glorify him, that he needs us to make him seem great, like he kind of forgot, you know? But again, God's purpose in glorifying himself in creation is not because he lacks this glory in himself.

Listen to what Jesus says in John 17, verse 5. Jesus is looking ahead to his death, resurrection, ascension, his return to the Father, and he says, and now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

[25:07] God doesn't need the world or you or me for his glory to be perfectly and utterly known and loved and rejoiced in. In fact, if you think about it, only God can glorify God fully.

Why? Because only God really knows God in fullness. Jesus says in Matthew 11 that only the Father truly knows the Son and only the Son truly knows the Father.

And in 1 Corinthians 2, we're told that no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. So only Father, Son, and Spirit can possibly know, love, and rejoice in one another fully. and that is exactly what God has done and will do from and for all eternity. Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

So we must not think that God's creation of the world for his own glory means that God is some insecure, ego-hungry deity in need of a little boost, right?

[26:09] No, God's utterly resplendent in knowledge and love and joy and glory. So then the second question comes, the second maybe objection even comes, that when we say that God creates all things for his glory, it sort of sounds like it kind of devalues us as his creatures.

Does this emphasis on God's glory, this radical God-centeredness of the purpose of creation this emphasis on God's glory is the final goal of all creatures?

Does that mean that we have lost our dignity? Does it mean that we as humans are just kind of some means to an end? And yet, what greater end could there be for us as God's creatures? that we would grasp through God's self-revelation something of the knowledge of God who is truth itself. To behold through God's self-giving the holiness and love of God that is to be drawn into the one who is goodness itself and to find our deepest delight and praise there.

And what finally could be greater to experience again through God's own self-giving to us the very joy of God? What greater end could there be? Right?

[27:45] If we are to be means to an end, I'd take that end. Wouldn't you? The fact that God called us into existence so that we could, in our creaturely way, reflect his infinite perfections back to him and enjoy the communication and communion of his supreme worth?

Oh, how could we question that? At the end of the day, finally, our greatest good. What greater end is worth living for? If your life and my life reflect something of the majesty of Jesus, the one who all the heavenly hosts adore, the one who called all things into being out of nothing, if our lives reflect some of that glory back to God from whom it came, if we experience that, would that not be the highest and most satisfying way to live?

Are you really telling me that building a giant bank account and crushing it at work and having everyone bow at your feet is better than experiencing eternal joy, exploding communion with the trying God and reflecting his glory back to him?

I think the fact that we wrestle with this, and I wrestle with it too, it's just evidence of how small our thoughts are of God and how much we need God to continue to show himself to us in his grace. Now, lest we think that this purpose in creation to glorify God means somehow a devaluing of creation, right?

[29:36] Well, how do we go about glorifying God, right? I mean, listen though, listen to what God says in Genesis 1.31. God saw everything that he made, and behold, it was very good.

We have to continue to keep in our view the very goodness of creation. God has pronounced the created order very good, which means that our glorifying God, right, is not detached or removed from participation in this material creation.

creation, the enjoyment of what God has made, the proper use and cultivation of creation, like we talked about last week when John took us through a biblical theology of culture.

These things are all central and vital to glorifying God. Glorifying God does not mean escaping or rejecting or removing ourselves from all this created order, but enjoying it and experiencing it and rejoicing in it and glorifying God with it fully.

in 1 Timothy 4, 3-5, Paul says that at some point some people will come along who, as he says there in verse 3, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth, right?

[30:55] It's very easy to think, well, if we're meant to glorify God, then we have to just abstain from everything down here, right? Because all this murky, evil, created stuff is bad. No, Paul says.

He says, that sort of rejection of created goods is not the way to honor and glorify God, our creator. He says in verse 4, for everything created by God is good.

Nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God in prayer. And the word of God there is most likely referring back to that word that God spoke in Genesis 1, declaring creation very good.

