

## ***God's Purposes and Plans In Creation***

Genesis 1:26-31, Romans 8:19-23

September 17, 2023

Please open your Bibles today to Genesis 1:26. Either page 1, 2, or 3 of whatever Bible you have. Last week we had a great time at the park for our outdoor service, everybody always has a great time. Several of you said you really enjoy it whenever I preach about Creation. I think it's pretty obvious that really enjoy it too and if you haven't noticed that by now, you're probably having trouble in your marriage as well. If you missed last week's message you can go back and catch the audio recording on our website. It was not livestreamed.

After God created 24 hours of alternating darkness and light, one of the angels asked him, "what are you going to do now?" God said, "I think I'm going to call it a day." When God created man, an angel asked Him, "Are you done?" God said, "Let me add a little toe to each foot." "Why," asked the angel. "For furniture," God said. "What's that?" asked the angel. To which God replied, "Believe me it'll be funny."

Last week we took a tour of Creation to catch a glimpse of God's creative genius on display everywhere we looked. From the atmosphere and mountaintops to the deepest oceans and everything in between. We followed that up Wednesday evening Bible Study to dig deeper and discuss it together. Today we're going to expand on that a bit and instead of just recognizing God's work and praising Him for it, we want to hear what the Bible tells us to do with Creation. If you are able, please stand as we read Gen 1:26-31 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

This is the tail end of the Creation account which culminates with the creation of human beings. We learn a lot about ourselves, our essence, and our purpose from this passage. For unlike anything else He made, God created us in His image and then handed us our menu which at that point only included plants. It was a vegetarian diet.

Say gross. But it was also a veggie diet for all the animals as well. Initially. After the fall in Chapter 3, death entered the picture and from then on there were carnivores consuming herbivores. Predators and prey. For people, however, our diet would not change for about 1600 years or so, until after Noah's flood and God added meat to our menus. In Gen 9:3, God said, "Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything." And Noah said Amen and threw a T-bone on the grill! One of our favorite verses, right?

We understand from these passages that one of the primary purposes of Creation is to provide food for us. Say yum. Thank God for the bread from the earth that we mentioned last week. In fact, God designed Creation to provide for all of our needs. Creation provides our shelter as trees or stones are made into houses. Creation provides our clothing through flax and wool and cotton and more. Even polyester is made from petroleum, air, and water which are all things God made. Medicines are extracted from various plants and minerals. And so forth. Every product we use for any purpose comes from Creation in some way. We would have nothing without God's provision. Nothing. Every good and perfect gift comes from God. God's love for us is written in all caps throughout Creation by providing for us. We can and must use Creation to survive, contrary to what some misguided treehuggers think.

But let's realize that Creation is not all about us. Even before man was created, God said it was good and only afterward did He say it was very good. We also mentioned last week that God delights in His creation. Even if no person had ever been formed, Creation would still bring God glory, it's just that the angels would have to do it all. He created us to praise Him and love Him and enjoy Him and what He had made.

We must be careful not to worship Creation. Many years ago I was inviting people to an outdoor worship service and one lady told me, "I worship nature just as I see it." I wasn't thinking very fast, or I would have said, "If you think nature's awesome, you need to meet the One who made it!" Sadly, humans have always substituted the lesser for the greater. We've succumbed to the temptation to worship the created rather than the Creator. God is not in trees or animals or birds as some religions teach. He is transcendent, over His Creation, but He also continues to be intimately involved in it. Let us be careful not to worship nature or any part of it but worship the One who made it.

For God also created all that is not only to provide for us but to reveal truths about Himself to us. Plato and other philosophers saw the created world as evil and tried to escape it. Good luck with that. The Bible, on the other hand, tells us that Creation is good, but fallen. Jesus told many parables using items from nature or creation, to help us understand God. Soils, seeds, weeds, sheep, trees, etc. Is it possible God made birds to demonstrate to us how He takes us under His wing and loves us? That He made day lilies

so we could understand how brief our lives are? That He made rivers flow so we can see His love flowing to us? And so on. Just as George Washington Carver discovered over 300 uses for peanuts that no one else ever found before, I'm convinced that everything in God's Creation, has lessons packed inside of them for us to learn about God if we would take the time to tease them out.

Carver once said, "To me Nature in its varied forms is the little windows through which God permits me to commune with Him, and to see much of His glory, by simply lifting the curtain and looking in. I love to think of Nature as wireless telegraph stations (telephones) through which God speaks to us every day, every hour, and every moment of our lives." But we have to take His calls. Someone once said about him, "No one can spend any time with Professor Carver in a grove or woods without getting some conception of nature and nature's God. He sees the good and beautiful in everything that God has made." May we do the same!

Let's also recognize that people are a part of Creation. The highest part and the ruling part, but not separate from it. We are not enemies of it as some ecologists would accuse us. Some so-called scientists have advocated for drastic reduction of the human population because of the damage we are doing to what they call the environment. They don't call it creation because they don't want to obey its Creator. But if managed properly, the earth can provide for billions of people without crashing and we don't yet know what or if there is an upper limit. God knows. And He's in charge. We have yet to fill the earth and subdue it.

