

Entrusted: Creation and Fall
Genesis 1
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1-19-14

Prayer: Let the good news come now, O Father, not only in Word, but in power and with great assurance, for we pray that your Holy Spirit which hovered over creation, separating light from dark, water from land, and intricately formed each living creature, would be the same Spirit that would draw us into a deep and abiding trust in you. We pray that as we open your Word and start in the beginning, that these words would be for us a new beginning as well. For we pray this not in our own power, but in the strong name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who is one and was with you and the Holy Spirit in the beginning. Amen.

I invite you to remain standing with me, and this week instead of looking up at the screen I want to invite you to grab a copy of Scripture we've provided for you and turn to a very easy passage to find. Turn to Genesis 1 (Genesis literally means what is said in the opening words of the Bible, "In the beginning.") This week, we launch into our 15-week journey from cover to cover of this book and we start in the beginning, looking at the first 5 verses of Genesis 1. But this morning, we are going to keep the first three chapters in mind as we read. I invite you to read with me the first five verses of Genesis 1.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God. **The grass withers and the flower fades but the word of the Lord lasts forever.** Amen.

"In the beginning." These simple words are part of the fabric of the Christian faith. They describe something that astrophysicists and theologians have studied for a long time, how this all began. I spent time this week mulling over these words, and at one point I had to step away because my head was starting to hurt, not because there was too much noise, but because this very statement has an almost vacuous characteristic to it. We are surrounded by a lot of noise.

I wonder if some of you have seen the movie adaptation of Carl Sagan's book *Contact*. It begins with a breathtaking opening sequence in which we see our planet and we hear through radio frequencies all sorts of noise. But as the camera, which is the vantage point through which we see, moves back traveling past the moon and mars, Jupiter and Saturn and out into deep space, you begin to realize that you're actually going back in time.

Pretty soon, the noise begins to diminish and only a smattering of voices come through. You hear MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech, then Adolf Hitler speaking, then pretty soon nothing at all. Silence, as you move further and further out into space. Scientists who work with the Hubble Telescope will tell you that what you see as you look at the beautiful images it displays, as you look deeper and deeper into space, what you are in fact looking at is the past. And if we were able to look back 13 billion years, scientists say, what we would hear is a very loud noise.

But what the Bible tells us we would hear is a simple phrase: "Let there be light." Just one voice, the Word of God, speaking into emptiness, darkness and chaos, "Let there be light." Then with each successive act of creation, God says, "It is good."

This is how the Bible begins: simply, with one lone voice speaking into nothingness, into blackness, into chaos, and then declaring it to be good. It doesn't take much for us to be able to relate to the notion that life is incredibly noisy, with everything vying for our attention. Our lives, life right now and down the line, can look incredibly chaotic. And so what I believe Genesis 1 teaches is that in order to understand and face the chaos, the frustrations, the anticipations, the worries of our present, we need to look back to the beginning, to the simple clear voice of God that speaks into our lives.

Anyone who has ever had a strained relationship, which is all of us, needs to hear this simple clear voice. I wonder how many of you who've had young children know what it's like to be in a moment of great stress with kids, and find yourself pondering what life was like before. When the chaos of life mounts in our family, Amy and I, in order to reset and move forward, look back to the Genesis of our marriage—our wedding vows. These simple words we wrote to one another have provided for us time and again hope and a sense of grounding in the midst of chaos.

What we find in Genesis 1 are the words that help us look back to the past, in order to move forward in Hope.

In the verses and chapters that follow, Genesis tells us that God unfolds creation as one who gets up each morning and goes into the workshop, creating and forming, separating and delineating.

But this is just one narrative of creation; how do we know God did it this way? Who was there to record these words? Who was there to see it? It's possible that God himself chose to blog about this. Paul Simms of the New Yorker recorded what it might have been like if God blogged about creation.

Update: Pretty pleased with what I've come up with in just six days. Going to take tomorrow off. Feel free to check out what I've done so far. Suggestions and criticism (constructive, please!) more than welcome. God out.

Not sure who this is for. Seems like a fix for a problem that didn't exist. Liked it better when the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of

the deep.

Going carbon-based for the life-forms seems a tad obvious, no?

The creeping things that creepeth over the earth are gross.

Not enough action. Needs more conflict. Maybe put in a whole bunch more people, limit the resources, and see if we can get some fights going. Give them different skin colors so they can tell each other apart.

Amoebas are too small to see. They should be at least the size of a plum.

I liked the old commenting format better, when you could get automatic alerts when someone replied to your comment. This new way, you have to click through three or four pages to see new comments, and they're not even organized by threads. Until this is fixed, I'm afraid I won't be checking in on Your creation.