So it's this fact that God created the world for his own glory does not lead to a kind of asceticism or a kind of rejection of the created world, but a full enjoyment and embrace of it.

Yes, a proper use of it. There are improper ways we can go about enjoying the created order, of course. But we are meant to receive it with thanksgiving, as Paul says.

[32:01] Now, later in that same letter, Paul's going to warn against just amassing material things for their own end. In 1 Timothy 6, verse 17, he says, As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God.

Okay, that's right, right? Lest we set our hopes on the created things of this world, we need to be reminded, no, set your hopes on the triune God. But then Paul says this, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

There's that same note again. God richly provides us with everything to enjoy. We're meant to receive God's good gifts and enjoy them with thanksgiving and gladness in our hearts towards Him. Do you remember that passage in Acts 2 that describes the early church? They broke bread in their homes with joy and gladness in their hearts, receiving those good creaturely gifts and praise to their Creator.

So part of glorifying God our Creator is agreeing with God that even though sin has entered the world, creation itself remains good and treating creation as if it is good and receiving and caring for it and cultivating it and stewarding it with thanksgiving and honor towards the Creator.

[33:21] So what is the end for which God created the world? It's His own glory. God creates for Himself. And rather than that being a purpose that diminishes or degrades us, it's just the opposite.

It's the highest form of privilege to behold and reflect the glory of God. And by the grace of Christ, we who have fallen short of the glory of God through sin, through the grace of Christ can be reconciled to God.

And by the Spirit we can fulfill this calling to reflect His glory once again. And you know, this calling to magnify God and to enjoy God for all that God is and to exalt Him as God through that, that calling is never going to reach its end.

You know, there's never going to be a day, even in the new heavens and new earth, even when sin and death are no more in the created order, even when we see God face to face, there's never going to be a day when we will say that we have finally glorified God for all He is.

Right? You know, have you ever listened to a piece of music that you really love? And then you listen to it and listen to it and listen to it and listen to it and then finally you're sort of like, I think I'm done. Right?

[34:37] You know? I think I've digested the whole thing. You know? I'm ready to move on. You know? But, in communion with the infinite, eternal, triune God of freedom and love, there will always be more to know, always be more to love, always be more to enjoy.

There will always be a further up and a farther in, as Lewis said at the end of the Chronicles of Narnia. And this life will just be the cover and title page. Or as Jonathan Edwards said at the end of his dissertation concerning the end for which God created the world, he said, let the most perfect union with God be represented by something at an infinite height above us.

And the eternally increasing union of the saints with God by something that is ascending constantly towards that infinite height, moving upwards with a given velocity.

You have to love how they spoke in the 18th century, right? And that is to continue thus to move to all eternity, he says.

That like infinite lines approaching each other, we'll never fully be able to plumb the depths of God in God's majesty and greatness and beauty. What a gift that God has made us for that.

[36:09] That we would have the privilege as utterly dependent contingent creatures on him to get to glorify him forever. Okay, let's pause there.

We have a little extra time for questions this morning. So feel free, we can talk about the end for which God created the world, or we can kind of talk about anything in this class.

Luke's here, thankfully, so he can answer all the hard questions. But what comments or questions or thoughts do you have as we kind of wrap up this class on the doctrine of creation?

We can spend the next 10, 15 minutes just talking. Yeah, Beth? Where does suffering fit in this picture? Yeah, where does suffering fit in this picture?

Right. Yeah, well, I think Scripture says a couple things about suffering, doesn't it? You know, one, it does admit that suffering is part of the fall, right? But that even suffering doesn't fall outside of God's purposes of glorifying himself and us glorifying God, right?

[37:12] I think this is the beauty of the biblical worldview, that even suffering doesn't sort of negate, right, the ultimate purpose for which God created the world.

Because God will ultimately redeem even those things for his glory, right? I wonder if it's related, but I'm thinking, you know, if you're talking to a non-believer, right?

