

Creation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 August 2017

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] So I'd like for a little while this morning to look back to Genesis chapter 1, which will be the first of our big stories. Like next week we're moving on to Noah's Ark, which is obviously a well-known story.

And I have to say that these sermons are by their nature going to need to be tasters. Okay? They're going to need to be tasters for you. And by that I don't mean that they're going to be shallow or insignificant.

And I hope that preaching is never that for us and the teaching that comes from it. But what I do hope is that these sermons will wet an appetite as Christians, and even if we're not Christians, to look more into these passages of Scripture and the passages that surround them.

There's really so much you could probably do a series of around about 100 sermons on creation and the first early two or three chapters of Genesis. But I hope that you will go from here and move beyond the sermon, that you will supplement the sermon, that you will find the appetite to look for more resources and spend more time thinking about the implications and the truth that is given to us in these chapters.

We want to, this may be an assumption that's wrong, of course, and you will no doubt correct me if that is the case. But we want to reintroduce more into our Christian thinking and into our Christian psyche the great stories of the Bible.

[1 : 26] The great well, well-were well-known stories of the Bible and would have been at one time taught in our schools, but obviously are no longer. I want to remind them, as of the importance of reintroducing them or reminding our children of these great stories as well.

And I hope that the families in the congregation might come on board with these sermons and maybe for the sermon that we do on a Sunday, that you will spend the rest of that week in family worship or reading the Bible and praying with your children, that you will use the stories that we're doing and maybe go into different aspects of them, because we'll never cover all of the story or all of the time that is recorded in these stories.

It's important to demythologize these stories which are regarded as myth today and remind ourselves that they still speak. And they still speak powerfully to us because they come from and are given to us by the living God.

And let us seek, and I've asked, obviously we've often asked this here, that we come prayerfully. We come prepared, we come cooperating with each other, that we come both having worked to receive God's word, both as hearers and as preachers together.

And that active preparation and that active listening along with the active preaching is something that God will honor and use in our lives, because we all have different circumstances.

[3 : 00] We will find that God through His Spirit will apply different parts of the sermon and the text to our lives as we listen for Him and as we seek His guidance.

So, I start with a question, who are we? Who am I? Who are you? And it's a very important question, isn't it? It's a very basic question that we ask.

Our identity, our belonging, our purpose, we are always asking, well, we are sometimes asking about that. We are asking about who we are and the identity that we have.

It's hardwired into our lives to know where we come from and to know to whom we belong. So, I'm giving you a little bit of portrait history here. My belonging, I was born in Corpuch, which is on the west coast just beside Fort William.

And I was born in a house. I was born in a manse, actually. And my mum and dad were Donald and Joan Lament. That's my story. That's who I am.

[4 : 05] When I think of my beginning, when I think of my identity as a human being, as a person, that is what I think of. I think of where I was born and I think of who were my parents.

I'm not really that interested in how Corpuch came together as a community. I'm not that bothered. I'm not even that concerned about what the stone was used to build the manse or the biological science behind my formation.

That's not what I'm thinking of when I think of who I am and where I'm from. It's not really the point of what I've shared with you. It's a different truth.

My story is the truth of my identity, but it's not the whole truth. I know all these other things are significant and are important. I'm not saying they're not significant and important, but it's not what I'm interested in when I think of my identity as an ordinary person.

And so I think we need to look at Genesis 1 very much in that light also, and on into the future early chapters of Genesis. It's about who we are.

[5 : 17] It's about our beginnings. It's about where we are from, our identity. And it is truth. Of course it's truth. It's historical truth, but it's not all of the truth.

It's not a scientific account, but it does account for science. It is early history, but it's not exhaustive history.

And so what God is doing here is reminding us of who we are as human beings and where our identity is and why that gives us significance and why the whole gospel then fits in to that reality.

And really these first five words are hugely significant in the beginning God created. These are hugely significant first verses that God has chosen to open up His account of communication with us using.

So life begins in the beginning. We recognize that time is linear, that time starts, and time will end.

[6 : 27] Matter and all that we are made of is not eternal. There is a clear beginning, and if that's the case, there is always a beginner.

There's always someone who begins the beginning, and God is revealing Himself as the one who began in the beginning. Who began the beginning, it begins with God.

Because everything that starts, isn't it right? Everything that begins must have a cause. Something must begin it. So we have this vast universe. The order, the beauty, the natural laws, the variety, the color, the mind and the consciousness of humanity, the morality, the ethics, the love that we experience and receive did not originate randomly.

