

God's New Family

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[0 : 00] About 500 years ago, the Protestant Reformation began where Martin Luther and other reformers began to reclaim the true gospel from the grip of a church that seemed just entirely lifeless.

And from that Reformation era, we inherited a beautiful Latin phrase, post-Tenebros lux. It means after darkness, light. When the world seemed at its bleakest, when the gospel seemed to be entirely lost, and when even the church had become so corrupt that it bore little or no resemblance to the early church of the New Testament times, after all of that darkness, light. Post-Tenebros lux is a picture of a sunrise, isn't it? You'll be familiar with the idea, the phrase, that the darkest part of the night happens just before dawn.

And isn't it true that the darkness of the night makes the first rays of the sun even more beautiful?

[1 : 20] After darkness, light. That phrase absolutely fills me with hope. It fills me with hope because I see a lot of darkness. I see darkness in the world around us, and I see quite a lot of darkness in myself.

You know, the first book of the Old Testament, and this is a series called The Story of the Old Testament, where we're kind of walking through the major moments of that big chunk of our Bibles that can be so difficult to understand.

This first book is called Genesis, and you could really sum up the theme of Genesis with the phrase, after darkness, light. That's how we're introduced to the book of Genesis.

It's how we're introduced to the world, and it's how we're introduced to God. Let's read Genesis 1, 1-4 quickly. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters, and God said, let there be light, and there was light.

[2 : 28] And God saw that the light was good. Now, if Genesis were a movie, the opening scene would be on this dark, churning, chaotic, watery mass.

No land, no life, no light. That's the opening scene in our movie, and then God speaks.

It's just two little words in Hebrew when we say, let there be light in English. In Hebrew, it's more like, exist light, and poof, light springs into existence.

Then, of course, God creates humans, and he forms land and animals and plants and trees, and he puts humans on that good earth. And in Genesis chapter three, which Derek preached from last Sunday, that would be in our Genesis movie.

It would be the tragic climax. It's actually the bleakest moment in all of the Old Testament, I think.

God planted Adam and Eve in this amazing garden, and he provided for them just an abundance of food, and beauty, and peace.

[3 : 41] He gave them everything they could ever want, an absolute wealth of generosity from God. But Adam and Eve, they spit on God's generosity, and they ate from the one and only tree that they were told not to eat from.

They had the world at their fingertips, and they chose the one thing they weren't supposed to do.

That's why I called this the bleakest chapter of the Old Testament. God made us, God made humans for innocence, and righteousness, and joy.

And we looked at that wonderful feast, and we chose guilt, wickedness, discontent.

We chose darkness instead of light, and darkness crept over the world that day, and crept over the hearts of humanity that day, and it hasn't left.

And in the darkest moment of the Old Testament, right after sin enters the world in Genesis 3, God announced a plan, a glimmer of light.

[4 : 53] The announcement comes in chapter 3, verse 15, where God says to the serpent who deceived Eve, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. When Adam and Eve sinned, Satan's rule over this world began.

But God's glorious announcement to the world, his plan, is to let us know that Satan's grip on us won't last forever.

The darkness will one day give way to eternal day. Now, if you tug on this thread, this announcement of God's plan, if you tug on the thread through the Old Testament and into the new, it leads you to Jesus.

In the book of Galatians many, many years later, the apostle Paul wrote, and he reminds us that in this verse that God doesn't say offsprings, plural, he says offspring, singular.

[6 : 09] Paul reminds us that the offspring of the woman, the promised offspring, is Jesus. Jesus, the serpent crusher. Jesus, the conqueror of death.

Jesus, the light of the world. That's why John the Baptist's father in Luke's Gospel could sing that because of the tender mercies of God, the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Now, God didn't just snap his fingers and zap Jesus into existence. As we've been learning in our Evening Service series, Jesus was fully God and fully human, which means he had a family.

And that means that if he had a family, then he had ancestors. That's why this story about God calling Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees is so important.

In a world of darkness and rebellion, God called one man out of that darkness. Let's read Genesis 12, 1-3 again.

[7 : 22] Now, the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation. And I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you. I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So why did God call Abram?

Well, he called Abram to make of him a great nation. And from that nation, the very thing that would make it great is that Jesus would come.

The offspring of the woman. Jesus, the light of the world. Do you remember how the New Testament begins? Matthew chapter one, verse one, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

And Matthew traces Jesus' ancestry from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, all the way through David, and all the way up to Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Christ.

