



2024 Weekly Devotions

Week of: January 8th - 14th

Sermon: January 7th



January 8

Revelation 4:9-11; Acts 17:24-28

The book of Genesis, which simply means the beginning, starts with these words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). It is no wonder that atheist and secularist attack the Christian doctrine of creation, because if you can do away with creation as we understand it, you do away with the Creator. It is imperative that we maintain confidence and our stance that God is Creator and thus Ruler of all. Because of the fact that He created, He therefore has the right to rule. Rebellious and sinful mankind does not like that truth and thus works hard to get rid of Him.

It is important as we begin our journey through the book of Genesis this year that we remember a statement that Pastor Aaron made prior to his sermon on December 31st. He highlighted the fact that our approach to preaching through Genesis throughout 2024 is to make much of and bring clarity to the beautiful thread of God’s plan of redemption that undergirds the entire book of Genesis and dare I say, history itself. This will not be an exhaustive or deep dive into every feasible knot that we could spend countless weeks untying and illuminating. Rather, our goal will be to show how God set out to redeem a people for Himself from the beginning – for His glory.

It is important to understand that God created the world not out of necessity but purpose. The final reason for creation was **His** ultimate glory and our well-being. I read recently in a book this statement published by a large church in California in 1978: “God doesn’t do things just for kicks He must have felt, in some sense, a need of being loved. Do you think it is fair to conclude that God “needs” us? I think so.” That is a boat load of heretical foolishness. Nothing could be farther from the truth pertaining to the reason why God created. In Acts 17:24-25 it says, “The God who made the world and all things in it...nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything.” God does not need anything and certainly He does not need to be loved by us since there is already perfect unity and “love” within the Godhead.

John wrote in the fourth chapter of Revelation, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created” (4:11). The Bible tells us that it was by His Word, His speech that all things were created. It was created simply because He wanted it to be. Three times in Genesis 1, God said, “Let there be...” and there was. Scholars call this “divine imperative” or “fiat.” It was the power of His Word that brought things into being. I find tremendous peace and hope in this one truth: By His word and His sovereign will, He makes things happen by decree. That means He can speak and bring events to be in our lives too.

Beloved, think for a moment what it means that Jesus Christ was able to calm the wind and the waves in Mark 4:39. Even His disciples asked the question, “Who can do this?” You see, they were already realizing the answer was only God, which meant that this Jesus must be divine. Like the Godhead in Genesis 1, Jesus Christ, a part of the Godhead, has the divine imperative to speak into existence that which is not. Paul wrote in Romans 4:17, “...who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.” He called Lazarus from the grave by decree. He simply willed it and spoke it and Lazarus breathed again. Our God can calm the sea, He can bring the dead to life, and He can draw people unto Himself for salvation simply by His will. In the beginning God created, and He still does. Join in with the worshippers of Revelation 4:9-11 with praise for our great God and Creator.

January 9

Isaiah 43:7

A Latin phrase exists that was first coined by Augustine – “*ex nihilo*.” It means “out of nothing.” It is understood that God created the world *ex nihilo*. In other words, other than the Trinity, nothing existed when God decided to create. Unlike the masterful artist Michelangelo, God began with no substances or materials. An artist like the great Michelangelo created beautiful pieces of art, but he always had something to start with. He said in relation to his sculptures, “The statue existed within the stone, I simply released it from its stone prison.” The point is that he created amazing art work, but he started with materials that already existed. God did not! God literally brought something from nothing and no one else can do that! God did not take preexisting matter and reshape it into the world as we know it. His creativity is unmatched by any artist who ever lived.

Some propose today that the universe was created by a big bang. They call this the “Big Bang Theory.” The theory proposes that if you go back far enough (billions of years), you will come to a point where all matter and energy was compacted into one miniscule, condensed point of singularity. “When atoms are compacted in one tiny point until there is no space left, leaving just mass and energy, it is called a singularity.” The Big Bang Theory teaches that a compact singularity, for no apparent reason, blew up and all the universe was created. If scientists who hold this view were honest, they would have to deal with what they know to be called the law of inertia. This simply means that an object at rest will stay at rest unless an outside force acts upon it.

As Bible-believing Christians, we believe that God was the Being that moved first. Unlike secularists who hold to an impersonal, accidental beginning, we believe that God, by His own will and decree, spoke creation into existence and therefore, there is a clear beginning to it all, there is a God who did it, and there is indeed a creation that was purposeful with design. Luke wrote, “In Him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:28).

