Tech Limitations

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[0:00]   Okay, so this is the third of our series as it were on Christ and the digital age and we've been looking at technology. The first one, Corey looked at God and technology right from the beginning, the Bible and how it took such things as the building of Babel and also the building of the ark. Two different examples of using the technology of the day in good ways and in bad ways. And then last time you looked at TV and film particularly. So today we're going to look at the limitations of tech and the limitations of technology and then hopefully for our last one and the last one will be in three weeks because next Wednesday evening is table talk. So we're having a meal together upstairs in the church and also communion.

And then the following week will be the question time from here and in the week after that will be our last Sunday. We'll look more at kind of iPhones and Instagram and the more kind of practical side of it. But today we're going to look for a week while before we move into our seven days of prayer as we were at technological limitations. And by doing that I think it's important to recognise who we are as people. When we think about ourselves and think about life and think about ourselves and technology, it's always important to ground that in who we are ourselves and recognising that as Christians who we are at the core level of our responses to everything that we face. And the first I think that it's recognising that we are first of all image bearers. That's what we are as people. We're image bearers of God. So you see iPhones, iPhone sources, the plug and the cable, they're uniquely designed for iPhones. You can't put a kettle cable into an iPhone to charge it up, it doesn't work. It wouldn't power it in the right way. And if the iPhone is not connected to its power source, it eventually loses any value whatsoever because it goes dead. I mean it will work for a while as we know, but then it goes dead and it doesn't really have any other use if it's dead, possibly as a beer mat or something. But it doesn't really have any meaningful use if it isn't connected and isn't powered by its own unique cable. And a foundational level, that's very true of us as well, that we are meant to be and we need to be and we were created to be connected to God and in relationship with Him. That's a really basic but an absolutely critical truth about ourselves. We were made by God, all of you, all of us, and we know this, but we were made by God and made for God so that when we are separated from Him in any sense, in any way, we're separating ourselves from the source of all life and the source of all our life and it's the deepest and most costly tragedy in the cosmos. So whatever else we think about the world in the cosmos and everything else, the greatest and the deepest tragedy is when humanity and when people are separated from God, their source, the source of life and love and power in their lives. So with

Image Bearers, we know that and that means a few things. It means that we are creative and we've seen that in this study and it's quite a significant and important thing. So that we recognise the place of technology and Corrie has very ably defended that biblically that there's an important place for technological advance and technological gifting and there's no point in pretending, there's no point in being troglodytes as Christians and pretending none of this has happened and I wish we could go back to the days before all these things because that isn't going to make any difference. It's just simply not right to think like that. We were made to be imaginative, we were made to solve problems, to steward our resources, to find solutions. As Image Bearers, we become Image Makers and we also seek to master the world that is our home, that God has given us, that is the creation mandate that we're called to master and subdue the universe, the world in which we live. And that's where that's the source of all engineering and all medical and sporting and artistic and agricultural developments and many more besides. We've seen before that technology is really about empowering us, making us more efficient, making us better at who we are, improving our techniques, whether it be in agriculture or whether it be in industry or in our workplaces or in our sport or whatever it might be. It's applying that science to life and making improvements and innovations and moulding our techniques so that things are easier for us. That's really what works about. It's about being creative and it's about doing something well. You see that all through the Old Testament and indeed the New Testament, maybe the Old Testament is better. The different giftings and skills that individuals are given, the design of the temple, the tabernacle, the different architecture, the machineries that was used, the tools, the musical instruments, all these things. They all point to technology and technological development and being creative image bearers of God. That's all very important for us.

