

WORLD VIEW SERMON SERIES

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WORLDVIEW-CREATION

Genesis 1

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In January our denomination will be holding its biennial youth convention. Youth from Reformed churches all over Australia will be descending on the Forrest Edge Christian Youth Camp at Neerim East, north of Warragul. The theme is 'Wise', focusing on the wisdom of God for our lives. Now imagine one of our young people goes to the convention and is really inspired by the talks. She comes home on fire for Jesus and wants to commit her whole life to serving her Lord. What would that look like, to live her whole life dedicated to Jesus? Does it mean she will be going into some sort of mission work? Does it mean she is now going to be more moral at work? Does it mean she will now try and make disciples for Jesus, evangelizing at university? Well, it could mean all those things. But it also means that the work itself, would be done in a way that glorifies God. The theory behind the work practices, she would think about as well, so she does it as best she can from a Christian perspective.

How is she going to be able to do that? Well, to start with she will need to understand what we talked about last week, namely worldviews. A worldview is a set of beliefs that is the basis for how we view reality. It is what we assume about how everything came into being, what it means to be human, how we decide what is right or wrong. As Hebrews 11: 3 says, "By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command". John Calvin said the Bible provides us with a set of glasses with which to look at the world. These glasses that help us test the ideas behind the theory and practice of work, or science or politics etc. A simple test to work out a person's worldview is to ask four questions: Where am I? Who am I? What is wrong? What is the answer? The worldview we get from the Bible can be summed up under the headings: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration. Everything in life, everything we think and do, should be assessed through that grid. To truly understand life and its meaning we must see that we live in a world created by God. It's a world that is fallen in sin, but a world that is still full of hope because God has brought the way of redemption. And one day he will restore the creation where sin and suffering will be gone.

Today we will look at the first heading of Creation. It answers the worldview question: Where am I? We start there because the Bible does. Genesis 1:1 opens with that grand statement "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..." So, "In the beginning God..." He is the cause of everything. There is nothing in life that does not link back to God. I have a son who as an inquisitive child wanted to know the reason for all sorts of things. Why is the sky blue? Why is grass green? After all my scientific explanations he would ask again: why? When I was at the end of my explanations I would say 'Because God made it so?' Then he would still go on 'Who made God?' I said 'No one. God just is and always was'. "In the beginning God..." You know you have reached your worldview belief when you can't go any further. So, the Biblical worldview starts, not with Jesus or salvation but with the creation. The whole point of Jesus' death and resurrection is not just to save 'souls'. It is to restore the creation. The New Testament has no context without the Old Testament. To understand redemption, we must first know ourselves as creatures of God who have rebelled against him. Without an understanding of God and creation there is no concept of sin and no conceivable need for Jesus. We have no gospel to preach.

Now as we look at this opening chapter of the Bible, we notice a pattern for all our living. We notice in this grand opening a recurring chorus in the creation song. "God said 'Let there be... and it was so... And God saw that it was good.'" We have here a picture of God's command and the creation's response. This is what I mean about a pattern for living. Just as we are all called to respond to the Word of God and obey and praise God, so the whole of creation does. Creation obeys God: "...and it was so...". And it praises God: "...it was good" The Bible never talks of the universe or nature in the abstract. They are always seen in relation to God. Creation always speaks in praise of the creator. Psalm 19:1&2 "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands, day after day they pour forth speech... their voice goes to the ends of the earth..." Psalm 148:3ff: "Praise him, sun and moon, praise him all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created".

So, what we find is that creation is not just chance happening, a chaotic evolving. Creation is an orderly universe structured by the creative word of God. It is God's word, his commands, his laws that determine the structure of everything. All that exists is there by the creative word of God and remains by that same word of God. Genesis 8 shows God as a covenant making God. He makes promises and keeps them. God promised (Genesis 8:21&22) "...never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease". Why is the whole universe stable? Why is there

always night followed by a new morning? Because of some unchangeable laws of physics in the universe? No, because God is faithful. God is unchanging. God is dependable. Therefore, the universe is stable. God is never absent from his creation.

The Biblical worldview is theistic not deistic. The deist says God is like a watchmaker, who makes a magnificent watch which he winds up and leaves to run all by itself. The watch never falters from its built-in mechanism. The theistic view says God is distinct from and way above his creation, but he is always with it. The seasons faithfully come and go, the earth spins and goes around the sun because God is faithful. His creative word holds it all in place. The rainbow is the sign, the guarantee of his promise. With this understanding of creation, with this worldview, we can accept it when the Bible says the "...sun stood still" in the battle Joshua led, for God commanded it to be so. For about a day he changed his commanding word on how the sun and earth relate. Deists, and atheists would say it is totally impossible. That's because their worldview says 'There are laws of nature that cannot be broken. Miracles cannot happen'. But Christians know that God is staggeringly Almighty. The entire universe, with all its mind-boggling numbers and distances, is but the obedient response of the creation to the creative and maintaining word of God.