[8 : 32] The New Testament writers, the first thing they wanted us to know is that Jesus is the offspring that was promised way back in the beginning from the line of Abraham.

Now, that's why this passage has been called the thematic center of the whole Pentateuch, which is the first five books of the Old Testament. And that's why this passage is so important.

It's not just the story of a man on a journey. It's the story of hope. Now, from this passage, then I want to draw three implications for us today.

Number one, you're not an outsider. I'm sorry. Number one, you are an outsider in the world. You're an outsider here. Number two, you're not an outsider in the family of God.

And number three, hope is bright when the world is dark. All right. Number one, you're an outsider in the world.

[9 : 32] Genesis 12.1, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. Now, the life of Abram, who would later be renamed Abraham, is the life of a pilgrim who was a camper.

He was and would always be a sojourner and a stranger in a faraway land. Now, God called Abraham out. One of the key words here really is the word from.

Go from your country and kindred and father's house. This is important because the call to become a part of God's family is a call to go out from something.

If you're a Christian, then you're part of God's family. And God has called you to leave. He's called you to go out from the ways of sin and death that we used to follow.

In Romans 13.12, the Holy Spirit says through Paul, the night is far gone, the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

[10 : 45] Go out from your sinful ways to the ways of righteousness, of light. He says in Ephesians 5.8, at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

Walk as children of the light. We're called from darkness into light, if we've had the call to join God's family.

Now, for some of you, the call to become a part of God's family literally takes you from your earthly family. Some of you don't have Christian parents or Christian friends.

And when you become a Christian, maybe it felt like a curtain fell between you, relationally. Maybe it felt like you lost something, like you had to leave something behind.

If you resonate with that, I want you to hear this, the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Mark chapter 10. Jesus said, truly I say to you, there is no one, no one, who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life.

[12 : 19] In other words, life with Jesus starting now and going on for all of eternity is better, worth more than everything we've left behind to follow Him.

He's worth it. And He does not take your sacrifice lightly. Now in His first letter, the apostle Peter calls us sojourners and exiles.

That's really important. Abraham, as we've discussed in our kids talk earlier, Abraham lived in tents, not mansions, right? So if you're a follower of Jesus, you are a sojourner and this world is not your home anymore.

So if this world is not your home, don't be surprised when the world hates you. Don't be surprised when you find yourself politically homeless or when you find yourself standing up for justice and morality in an age of oppression and anything goes.

You're an outsider to the world. But point number two, you are not an outsider in the family of God.

[13 : 41] Abraham was called from Ur of the Caldees. Now Ur was a pagan nation far from God, full of sorcery. They were well known for their sorcery.

And it was a moon worshipping cult. Before God called Abram out of Ur, he wasn't ever since a stranger to God. He knew nothing about God and His ways.

And weren't we all in the same boat at one time? Before Jesus saved me, I was as far from Him as you could imagine.

And I wouldn't have sought Him out. I wouldn't have chosen Him on my own. I was hopeless. I was helpless. Weren't you?

But if you follow Jesus now, then you are not an outsider. You're not a stranger in God's family anymore. In Ephesians 2, the Spirit says through Paul, You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

[14 : 47] Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In Him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. A dwelling place for God. What could be more dignifying than that?

What could be better in this cutthroat world than knowing that to God, you belong?

It doesn't matter how dark your past is. It doesn't matter how impressive you are, or how much money you make, or what your family background is, or how much of a good person you are, or how intelligent you are.

All that matters is that you look to Jesus as the only source and cure for the darkness of the world, and as the only source and cure for the darkness in your heart.

[15 : 59] And then you love, trust, and follow Him. If you follow Jesus, you belong in the family of God.

Now Abraham didn't have to convince God, said, God, please send me. He didn't twist God's arm. That's important. One of my favorite little verses from the Bible is in John chapter 16.

Jesus says, the Father Himself loves you. No one twisted God's arm to get you into His family.

Jesus didn't have to plead with God to accept you. It's not like God hated you, but Jesus, God the Son, loved you. God, the Father Himself loves you. God wants you to be in His family.

God likes you. God likes having you around, and He wants to spend eternity with you. Who do you like that much?

[17 : 00] God loves you enough to send His own Son, to take you from the kingdom of darkness, and at the cost of His Son, bring you into His glorious light and make you a child of the day.

Your sins, then, your own inner darkness, does not keep you, and cannot keep you from belonging in the family of God.

Your own inner darkness and sins merely qualifies you to receive the mercy and forgiveness of God, which is just the entryway into that kingdom of light anyway.