As well as being, because we're made in the image of God, we are creative but we are also created. That is a significant reality for us as well. Ecclesiastes 3, 11 reminds us that God has put eternity into man's heart. We're not just technological beings. We're not simply machines, making machines. We are people who are created by God to worship God, to be in relationship with God, to have a loving relationship with Him, to serve Him and to serve other peoples. That is right at the beginning of the creation mandate for us. We are body, yes, we're mind, yes, with all the intelligence and all the imagination and all that goes with that, but we're also body and soul. We're made for more than just this material and physical world. We're made with ultimate purposes that include that which is not technological, love, righteousness, belonging, companionship, meaning, identity, our place in the universe. All of these things remind us not just that we are to be creators in the image of our Creator, but we ourselves are created by God to be in a spiritual relationship with Him and we recognize and see how important that is. Along with being created and being creators, we know the biblical truth which reminds us that we're also rebels. We're rebels against that order and that affects how we relate to God, obviously, separates us from

God, but also affects how we relate to technology and how we deal with technology. I'm going to read Psalm 20. There are Bibles at the back if you want to have it, but you can follow them. It's just a short Psalm and it's a Psalm of David, probably a Psalm of David when he was either going into war or had been in war and been successful. To the choir master, it is a Psalm of David. May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble, may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion. May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices.

[8:51] May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all of your plans. May we shout for joy over your salvation and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions. Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed. He will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. O Lord save the king. May he answer us when we call. So we see and we recognize in this Psalm a little bit of the tension between the fact that we are gods, we've rebelled against God and the two different directions that take. That takes because of sin and because the reality of sin, we use creativity and we use technology to substitute for what only a relationship with God can give us or we use technology to usurp God's place and God's

Lordship in our lives. So it's the misplaced creation of a godless world which abandons the Creator himself in their own creativity and that is disastrous because what happens is we become a world of little gods and it's an ugly world that we've ended up living in, isn't it? We know and recognize that as the result of sin and harass, but it isn't. It's this world of little gods of creative beings, of technological monsters is in some ways an increasingly spiraling downwards ugly world. This world without God get me out of here.

It's far worse than the jungle and that's the tension that's revealed in this Psalm because there's a reality of war and division and separation and the use of technology in that and also a recognition of what is the right use of technology and what is the wrong use because David in this Psalm as the king, as the warrior king of his people is clearly and rightly looking to God in his distress for victory and for help. You see he's going to the right place to find what he needs. He's going to the Lord who has already been his rescuer and he recognizes the Lord's protection and help verse 2 that the one who will bless him is the Lord blessing his plans and blessing his heart and his desires verse 4. He's the one who will bring victory verse 5 and who is his saviour verse 6. We see all of these things in the Psalm so that as David is going to war he's recognizing ultimately where his hope and his help is coming from and who in whom he must trust. It's not saying he is not taking any warcraft with him, any technological advances that might help him in that warfare.

We know in the past that he was a skillful sniper and using only stones and a sling against much more technologically advanced weapons but he went on to become a great warrior king in battle but he knows that that is not where his reliance must be in the technological abilities and weaponry of his people and he recognizes where the problem is, where he speaks about those who trust in chariots and in horses but they are the ones, Jesus God David and his people are the ones who trust in the name of the Lord our God and these chariots and horses that he's speaking about of the enemy were absolutely the most powerful war technology of the ancient Near East. Possibly the chariots kind of modern day equivalent of a tank or something like that but they were very powerful and these war weaponry gave nations great power and they rested on and they leaned on that military strength and we saw quite often the Israelites trying to do the same thing, not relying on God but relying on their own wisdom, their own creativity, their own strength, their own warfare and their own inventiveness and technology as it was in these days and we see that that throughout history as nations and kings and rulers rely on all their own technological advances and their own power and their own wealth it leads to domination and influence but ultimately to destruction.