It's impossible, it's impossible for these things to have simply evolved from matter. Matter before mind as it were.

Attributing to mere matter, ordered creative genius. It simply can't happen. And everything in science and philosophy and religion points to a beginning.

[7 : 49] A cause that reflects what was begun. Mind before matter. Not matter before mind.

The matter that is created reflects the mind and the being of the Creator, a living God. In the beginning God created.

And so we have recognized here a personal God, a God that goes on to reveal himself in personal terms. Independent, complex, social, Trinitarian, who existed and exists outside of His creation.

Before His creation. A God who in His Spirit and through His Son by the Father worked in creation. He's the source of all the energy and the power that both created and sustains the universe and our lives.

[8 : 59] Vast, unlimited, unaccountable, good, just, loving. We have this God who's in the beginning before the world has created.

And that should, and I don't think it does, I don't think it does for us for whatever reason. But it should inspire, I do believe in us more and more, mystery and marvel.

There is a huge mystery in the thought of a non-matter, an eternal, an uncreated being at the source of the universe.

We must stop comparing Him to ourselves. We must stop putting Him alongside ourselves as if He's just one of us, but a little bit bigger. That He is incomparable and He is God.

And there's huge mystery in that. There's actually a huge mystery in the universe and its creation anyway, whether we believe in God or not. Mind-blowing mystery. But we channel that mystery into worship of the living God.

[9 : 59] And we also marvel. We marvel because, for example, what science has allowed us to achieve and to see. How it has scratched the surface, even of the size of the universe.

And we have these accounts of how great and how marvelous and how huge and how vast the universe is that science tells us. And it's all inspiring beyond our understanding. How it goes on for, I'm not going to give and repeat, facts because they could go on forever. But there's great power and vastness even in the physical universe, expanding all times and also running down.

But there's also this tiny planet earth, tiny, tiny planet earth, this grain of sand. With all its intricate detail, life and beauty and intimacy.

You've got this great God who we marvel at His power and also at the intimacy and detail of the creation that He's made. And we need to understand both aspects of God as we seek to develop our knowledge of Him.

[11:12] So we have a personal God here and a personal God who creates. In the beginning, God created. And it speaks of creation, ex nihilo, out of nothing.

There was nothing. He created from nothing. In other words, it's the source by the power of His word. Now that in itself has huge implications for every single atom of our existence.

For every moment of consciousness that we are, that this word says in the beginning, God created.

We can't trivialize Genesis 1 verse 1. We can't throw it away. We can't ignore it.

It's the single most important statement in the universe and in your life. I spoke about my human identity, but there's a deeper identity, isn't there?

To even who my parents were and where I was born and in what surroundings I was born. It's about our identity in the universe, in the world in which we live.

[12:22] And these five words begin to answer for us the really big questions that we are very good at suppressing. That we are very good at ignoring in our lives and so that so much of our lives we just go on in a routine, don't we?

And we go on doing what we do every day and we suppress the big questions about who I am and why this world came into being and what it's about and why am I here and what is life for and what's the point?

We can spend a great deal of time suppressing that question and simply skipping along in our lives, not thinking beyond the surface because it's hard and because it's uncomfortable for us to think about these big, big questions.

And yet, Genesis 1 and the first five verses challenges us to do so. Who creates a personal God? A personal God who creates by His word.

He creates by His word, verse 3, goes on to record the first recorded words of God in the Bible and I think first are significant usually in the Bible.

[13:39] And here we have, let there be light. Huge significance in the recording of what God wanted recorded as He shared that with Moses in the recording of these early chapters of Genesis.

This was what God first spoke, the physical light of life, along with in many ways the light of disclosure, isn't it?

Let there be light, He's saying, let there be light on this world. Let there be light on how it was formed and how it began and His word enables us to live but also to see.

It brings us the perspective into life and who we are that we need to see. He breathes life into creation through His word, through communication, isn't it great?

It doesn't say God by His action created. It's not that He came aside and used His hands to mold the universe, but it says He spoke the world into being.

[14:44] By communication He created, He revealed His great power and of course there's a flash of further light in John 1 verse 1, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

So there's this core reality of communication and the very nature and being of God that's creative and powerful and social in its very being, divinely social.

And it reflects, of course, I'll say a little bit more about this as we close, the character of God Himself who is the light of the world, He brings light, spiritual light, the light of life.

His indelible stamp is on creation as He speaks these words, let there be light. It's His seal. This world has one good owner, Lord God.

So it's a personal God who creates, who creates by His word and who creates with artistry. We simply don't have time this morning, I said it's only a taster. We simply don't have time to go through the six days and the seventh day rest of creation.