We will look at this more this week, but dear ones it is important that we hold to the fact that God created. You see, the Bible says that God created us in His own image. The point of an image is to image or reflect that which it represents. We were created to display the “original” and to glorify Him by submitting our lives to our Creator’s will. Isaiah wrote, “...everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made” (Isa. 43:7). The angels declared in Isaiah 6:3 that “the whole earth is full of His glory.” That is in part true because we, as image bearers, live in the world for that purpose as does all of creation (PS. 19:1). If God did not create as we are told in Genesis 1, then all of this falls apart.

Let me close today by saying that we don’t have to make God glorious, He already is. A plain room can be made beautiful with decor and an eye for design. God does not need to be made glorious. We glorify God by seeing it, savoring it, and showing it through our worship and adoration which should be connected to obedience and submission to His will. We magnify His glory like a telescope not a microscope. A telescope takes that which is transcendent and huge and provides a means for us to see it as it actually is. Microscopes make small things look bigger. We don’t need to do that with God.

January 10

Genesis 1:2-4

Our hope as we preach fifty sermons from the book of Genesis this year will be to highlight the redemptive plan and acts of God in our salvation. Our goal is to make much of our great God and to lead each of you into worship. We hope that you will see the many parallels throughout Genesis with His salvific work through Christ on the cross. An easy example will be to look at the ark in relation to the cross. In both events, God was making a way of salvation for all who would believe in His message and His means. You will be thrilled and excited as you see the "types" or "shadows" of the Old Testament fulfilled in the New Testament.

Today, I want us to consider the picture that is painted in God's creative work in the beginning that reflects beautifully the creative work in the heart of every person who is brought to life or born again. Before I go farther, I want you to know without reservation that I believe wholeheartedly in the actual 6, 24-hour days, of creation. (He rested on the 7th). I do not believe that the events Moses recorded for us in the book of Genesis are allegorical in nature. An allegory is simply a story made up to reveal a moral or point that is otherwise harder to see. John Bunyan's book *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory depicting a person's journey to salvation and ultimately heaven.

The creation story of Genesis 1 is actual events that took place in time and space. At the same time, there are allegorical type truths that are depicted and become instructive in relation to how a person is saved or "recreated." Consider what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where it says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Lessons can be learned about how God moves in a person's life to bring them to salvation. For example, in Genesis 1:2 the earth is described as formless and void with darkness upon it. One might see the parallel with the person who prior to salvation is considered spiritually dead and walking in darkness. The world was shrouded in darkness just like the soul of man before God decides to move upon them. When God decided to move upon the face of the earth, it was by His grace that He moved. There was nothing in the earth that merited His movement or favor. The same can be said of every person on which He decides to extend grace and mercy. In Genesis 1:2b it states, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the earth" just like He does when He begins to draw a soul unto Himself.

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:8 that the Spirit moves wherever it pleases like the wind. We do not understand how the Spirit suddenly "blows" across a person's life, but we know that He does. What we know is that until the Spirit of God moves upon the soul of a person, nothing is accomplished towards salvation. It was that way at creation, and it is that way in a person's recreation. Then in Genesis 1:3-4, we learn that God simply said, "Let there be light, and there was light." God had to but speak the word and the great wonder of creation was accomplished.

Surely you have noticed that light existed before the sun was created on the fourth day. That should not bother you one iota. God is not dependent upon His creation for anything. He is Himself Light. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:16 these beautiful words in reference to Jesus, "He who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light." Ezekiel speaks of the brilliant radiance surrounding Christ in heaven (Ezek. 1:26-28). So, God spoke light into existence, and He is the One who speaks "light" into the heart of an otherwise lost soul (2 Cor. 4:6). When God decides to recreate a person, He moves over their darkness and speaks light and life into them. Praise the Lord for His creative power, mercy, and grace.

January 11

Genesis 1:26-27, 9:6

The Bible teaches us that mankind did not evolve from a single cell amoeba that crawled out of some primordial ooze millions of years ago. It states that God created us. In fact, it says, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'...God created man(kind) in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:26-27). Obviously, it takes both male and female to complete what God had in mind for *man*. In other words, the entirety of mankind lies in both male and female.