Yeah. And he's near, he says, you know, hey, what's the purpose? Why are we here? Why are we here? Yeah. And you say, point two, well, it's, you know, God's glory.

That would need some translation, wouldn't it? Right. Yeah. And a non-believer saying, are you getting to look around? Yeah. Things are awful. Yeah. Right. So, what's your response to that?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I think that's really good. I think people seeing the brokenness of the world is such a good entree into understanding the scriptural storyline, right?

[38:10] Because what suffering tells us, what evil tells us, right, is that our relationship with God is deeply broken and needs to be fixed, right? It just screams that, that something is broken and needs to be fixed, that somehow we're separated from God and need to be united to him.

And that is exactly what Christianity is all about, that God was willing to come into a world of suffering and pain and brokenness and to actually bear that into himself so that we can be brought back to him without our own suffering and wickedness.

All the ways in which we contribute to that, God's willing to come and bear the consequences that for us so that we can be reunited to him, so we can start to live in new communities where we kind of push back the darkness, right?

Which is kind of what we're meant to be doing as the church. But it's also a promise, right? What we see in Jesus is also a promise that the suffering and evil of the world won't last forever, that it will come to an end one day.

That God's purpose in creation isn't going to be stopped. But it is. You know, the problem of suffering is one of those, I mean, it's probably one of the top, like, three questions, right, that we have when talking to non-believers.

[39:36] But I have found that just, even in my own heart, thinking of it that way, that, man, when I see evil and brokenness in the world, is that not a sign that our relationship with this God has been fractured deeply.

In a very, in a deep way we probably don't even really understand the depths of. And yet God is acting and has acted supremely to bridge that chasm for us.

Yeah. Yeah, Susan. So I have observed in this short lifetime that when I refuse to accept reality, I, when I concoct an alternate reality, even over a small thing, smaller thing, I do myself hard.

If I get laid off from a job that I refuse to accept that I've been laid off, and I don't do anything to look for the next job, or I keep going to that place when I've been locked out of it.

So if it is true that there's a created a fraud, coming to live God, who's actively described in the Bible, it's in my own self-interest to conform my life to that reality.

[40:52] I'm just fighting my time, dooming myself. Yeah. If I don't come and choose sin. Yeah. And isn't this sort of like cascading of brokenness

in the world, like, okay, there are natural disasters in the world, granted, right?

But, I mean, I would posit that 99.9% of the real suffering in the world is due to human beings trying to glorify themselves and live for their own glory and not live for the glory of God, which has to then cascade out into the love of others, right?

The reason why there's suffering and poverty in so many parts of the world today is because evil, selfish human beings are glorifying themselves and not taking their responsibility as humans or as leaders, thankfully.

You know? Yeah. Because we're part of the system, right? Exactly. Even so come, Lord Jesus. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, Luke, go ahead. I've thought about this problem of, like, this feeling, this intuition that we have that for God, the purpose of creation for God, for it to be God's own glory, that intuition that we have is like, oh, it's kind of selfish.

[42:18] Yeah. Is there a selfishness there? But I think what's helped me is I think about, so I think about, hey, what would I rather it be? Yeah.

What would the alternative be? Yeah. What would I want God to, you know, like, what do I want a good person to do? I want them to be, I want them to serve justice and love and, you know, maybe you ask somebody else in the world, like, okay, if the purpose of life isn't glorify God, what is the purpose of life?

It's like to be a good person, like, in that sense, serve immorality or whatever. But I think one of the issues is when we think of God as being on our level, we think of things like morality and justice and love as being some kind of standard above which God himself must submit, when in reality, God is the love.

God is the justice. God is the goodness. So it's like anything that anybody else can come up with, a good thing about the creative world that is a worthy thing that we should submit our life to or whatever, it's only just one part of what God is in himself.

So it's like, it's not enough that you serve justice as the ideal of your life. Justice is a person and that person is also love and goodness and everything else.