[16:00] But the literary structure of Genesis chapter 1 is artistic and is beautiful. It's poetic and it's an unfolding of God's work in creation.

So you're moving, and it's very structured if you take time to look at it, it speaks at the beginning in verse 2 of the earth. It was without form and void. It was formless and it was empty.

There was a kind of a primeval chaos into which God spoke order. And so you've got the first three days kind of bringing form to the world and separation, light and darkness and land and sea.

And then the days 4, 5 and 6, you've got the void of these days being filled. So there's plants and animals and fish and sea.

Everything that is to fill these different created aspects of his universe coming to culmination in the creation of humanity.

[17:16] And if you notice the way we're reading, you'll see that Corrie had the longest bit to read. He's the best reader, but that wasn't why. It was because it was the sixth day. And that has a longer communication from God as it unfolds the creation of humanity, of which we're apart.

And it's done, and as we see this in its summary form, as it speaks of creation, it's done with imagination and with artistry and with variety and with glory and with beauty and with skill and perfection, maybe beyond anything that we are prone to maybe attribute or understand as part of God's nature and character.

I think it's easy for us to bind God's relevance and lordship to our inanimate souls, to that invisible part of our being, which is kind of separate from the day-to-day world we live in.

So we live our lives and we do what we do, but Jesus is only important about our soul. That little bit of our life that we give a couple of hours to, or we think about it now and again, or we hope we'll have an insurance policy over it when we die and might get to heaven.

And we think somehow that God isn't interested in the day-to-day cares of this world or the reality of the beauty and the acknowledgement of the beauty of this world.

[18:54] But He originates this stuff, His stuff. It's a world of Him and His world that He's created and art and beauty and life and physicality and all that makes up the world in which we live.

It's not out of His domain. It's not like He is a little bit of ownership in our soul and the rest is for the devil or the world or for whatever. It's His world.

He made it and it's how many times has it repeated in the midst of each section? It was very good. It was very good. It was great.

Everything that He created was beautiful in its time. And we recognize that and He creates with artistry. And as Christians, He demands our lordship over all these things, over our eating and our drinking and our pleasure and our response to the world in which we live and our environmentalism and everything that is part of the world in which we live.

We take a Christ-centered approach to it because it's His world. He creates with artistry and He's the one who creates image bearers.

[20:13] Verses 26 and 27 speak about that. Humanity. Man and woman. Dependent on Him for life.

Mind before matter. We didn't simply evolve into being. It's mind before matter.

We are dependent. We are worshipers. We are creators in His image but not like Him. We are communicators. We're explorers.

We're lovers of love. We were lovers of God. We were lovers of each other, of morality and of good and of justice. Lovers of community and lovers of society in His image.

Conscious and moral beings. Distinct, separate, sexes. Sex not being a social construct but a revelation of how He has made us gloriously diverse, different, physically, sexually, psychologically, physiologically, and in every different way, together in society, image bearers of the divine.

[21:37] Whatever this doesn't speak of, and whatever it doesn't reveal, it does reveal that we are not glorious accidents, that we are not random genetic formulations with no ultimate meaning and no ultimate purpose, that we are not alone in this universe.

We are God-reflectors, and we are made for relationship with Him, made by Him for relationship with Him. And if you are running away from that, you are running away from the essence of your being, which is to be in relationship with God, and all that that means.

Don't run away from that essence of your being, which is to be in relationship with God. And that brings it very briefly for the last couple of minutes to how creation echoes the gospel.

The creation in Genesis 1 echoes the gospel, and it's hard to make sense of the gospel without Genesis 1, and all that it speaks of, because what we go on to see, and we obviously didn't have time to look at the other chapters, was that humanity rejected the word of light, rejected God saying, let there be light.

They rejected His Lordship, and they rejected dependence on Him, and introduced a monumental reversal into creation and into a relationship with Him.

[23 : 22] So the move from formlessness and voidance, chaos, primeval chaos to order and beauty, begins to be dissembled, begins to unravel because of a rejection of God.

We wanted to be God. Humanity wanted to be independent, simply to be in control. Self-Lordship. Don't want God. Don't require God.

We wanted it all. So that darkness began to encase the light, and death was His curse on life as judgment, and chaos began to prevail in the natural world in which we live.

Separation from Him and His life marred that creation. God introduced hatred where there wasn't any, and division which clouds great love of God, and ugliness where there was only beauty, and ugliness which becomes lauded and replaces beauty.

And we channel worship. It's not that we cease to worship. It's not that we cease to be dependent.