In Colossians 1, we read, God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

All right, well, you're an outsider to the world. You're not an outsider in the family of God.

[18 : 08] Number three, hope is bright when the world is dark. Now, I don't have to teach you about darkness, about the darkness of the world or the darkness in you.

The world is full of physical and spiritual darkness, isn't it? And if we're being honest, our hearts are just the same. In his memoirs, *Chronicles of a Wasted Life*, I looked for the quote, to quote it precisely, and I couldn't find it. It's a big book.

But Malcolm Muggeridge said something like, there's no sin, no evil, that I haven't either done myself or seriously thought about doing.

Isn't that honest? If we're being that honest, can't we kind of say the same? So in the darkness of the world around us, all of its brokenness and all of its evil, and in the darkness of our own hearts, which like Paul says in Romans 7, you know, I do the things that I don't want to do and I don't do the things that I want to do, wretched man that I am.

That's the kind of darkness I'm talking about. In that kind of darkness, what hope is there?

Post-Tenebros, the Luxe, after darkness, light.

[19 : 24] That's God's way. Our hope is anchored. Our hope is founded on the God who creates everything out of nothing.

Our God is the one who speaks into darkness and says, exist light, and it does. This is the God who calls a pagan moon worshiper from the faraway land and says, I want you and my family.

From the nothingness of Ur to the concrete existence there's a new creation in the family of God.

Did you know that there's actually three creation stories in the book of Genesis? Thematically. So there's the first couple pages of Genesis, of course, are the creation of the world and that's what we all think of when we think of Genesis and the word creation.

God speaks things into existence. Let there be light. The second creation story is in Genesis 9, several chapters later.

[20 : 34] The wickedness of the world, the darkness, had gotten so deep that God floods the earth to cleanse it from wickedness and all life is destroyed except Noah and his family on the ark.

Now, if you remember our movie of Genesis, in your mind you picture this opening scene of the dark, churning, watery mass with no land, life.

That's the scene of Genesis 9 as the floodwaters recede and Mount Errorat comes out the top.

Land emerges from water and life is there and Noah and his family are saved like a new creation.

And the third creation scene is this passage in Genesis 12. From the nothingness and chaos of the pagan nations it's like God said, let there be family.

One of my favorite theologians, Bruce Walke, said, the same word that summoned the cosmos into existence summons Abraham to bring a nation into existence.

[21 : 45] The nation that would bring forth our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our God is the Creator God who speaks new creation into existence from nothing.

So we have nothing to offer God. We just can't offer God anything and it's into our nothingness that God speaks and makes of us a new creation in Christ.

2 Corinthians 4-6, for God who said, let light shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That is the way of God bringing light from darkness, bringing new creation out of nothing. That's the wisdom and power of God. The sort of wisdom and power that says if you want to save your life you must lose it.

The wisdom and power that says the way to eternal life is through death, through a cross, that the family of God should be spoken into existence from the enemies of God.

[23 : 02] If that's the way of God then what do we have to fear? Then no darkness can overshadow our hope because it's the deepest darkness that God uses to bring forth the most brilliant light.

Let me just say a few things in conclusion. What's most true about you now, if you're in Christ, is not your inner darkness.

If you're a Christian, here's what's most true about you now. 1 Peter 2, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. That is what is most true about you.

So if that's true about you, live like it. If we are children of the day, let's live as though we're in the daytime.

[24 : 24] Let's walk in the light where God is. Put away all the works of darkness. Put away the secrecy. Put away the vileness. Put away the sin.

Put on Jesus. Walk in the light of honesty and vulnerability and purity. It's where Jesus is. It's better. Let's live like children of the day.

But now if that's what 1 Peter says about being a royal priesthood and a holy nation, about having received mercy, if that's not true about you, it can be.

You might say, well, I'm not in the family of God. How do I know if God's calling me? Maybe he hasn't called me. But here's the thing. If you'd rather have his light than your darkness, there's so much hope.

If you can just say, Lord, you are my Lord. Just take my darkness and give me your light instead. Take my sin and give me your life and goodness.

[25 : 34] I'm messed up, but I'm yours. Then you look back on that and say, oh, he has called me. That's the proof that he's called you.

Yes, you'll become an outsider to the world. And yes, it will be hard. But you'll have somewhere to belong.

Like you've never belonged anywhere else in the world. You'll have a family truer than family, an eternal family. Jesus as your big brother, God as your father.

And you'll have an unshakable hope to put steel in your spine, even in the darkest night. Why not? Amen.