We can determine from this passage that all three persons of the Trinity were present in creation. When God says, "Let *Us*" He is referring to the Son and the Spirit as well as Himself. He said, according to "Our" likeness we were formed. These are clearly plural words signifying more than one. Before I go any farther, we must view our image bearing assignment and reality in light of sin that has marred, and in many ways, hidden that image. The image has been marred not eliminated though. This is one of the main reasons why in Genesis 9:6 we are told that if a man murders another man, the murderer is to be killed by the proper authorities because he has taken the life of one created in the image of God. In other words, here you have the image of God functioning ethically and morally in Genesis 9 as a warrant for capital punishment even though all human beings have now become sinners. So being a sinner does not mean we have ceased to be in the image of God. The fact that we are created in the image of God is what gives dignity and value to human life.

I think it is important to understand in its most basic form, to be created in the image of God means to mirror or reflect Him and His attributes to the world around us. That is certainly why we were created in His image. It does not mean that God has a body like ours. Adam did not resemble God in the sense of God having flesh and blood. Scripture says that "God is spirit" (John 4:24) and therefore exists without a body.

Mentally, humanity was created as a rational, volitional agent. In other words, human beings can reason and choose. This is a reflection of God's intellect and freedom. We were endowed with the ability to create because God creates. Anytime someone invents something, writes a book, paints or sculpts, enjoys a symphony, performs math, or solves a problem, he or she is proclaiming the fact that we are made in God's image. We can do this by the way because of the fact that God keeps everything in perfect order so that we can learn our world through science and technology. There is stability, by His doing, so that we can study and learn patterns and truths in creation.

Morally, humanity was created in righteousness and perfect innocence, a reflection of God's holiness. God saw all He had made (humanity included) and called it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Our conscience or "moral compass" is a vestige of that original state. Whenever someone writes a law, withdraws from evil, praises good behavior, or feels guilty, he or she is confirming the fact that we are made in God's own image. We know right from wrong because it was written on our hearts by God. Socially, humanity was created for fellowship and community. This reflects God's triune nature and His love. In Eden, humanity's primary relationship was with God (Gen. 3:8) which implies fellowship with God. God made the first woman because "it is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Every time someone marries, makes a friend, hugs a child, or attends church, he or she is demonstrating the fact that we are made in the likeness of God – to enjoy community.

January 12

Acts 17:26

We learn from the Genesis account of creation that God created Adam and Eve and that all of humanity flowed from this pair and then from Noah's family after the flood. We are told that Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living (Gen. 3:20). After the flood, God said to Noah and his sons, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 9:1). The simple point that I want you to ponder today is the brotherhood of all humanity. The doctrine of creation and the descent of the entire human race from one original pair means that we are all related to one another. In a sense, each one of us is a distant cousin to everyone on earth. We are not totally unrelated. The negative side of this truth is that we all inherited Adam's sin nature as a result of our kinship. This means we are all rebellious and estranged from the Lord and each other until we are redeemed and made new.

The truth of our universal kinship, if fully understood, should produce concern and empathy for other humans. We have a tendency to feel more strongly the needs and pains of our close friends and relatives than strangers; understandably so. The pains and sufferings of people we don't know may not affect us all that much until we learn that someone we knew was involved in the accident or tragedy. The doctrine of the brotherhood of the whole human race tells us that all human beings are our relatives. We are not to see them as our rivals but as fellow human beings. We are one with others in the most basic sense – our origin. We should therefore be able to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Now, I know the emotions will not be as intense for people you have never met, but the understanding that we are connected should matter.

Paul wrote in Acts 17:26, "...and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth." From a biblical perspective, there is no basis for racism. God created all of mankind in His image. We are all descendants of Adam and Eve and are all part of the human race. You might ask how do we make sense of different skin tones, eye shapes, etc.? We know that all humans, after the flood, descended from Noah's three sons and their wives. After the incident that occurred in Babel (Gen. 11), it is scientifically verifiable that in just a few generations, varying combinations of genetic information could result in distinct people groups with superficial differences including skin color, eye colors and shapes, and other body characteristics. These differences are merely the result of various genes coming together to produce varying outcomes. It's the old biology charts depicting what would be produced between a blue-eyed boy and a brown eyed girl. What traits would be dominant and which ones would be recessive?