So that Old Testament Sam with that old vision of technology and that old picture of the difference between what we trust in and whom we trust in and how we should think of our lives as those who are created in God's image brings us right up to the modern day, recognizing that the modern world in which we live that it was you and I live it really worships technology now. Technological advances what many people put their hope in and their trust in if not explicitly at least sometimes implicitly and we're living in age and you young people are living in an age unlike any other because this exponential growth of technology now is developing far faster than it has in the last thousand years. Frighteningly so if you do if you did get the book that we've been using that I've got a basing our thoughts on it's quite a scary book it's quite a really interesting fascinating book for the chapter that I read for this chapter three had quite scary revelations about the development of technology and scientists particularly may be the new priests of this world religion and many people's hopes when you think of feeding the world or when you think of climate change or any of these huge issues that we see the hope is in science the hope is in humanity in ourselves to make the difference in technology and in advances the evolution of ideas and answers and technology been harnessed to such a degree obviously that God is just thrown out the window no need for God now that's just for the simple people who needed someone something to rest on when the technological advances were not in place and we see that technological focus bearing or feeding into some of our kind of sinful impulses certainly for control you know the more technology advances the more control it gives us we want to be the nations want to be in control of their own destiny they want to be not just in control of destiny makers we live in a world which wants to be sovereign over its own destiny to control the future to control our health to control aging to increasingly control other people's behavior and other people's thoughts we see that happening more and more when you think of how much your own iPhone is listening to you and responding to you and advertising to you and controlling where you think and what you want to do little gods we want to be gods in control using technology as the means of doing that we see it in medicine constantly seeking I will come at the there's positive things of course in all of this but

[17:10] I'm looking at in a sense where where tech is limited and is valuable for us but medicine we see that isn't the great search for eternal youth where increasingly medical advances are not just curative or the relief of suffering but augmentative to make us better stronger more amazing people to help us to live longer the the technology of genetics is an astonishing field very interesting I'm sure and very challenging where there's this desire to resist the aging process turn it back completely eternal youth in the book we've been looking at there's a quote in chapter four chapter three I think is man aims to regenerate through genetically fabricated designer babies and eventually by ectogenetically wombless children purified from all disease defilement and defect so this this move towards perfection sinlessness and freedom from any kind of disease designer babies we've seen and hear it and know all about that and disembodied transhumanism we're moving towards that Gnostic idea of just the mind being able to exist just apart from the body eternally can you imagine can you imagine the awful hell of that of in our current situation not being allowed to die but living in an eternal state of spiritual or mental torture is all I can think of being so control is is is one of the ways that technology is being manipulated by humanity as is power of course the desire for power for inventions that create great amount of wealth and a great amount of power to give us independence see that in the military field increasingly we see it in the Ukraine at the moment where security and domination is is driven along further by high tech weaponry which allows conquering nations to happen even conquering space the prestige the meaning the influence the identity that comes from the new frontiers that we seek to be empowered over so I think it works in that way of the misuse of technology for us where we become the creator as it were our desire without God for control for power and indeed for glory the redemptive power of technology without the need for a redeemer without the need for a savior self redemption coming from all that we can invent all that we can do all that we can redefine gender redefinition technology enabling us to find our own identity and create that self identifying feeling which is the ultimate interestingly I think technology is what we're finding as we look at it technological advance is driving individualism and therefore isolation interestingly it's driving people more and more away from one another towards and complete independence and individuality which of course goes

directly against our created instinct which is that we are social beings made for God and made for one another so the paradox of so much of this is that humanity trusts in its own technology to bring meaning now our ability to stem global warming our ability to stop starvation and to stop wars and to create this evolving and glorious world and it trusts in itself to do that but the paradox is it also blames itself for it not happening humanity is the one that's being wasteful and being destructive and so there's this deep paradox even in humanity's own thinking where they're seeking technology to bring us utopia and yet they blame humanity for that utopic not happening so just to finish with a just what we're seeking to do I guess and this is to encourage you to have a thoughtful critique of the world in which we live and the technology that is an inevitable part of that much of it really positive and good and some of it and our attitude to it destructive so it's good to think about where technology is leading think about that it will it be as great as it claims to be moving forward is it bringing us what it claims to be bringing us or will it be like the great story in Terminator the rise of the machines well that is that is that the end that's going to happen how will God use technology to usher in the end of time we don't know but technologies do sell a vision we just remember that they sell satisfaction with many promises they sell the ability to have whatever we want it's quite interesting I think that the the more the the logo of apple is an apple with a bite out of it which maybe speaks back to Genesis chapter three and the desire to have what God that I don't know what the fault does anyone know what the Genesis of not the Genesis of it as in the Exodus of apple but why that was chosen as a more interesting a logo rather might be worth I should just try to find out that but it technology you know it promises to satisfy our our comforts doesn't it it's all about how often have you know my age of my kind of age or generation of people say you know we've got all these labor saving devices the washing machines and dishwashers and I don't know all that kind of stuff and oh we're busier than ever that's what we say because it's not really giving us any more time for one another or relaxing in many ways or at least sometimes it doesn't allow us so it's important to recognize that in God's in God's economy technology is a great servant we've got a lot of things to