Sadly, many people today don't see themselves as a part of Creation but as separate from it. They may go to a park or float a river but see themselves as outside of creation just visiting. No. We are part of it. Most people today live in cities far removed from Creation. We are fortunate to live in a rural area and some of you even on farms. Farm life is a daily reminder that we are a part of Creation. And that we have a role to play and a job to do. Although as we said last Sunday, we don't own Creation, God's original mandate to care for and to rule over it still stands and to this day it has never been revoked. We inherited Adam's job description for caring for this globe. Both of his first two sons managed agricultural enterprises and other of his descendants learned to extract metals and use them and get other products from the earth.

In His wisdom, God also gave us some management guidelines to use. Throughout the Old Testament Law, He instructed the Israelites how they were to not only work six days, but also rest the seventh, as He did. But they were to let their lands and animals rest as well. They were to manage their fields so that, as we learned in the invitation to give today, the poor people could also have food to eat by harvesting the edges and picking up leftovers. Notice they weren't to harvest and take it to them as everyone was expected to work if they were able. Even today, it's important for human

dignity for people to work for their keep. Although few of us are farmers today, how can we help provide for the hungry by leaving a portion behind? Even this past week, Brother Michael Cooley was in Malawi teaching them how to grow their own food instead of depending on handouts. Part of his teaching is to share the crop. Another part is tithing. God's economy has always included giving 10% of all increase to God. Crops, animals, income, etc. These are some of God's management rules.

God's original plan was for shalom, or universal peace and wellbeing and wholeness for everyone and everything. Not just for people, but for all Creation. And one day, He will restore shalom. In the meantime, that should be our goal as well. What can we do to create as much shalom, joy, provision right now, without raping the land and abusing resources. The pure profit motive is to work creation but not care for it. The environmentalist motive is to care for it but not work it. God's plan is not either/or. It is both/and. We can use it and care for it in balance. Conservation is wise use, preservation is no use. But husbandry is beneficial use. That's another old term, like vocation, to talk about how a farmer or homeowner coexisted with his or her surroundings. As a husband caring for Creation even as Creation cared for him or her. We now just often talk about how much can we produce? Over 600 bushels of corn per acre is the new record! Praise God for high yields but praise God also for production methods that now protect the soil and water so we can continue to grow food indefinitely.

Proverbs 12:10 says that, "the righteous man cares for the needs of his animals," which applies to both livestock producers as well as pet owners and Prov 27:23 commands, "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds." We **can** use animals for meat and other products but we also have a God-given responsibility not to abuse them, to care for them ethically and properly and to see that as part of our obedience to God. When we care for the **land** as God's stewards, it's a way of loving and honoring Him and of loving our neighbors who will live after us. Neighbors over time. We glorify God when we transform parts of His creation into food to eat, clothes to wear, and other items that glorify God. Even beautifying our yards is a way to enhance that part of Creation God has entrusted to us and to bless others.

One of the common misconceptions about eternal life is that it will be "out of this world" in heaven. Yes, we will dwell with God up in heaven for a time. But after the final judgment, Revelation 21 describes how the new Jerusalem will come down out of heaven to earth! And how God will live with us here! How the earth will be recreated and restored to its original beauty and perfection! So let's understand that from the very beginning to eternity future, the earth is our home! Not like it is now, but like it once was and like it will be once again! Someone once said the meek will inherit the earth after the rich get done ruining it. No.

One of the passages I didn't get a chance to read, much less flesh out last week is Romans 8:19-23. It says, "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to

be revealed. 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, (Adam) in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

All of Creation suffered from Adam's sin, the one who was in charge of it and subjected it to death. All Creation was impacted by sin when the earth was destroyed by a flood, and all of creation continues to suffer today because of sins' effects. The ecological is connected to the theological. Our world is material **and** it is affected by the spiritual. Creation convulsed at Jesus' death and resurrection with earthquakes both times. I believe that some of the severe weather, the deadly hurricanes, droughts, fires, floods, etc are connected to the spiritual decisions, the sin of human beings. Our neglect for good farming practices caused the dust bowl. Cutting all the trees in Haiti caused massive soil erosion and fertility loss. But our sin can also cause natural disasters like the flood of Noah's day illustrates clearly. Because of this, Paul says all Creation yearns to be set free from sin and its consequences, for its chains to be cut. For death and decay to disappear. And one day they will! And if you are in Jesus, Vs 23 you are yearning for that day! "We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Even so come Lord Jesus!

The perfect earth without pollution or corruption will not come about by manmade laws or scientific progress, but by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ! His death and resurrection charged the battery with the needed energy to renew all Creation. God's just waiting for as many people as possible to receive the forgiveness, grace and mercy Jesus died to provide that they might enjoy that new earth with Him one day.

Oh my brothers and sisters, it's all about Jesus!!! The Creation was made by Jesus, used and highlighted by Jesus, redeemed by Jesus, and will be restored by Jesus! Don't you want to be a part of it? Don't you want to see what a perfect world looks like? True shalom? True harmony without water or air pollution? Without extinction or starvation? Without death or sin? It's coming! But you will not experience it without surrendering to Jesus now.

I'll close with some illustrations from nature. Rainbows are beautiful creations of God but they are only visible for a short time. Enjoy it while you can. The same is true in tasting a ripe tomato or in getting a shot at a monster turkey. If you wait, you'll miss it. Same is true with this opportunity to receive Jesus. You have a window of opportunity that will soon close. Take it now while you can by confessing your own sin

and receiving His salvation. Allow Him to restore and renovate your soul so you'll be ready to share eternity with Him in a restored world.