Therefore, when we in our science uncover how things work, we are not just discovering 'natural laws'. We are discovering God's creative word. We are following the Father into his world. We are thinking his creative thoughts after him. The study of science and mathematics, the enjoyment of nature or the developing of our culture, are responses to God's creative word, and are seen and done as acts of worship.

That's the Biblical answer to the 'Where am I?' question. Now the 'Who am I?' question. When we look at ourselves in this world, we find that the Bible makes clear that we too are created by the word of God. Genesis 1: 27 "So God created mankind... male and female he created them." So, like the rest of creation we are totally dependent on God and his word for our existence and our daily provision. As Psalm 104 puts it so clearly, :19ff "The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the field prowl. The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. Then people go out to work, to labour until evening.... These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth." Like the heavens declare God's glory (Psalm 104: 1,2) and the winds do his

bidding (Psalm 104:3&4), so we too are creatures of God. We are his servants, completely dependent on God for our lives and daily provision. Like the rest of creation, we were made to obey, to do God's bidding; to declare God's glory. It is when we do that we are truly alive. Obeying God is not a hindrance, it is true freedom. In obeying God, we find our true purpose and meaning. And yet we are also different from the wind and the plants and the animals. We are creatures like the rest, but also unique. We are made in God's own image. Note Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...". Being made in God's image means that we have attributes like God; in a very limited way, of course. We can think and love. We are able to make choices and respond of our own accord. The rest of creation obeys out of their very nature, out of how God has structured them, by instinct. But we are called to obey and worship God, to respond to him by our own free will, out of love. Like God, we too can imagine a thing before it's there. We can design, plan, and be creative. We are able to be righteous, to know God, and know good from evil. But these things are given for a reason. And that is to rule over the creation. Note again Genesis 1:26 "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind 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.'" God is the Almighty King. We bear the King's image. We are his visible presence in the creation. We are called to rule over the earth on God's behalf. We are God's stewards. Nothing on this earth is ours, as if we were the sole masters. The creation, and all living things are God's. And we are called to look after it on God's behalf.

As human beings we have been given a mandate, often called the 'cultural mandate' which we find in Genesis 1:28 "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.'" 'Fill the earth and subdue it'. That does not mean we conquer and abuse, rape and plunder. That is the devastating effect of the Fall into sin. In Genesis 2:15 we are told that "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it". Our task as human beings is to care for the creation. And we are called to "work it...", to develop it. The cultural mandate implies God did not intend for us to just keep everything as it was. Our task is to discover the potential in creation, to discover what God had placed in the creation and to develop it. This implies that creation has a built-in eschatology. It is going somewhere. Sin did not introduce change. Sin has taken change and development in very wrong and dreadfully distorted ways. But change and development would have come any way. As God built in potential in creation, so we, in his image were called to develop it. We see in Revelation 21&22 with the new heavens and new earth, that instead of a garden, there is a city. We do not just go back to

paradise. Human beings have been given the mandate to develop the creation. And what we develop in Jesus' name goes to the new earth says Revelation 22.

Now the full Christian worldview involves all the themes, Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration. But what can we say so far about the fact that all creation is an obedient response to God's sovereign word? How does that effect how we live and go about our work? Well, we are creatures in God's image. Therefore, we will never find our true selves until we find God. As John Calvin said to 'know yourself you must know God'. We will never find true happiness just with material possessions. These things are not ultimate – God is. Further, all human beings are created in God's image. Therefore, we must treat each other with dignity and respect. To touch another person, to abuse another is to touch, to abuse, God. And when we do our work, the things we put our hands to, the issues we consider, they are all part of God's creation, part of the obedient response to God's word. So, we need to ask ourselves 'Is what we are doing in our work, in our leisure, a faithful response to God? Is it good for the creation? Is it good for fellow human beings, good for ourselves? Is it good and worshipful of God? As we study, as we research, are we thinking God's thoughts after him? Are we conscious of working with God's creation? Or are we simply doing a task to earn the money with little thought to our roles as stewards of the creation? Do we just accept the theories we are taught at university without asking if those theories recognize God and his presence?

This is the beginning of the Christian worldview. It's a belief system that believes all began good and leads to hope. Ask your non-Christian friend what their worldview says about Where am I? and Who am I? Where does it lead? Hope or despair?