Lord and to praise God and to give thanks for in technology but it is a terrible master and as Christians we do need to consider that whether technology masters us or whether we are servants of the living God one of the challenges is it kind of blinds us to eternity it blinds us to the reality of how short life is if it make it encourages us just to focus on the here and now all the time immediate satisfaction immediate pleasure and consumerist thinking it's worth asking the question and I'm only throwing I'm going to throw out some question before we finish some of which you might discuss at say group if you're there is society today better than the world of technology and I think I've said on the questions is the world we live in in 2022 better than the world of 1922 right you can act there's lots of debate in different ways about that of course it is in many ways much much better but are there ways in which it is not any better now than it was then it's easy for us I think to be not have nuance on these things to just be black and white it's also easy for us just to be thoughtless to be mindless to not consider that although these things are neutral morally technologies they are used in ways that are not neutral by those who use them what does tech achieve for community in Scotland today probably the suicide rate certainly among young men has never been higher isolation is a pandemic there's algorithmic division being brought about all the time as technology pushes us towards our inclinations and pushes us away from other inclinations all the time and from other people and does it inspire love or corruption what is important in your life and what's important in mine about our souls how do we feed and nourish and spend time on our created beauty of being in relationship with God what is it that we are practically trusting in even though we would never say spiritually we trust in technology how does it look in our day what does the division of our days look like in terms of commitment and time we spend in building relationships with others and with God or God and others and time we spend on our own on technology in different means where is this technological advance taking us is it to self destruction or to a new utopia and what is truly good in technology what is what and on what basis do we decide what is good in technology and there are lots and lots of tremendous things in terms of the advance of health comfort serving others the advancement of knowledge good outcomes fulfilling our creation mandate lots of good things I certainly I don't want to be a bad humbug person and I don't think I am but we do need to I think recognize the limitations of technology and then what you may look at more and say groups or maybe next time is how do we live in a technological city and a technological age how do we live and I'm just going to finish by reading

Jeremiah chapter 29 which I think is quite a significant passage in thinking about these things and speaking about the city and the city as a kind of hub of technological advance and technological focus in most places in the world the next chapter of the book speaks about the city I don't think I agree with some of the stuff in that chapter but it's very interesting nonetheless what he says and of course speaks about the technology and the technology and the technology and the technology and of course speaks about the tower of Babel and then he speaks about Babylon becoming the great anti-God technological advanced city of its day and then it relates that to Babylon at the end of time in Revelation and the destruction that Babylon speaks of everything as anti-God so there's some interesting parallels but in Jeremiah 29 where God speaks to the exiles who have been taken from the promised land are in exile in Babylon and the false prophets have said dad don't worry about it don't get don't don't don't be concerned you'll be out here in two years and you'll be back in the promised land and of course the Jeremiah says that that prophecy of peace and of freedom is false prophecy and so in verse 4 there's more to it but we'll just read verses 4 or 7 thus says the Lord of hosts this is what God said to the people in exile in very well known words to us thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel to all the exiles who might have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon build houses and live in them plant gardens and eat their produce take wives and have sons and daughters take wise for your sons and give your daughters in marriage that they may bear sons and daughters multiply there do not decrease but seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf for its welfare for you will find your welfare for thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you and do not listen to the dreams that they dream for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name I did not send them to clears the Lord and there's just that interesting provocative challenge from God about living in exile but praying for that city and seeking its good seeking its prosperity by living appropriately and following God and being light in a dark place and in the questions there's some other texts that maybe say something slightly from a different perspective to speak into so the limitations of technology I hope it's something that you think about it's something we almost think about the amount of time particularly that we use technology we can't avoid it we can't run away from it it's very much part of the world we live in but we need to make our servant and not be mastered by it because God is our King and Lord