Unfocussed. Seems like a mishmash at best. You've got creatures that can speak but aren't smart (parrots). Then, You've got creatures that are smart but can't speak (dolphins, dogs, houseflies). Then, You've got man, who is smart and can speak but who can't fly, breathe underwater, or unhinge his jaws to swallow large prey in one gulp. If it's supposed to be chaos, then mission accomplished. But it seems more like laziness and bad planning.

Wow. Just wow. I don't even know where to start. So the man and his buddy the rib-thing have dominion over everything. They're going to get pretty unbearable really fast. What You need to do is make them think that there were other, bigger, scarier creatures around a long time before them. I suggest dinosaurs. No need to actually create dinosaurs—just create some weird-ass dinosaur bones and skeletons and bury them in random locations. Man will dig them up eventually and think, What the?

Epic fail.

Well it's a noisy world, but thankfully God didn't advertise his creation on a blog. But who was there in the beginning? Scholars tell us we don't really know who wrote Genesis 1, but what I think is that the writer of Genesis 1 is someone who is discouraged in the middle of life, and so they find hope for the end by looking back to in the beginning.

Genesis is situated in a grouping of books called the Pentateuch—5 books we call the Books of Moses. If you are familiar with the Bible, or if you are very new, the Bible is a book in two parts: there's the New Testament and the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is broken up into three parts: the law, the prophets, and the writings.

The Law or Pentateuch is five books.

Zoom in on the first of those books, Genesis, and you find that it's broken into two parts, the Prologue, chapters 1-11, and the Patriarchs, chapters 12-50.

Zoom in on the prologue where we are today and you'll find it broken into two parts: before the fall and after the fall.

Bible Outline

- I. Old Testament
 - a. Law (Pentateuch)
 - i. Genesis
 - 1. Prologue (chapters 1-11)
 - a. Before the Fall
 - b. After the Fall
 - 2. Patriarchs (chapters 12-50)
 - ii. Exodus
 - iii. Leviticus
 - iv. Numbers
 - v. Deuteronomy
 - b. Prophets
 - c. Writings
- II. New Testament

where we are today

Here is everything before the Fall, the Garden of Eden, paradise...all the rest of this is just God's recovery plan.

In the beginning, God created a wonderful Garden with all sorts of good fruit, and freely gave it to the man and the woman God formed to enjoy and share with God. And so every time they ate the fruit that was given to them, they were expressing thanks to the one who gave it to them. They were enjoying it for the purpose for which it was created, gratitude. Gratitude is one of the most important characteristics someone can embody.

But, of course, you probably know how the story continues. "All of this I give to you, but there is one tree you're not to take. One tree that's Mine." Adam and Eve were given almost everything; all they had to do was just receive it. But when they ate the fruit that was not freely given to them, they were desiring it for its own purposes, rather than simply receiving it as a gift. Alienation takes place, the perfect order was disrupted.

Author Craig Barnes points out, "Do you notice where the forbidden tree is situated?" Right in the middle of the garden. We're given all this good fruit, and the one we're forbidden isn't situated off in some corner of the garden, it's right in the middle. Adam and Eve can't ignore it. They walk past it every day. And every day, they are reminded that there is a hole in our lives, we can't have everything—and this is paradise.

But why? Why are they reminded of the hole, why do they have to see that darned lemon tree every day? It's not to remind them of what they don't have, but what they *do* have. You see, we were not created to have everything, and when we recognize the things in life we don't have, it's here where God is inviting us to see and give thanks for what we do have. I don't know if there is a supreme spiritual gift, but if there is--I'd go with gratitude.

The person who wrote Genesis 1 is someone who lived after the Fall. We live East of Eden, we live somewhere in the middle. In the middle of having more than enough, and having not nearly enough; in the middle of the pain of childbirth, or toil by the sweat of one's brow; in the middle of life with a domineering husband, or perhaps in the middle of life with no husband or wife at all. The person who wrote this is someone who struggled with relational conflict, someone who struggled with having too much bread or perhaps not enough bread. The person who wrote Genesis 1 is living East of Eden, in a fallen world. And in that very real sense, we know what the person who wrote this has experienced, because we too live East of Eden.

So how are we to live as people East of Eden? I want to suggest two ways: First, as people who see creation as doxology, who live lives that are marked by gratitude above all.

[CS Lewis *Narnia* Creation]

Secondly, as people who have faith that God is in the business of restoring the world. God has one more move. With God, we always have one more move. With Jesus Christ, God always has one more move. We are never without hope, because God has one more move.