We cease to live like that, but rather we channel it all everywhere except God.

[24 : 52] And usually it's internally focused on self-ideality and self-Lordship. And so in Christ what we have is the word, Genesis, John 1.1, the word becoming flesh.

This word of light and of life becoming flesh. The ultimate mystery that there is in the universe is that the uncreated one becomes flesh.

The image maker becomes the image bearer in order to rescue us. Because it was great love. He didn't want to leave the situation as it was.

He didn't want to leave us facing death and separation and all that goes with it. And He speaks so that in John 8 verse 12, and if the guys have got that, yeah, again Jesus spoke to them saying, what does He say?

God said in Genesis 1, let there be light. Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

[25 : 59] I've got this great spoken word of Jesus who has come to restore beauty and life and grace and forgiveness with God vertically and horizontally with one another.

He speaks, but He dies. That's what is uniquely different, isn't it? He dies. He came as the light of the world and He comes into the darkness and death of this world and on the cross He Himself dies.

So awful is that isolation and forsakenness and loneliness, if we can, ultimate loneliness, separation from life and the Father and everything.

That creation itself at that moment would not shine. The sun would not shine. So you've got that strange moment where it says that darkness came over the face of the land from the ninth hour to the twelfth hour.

The all-powerful one, drained of His glory, the author of life, giving Himself over to death on a tree in Palestine. Crazy, isn't it?

[27 : 15] So that we might live. And then, in His resurrection and His ascension, He recreates. So there's a real paralleling between the original creation and the recreation in rescue and in salvation.

Titus 3 verse 5 it says, So there's a recreation going on in our lives as believers.

He is bringing order and bringing beauty and bringing love and relationship with Him back. There will be a recreated universe, but not yet.

Currently, He is re-birthing, recreating, remaking a people. And as we trust in Jesus Christ and His living Word, He is turning us and He continues to turn us upside down.

He works that, Genesis 1 literary pattern of moving from spiritual chaos to order and to beauty and to hope and to relationship.

[28 : 38] Everything, it's all encompassing. We've moved from death to life as Christians, and it's hugely significant. So in the beginning, God created is a massively significant truth that is reflected in Jesus Christ and in what He has done.

So our Christianity, whatever else it is, please never make it a wee jaunt to church now and again. Never make it a wee prayer at the end of the day.

And a wee wink at God now and again, just when we feel a little need for a bit of spiritual perspective.

Never let Him be your back pocket God, that we slip out of our back pocket now and again. As Christians were restored into communion with the living God and the darkness is being dispelled, I know that often we sense that darkness and we can't see as we want to.

We simply can't and we feel more like we're in the darkness than we are in the light. We need to persevere and we need to ask Him to enable us to see His light more and more and live in the light. [29 : 58] That's what He wants us to do, isn't it? He has redeemed us to live in the light and so often we choose to plunge ourselves back into darkness, maybe by our attitude to God, our attitude to one another, or our carelessness, or our greed, or our selfishness, or our lack of our self-righteousness, or our pride, whatever it might be, there's lots of things, isn't it?

That we choose to hold on to the dark things we like. I'm keeping, I'm keeping here. And He says, let's move from darkness to life and appreciate that recreative work that He cooperates, that He encourages us to cooperate with as He does His work, as He communicates to us in His Word, and as we seek to share that with others.

And maybe be able to do that and know His life and His light and His love in our lives. Amen. Let's pray briefly together.

Father, we ask and pray that you would take your word and that you would challenge us with that word, that we would not throw aside as being mythical, or irrelevant, or meaningless.

But as we, in our minds, identify where we were born and who our parents were and are, and what formed us as people, may we see what God is seeking us to understand through His living word, which tells us of beginnings.

[31 : 37] And we thank God to see this morning that we are not random molecules with no purpose, with no meaning, with no mind behind our creation, with no order and no love and no direction.

We thank you that we do have an ultimate purpose and we are made in your image, and we'll find life eternally in your rescue and in your salvation.

And we acknowledge today so much mystery, so many things we don't know. May we never be smart, Alex, who always think or who think we always have the answers.

May we bow sometimes simply to our own ignorance and the mystery of the world and the universe in which we live, and put our trust in you nonetheless.

Because although it may not be revealed, we do believe you know, and you have chosen to reveal what you've revealed. And Lord, we pray that you would make us humble and gracious and gentle and strong.

[32 : 45] As we live out our Christian lives seeking to be recreated, moulded, directed and renewed by your grace and by your Holy Spirit.

For Jesus' sake, amen.