[43:39] So by glorifying God, you're not only glorifying those things that we naturally feel like, oh, we should live for, but also everything else that's good and the wrong get bundled up and it's not even, you know, it's just a portion of what, you know, I don't care about the same portion, but, you know, it's only a little taste of what God is in itself, right?

Yeah. So I think that's been helpful for me. Yeah, that's really helpful, Luke. Thanks. Yeah. Let's see, Matt, you had your hand up and then we'll go over here. I don't know what Chris meant when he asked this question.

Yeah. What I thought that Chris asked this question was, if somebody, you know, asks, you know, the big question or what sounds like a big question, if I don't feel comfortable handling that, you know, if I wrestle with, oh, the purpose and everything is, you know, the glory of God, what I could say is, you know, there are some things that are beyond me, you know, and I'm not sure how to answer that question, but here is what I do understand.

And then taking it down to, you know, given evil, you know, how can God use that for good?

And I think of Romans 8, 29 or so. Sure, sure. What is God's purpose in salvation?

[45:15] That Jesus would be the firstborn among many brethren. That's right. That, you know, my purpose here is to become more like God and serve the purpose of having dominion that God originally intended.

That's good, man. Yeah, that's good. So all of that clearly shows that a lot of things are beyond me. But focusing on what I think by God's grace I do understand, you may actually get more accurately what people were talking to.

Sure. Yeah, that's helpful, Matt. Thanks. Yeah, let's go over here. How would you respond to other Christians who claim that certain nations suffer, or that God intentionally makes certain nations suffer more than others due to the sins of the people from that nation?

I don't know if I'm phrasing it correctly, but like other Christians, other people who claim that God is intentionally choosing to make certain nations suffer, because they claim that the people kind of, I don't know, like they claim that the people turned away from God.

Sure. And so this is, their suffering is as a result of their own actions. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, how would we respond as Christians if someone, a fellow Christian says like, well, those people over there, that nation over there, they're suffering because they're particularly bad sinners.

[46:49] Right? Right? Yeah. It's interesting that there was a moment in Jesus's life when people came to him and said, oh, did you hear about the tower that fell on all those people and they died?

Did you hear about that? And Jesus says, do you think that those people are worse sinners because they died in that accident? And then he says, I tell you, unless you repent, the same thing will happen to you.

So Jesus himself does not kind of play the game of like, who's the worst sinner and that's why bad things are happening to them.

In fact, Jesus will even look at the man born blind and said, this wasn't because of his sin or his parents' sin. He was born blind so that I could get the glory in healing him. Right? So the reality is, is that according to the Bible, we're all sinners in desperate need of salvation and that none of us is in the place of God to say why certain historical events are or are not happening.

With that being said, you know, we do reap what we sow, right? Like if there is a nation where the leader of that nation decides to like slaughter its own people, right?

[48:04] Is that because those people were sinners? No, it's because that person is doing something that's wicked. Wicked, right? That's clear, right? And God is against that wickedness, right?

But I just think we need to be very careful to sort of look at another group of people or another nation state that's undergoing duress or trial or suffering and sort of draw a direct line between that and particular sins that we might see, right?

I think the scriptures would have us look more towards ourself and our own communities and say, how do we need to be repenting? And then how do we need to be loving them well even if there are quote unquote enemies?

Yeah. Matt, did you want to jump in on that? I think everything you said is right, but I think it's helpful if somebody's thinking in that way to acknowledge that at times the Bible, you know, reveals historically that yes, the reason why these people were punished was because of their sin.

Yeah, sure. That's true. Yeah. But the Bible revealed that directly. Mm. And then... Very well said, yeah. On the other hand, as we look at a situation today to acknowledge we're not, just like you said, we're not God.

[49:20] Yeah, that's right. That's right. Yeah, there are instances in the Old Testament where God does send judgment on nations, but, you know. And revelation saying... That's correct. That's right. That's right.

Yeah, that's right. Good. Thank you, Matt. That's good. Javani, yeah. Yeah, so there are some traditions, some Christian traditions that emphasize a lot the role of creation, like the goal of creation as being united with God as its final...

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, sure. Sure, sure, sure. Yeah. And I was thinking, like, what is the green thing and also the danger of taking this, like, union with God as the final...

Yeah. ...goal? Yeah. Yeah. I feel like that merks a little bit the distinction between... It can. ...creator, but it's also a beautiful... It is. Yeah, yeah. Peter says this.

Peter says this much, that we're meant to be partakers of the divine nature. Yeah. Yeah, well, I think you've landed right upon the danger of that, that one would need to be careful of in picking up that biblical thread to not blur the distinction between creator and creature.

[50:25] And Eastern Orthodoxy does not actually blur that distinction, or at least in its best forms, in its actual, like, canonical dogmatic statements does not blur that distinction.

It's not saying that we become literally the triune God, right? So in the West, we found other ways of talking about that, right?

But the benefit, I think, of talking about union with God, not just that it's a biblical theme, but also, I think, isn't it, it's just a wonderful thing to think that our communion with God is going to be so intimate, so permanent, that it, Jesus himself says that the Spirit will come and live in us, that he will come and dwell in us, that the Father will come and make his home in us, right?

That we do have this union with God that is intimate, that is real, that is deep, that is transformative, right? And I think it actually, you know, when you press into some of these themes, you find that a lot of times theologians and traditions are oftentimes saying a lot of the same things, just kind of coming at it from different angles.

Because if one were to ask someone like Edwards in the Western tradition, well, how does God glorify himself? He's going to start to talk a lot about our union and communion with God, right?

[51:46] If you ask someone in the Eastern tradition, well, towards what goal is that union and communion? It's going to be for our own good, for our own joy, but ultimately for the glory of God, right?

We're going to start talking about the same things, I think. There are differences. I don't want to collapse all of the distinct Christian traditions into one thing, but I do think a lot of times we end up in some similar places and can learn from each other and how we speak about those things, yeah.

Beth, yeah, back to you. I actually, Luke's comment, and Drew Boney's comment, kind of, or my thoughts were as well, that like, what you were teaching teaching it for a dhamdhamme that like, to be creative with the capacity to be in relationship with God or to be in union with God.

We actually have to live in the tension between autonomy and dependency. Yeah. And it's not just the ability to like, choose sin or choose God or choose to be our own God or to choose God, but to have a capacity to engage with God's otherness.

We have to be able to, at minimum, imagine the idea of otherness and yet imagine the idea of like, being like, this self-contained being.

[52:54] And I think that living in that tension is almost this like, building capacity to be a sinner. And to be broken, right?

But it's also that same capacity that allows us to be identifiers of God and to actually in union with God. That's right. Yeah, that's right. Yeah. We wouldn't want to say that creation is sort of preloaded or predetermined to sin, right?

But the fact that we are distinct from and yet dependent on God, God did create Adam and Eve with the freedom to not obey, right? And they actually took that path, right?

But how much more will God be glorified in redeeming us from that so that we can then live that dependent freedom that we have in God to his glory, right?

You know, why did God allow the fall? Augustine will say because God wanted to be glorified not just as creator but as redeemer. Right.

[54:00] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay, friends, we should close there. Next week, bring your friends.

We're going to be talking about work on your day off. No, we're going to, isn't it great that, you know, we just started to touch on this theme of being made in God's image, being culture bearers. For the next eight weeks, we're going to talk about work and vocation and the gospel and how the gospel can help inform and shape how we go about these vocations and callings and tasks and labors that we have.

So let me pray quickly and then we'll go. Father, we praise you as our creator. We confess with the church of all ages that we believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth and that brings us great joy and confidence, happiness in you, God.

Lord, help us to rest in you, our creator, this week and give you much praise. Amen.