The sad reality of racism, prejudices, and even slavery resulted from sin and an abuse of God's word in some cases. To enslave another person based on their skin color was heinous and ungodly. It was a complete disregard for the fact that we are ALL created in the image of God and therefore have value and dignity. It was to fail to understand the brotherhood of all human beings. We are all one race and God sent His Son to die for the world not just one nation or one race. I hope that today you will understand that to hold racist attitudes and beliefs in your heart and mind is to disregard creation as it is revealed in the book of Genesis. To hate another person is an egregious sin in part because that person was created in the image of God just like you and me.

January 13

Matthew 6:25-33

The truth that I want you to ponder today is that God not only created the heavens and the earth and all that followed in the creation account of Genesis 1, but He also made sure that He provided for His creation. When Adam was placed in the garden of Eden with Eve, God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you" (Gen. 1:29). He even went on in the next verse to say that likewise, He has provided food for all the animals that He created as well. He declared His creation and care for it as "good." Our God is a good God who cares for us deeply. (For all of our meat-eating readers, do not fear. When you get to Genesis 9:3, praise God, meat is clearly put on the menu for our enjoyment).

My goal in this entry is that you might consider not worrying so much about things that God has already promised to provide for you. I would suggest that you spend a greater portion of your time not worrying about how you will make ends meet, but instead invest your time in dedicating yourself to fully yielding to Him in obedience and worship as a result of pursuing Him with your heart, mind, body, and strength. Your job is to trust and obey. His job is to provide for His children.

I am reminded today of what Jesus was teaching in His Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. In 6:25-33, our Lord utilizes several analogies meant to show us His deep and abiding love that is meant to eliminate, or at least, lessen our tendency to worry. He talks about how He provides shelter, "clothing", and food for plants and animals which reminds me of what I quoted above from the book of Genesis. He created and then promised to provide for His creation. In the Sermon on the Mount, He is literally doing the same thing. He summed it up by saying, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matt. 6:32). Our assignment, as I have already written, is to spend our energy and time "seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, knowing that all these things will be added unto us" (v. 33). Isn't it amazing that the same promises and conditions that were present in the Garden were still present on the Mount of Olives. He is the same God yesterday, today, and forever.

Dear ones, the very heart of our great God is love. He is just and He will punish sin as He will one day pour out His wrath on those who finally and ultimately reject their Creator, but that does not lessen the truth that He is perfect love. Paul reminded us that nothing will separate us from our Father's love and that He proved it emphatically by providing His own Son as our substitute for sin on the cross. Paul told the Philippians that they need not worry simply because the Lord is near (Phil. 4:5b). We see a beautiful, and albeit, hard to fathom picture of how He loves His chosen in the book of Hosea. In spite of their rebellion, idolatry, and adultery, He loves the remnant still.

God created because He wanted to share His goodness, His grace, and His wonderful attributes with us. Oh, I don't mean that He gave us His attributes that are now and will always be unique to Himself as God. There are incommunicable attributes that we will never possess as we will never be God or little gods. Having said that, it is still true that He wants us to experience His love being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit so that we will bask in His wonderful glory and majesty. He wants us to know Him so that we treasure Him and therefore glorify Him as His image bearers.

January 14

Psalm 33:6,9; Hebrews 1:10

When I consider the theory of evolution, I cannot help but wonder how anyone can actually believe that is true. Science does not support it, evidence does not support it, and experience does not support it. You can look around and realize experientially that things don't get better over time, they deteriorate. Look no further than your own body to realize that the law of entropy is alive and well. There are no fossil records of transitional intermediates either. That simply means that a fossil has never been discovered that shows evolution. You cannot find bones that show a fish that was becoming anything other than a fish. Now, I did not say there was not some forms of adaptation.

Adaptation can be thought of as how a person's skin may change over time to better handle exposure to the sun or extreme temperatures. The Shulamite woman of the Song of Solomon had become darker because of the sun (1:5-6). The body adapts but it does not evolve from a monkey to a man. If it was a monkey, it remains a monkey. What the fossil record does indicate is that creatures either appeared suddenly, as in creation, or they appeared to die suddenly, as in the flood. Evolution is just rebellious man's way of trying to deny the existence of an authoritative Creator who has the right to rule over them. Man does like being subject to anyone and so the only way around that is to deny creation, intelligent design, and the existence of a Creator.

Psalm 33:6 and 9 says, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host, for He spoke, and it was done, He command and it was established." That is the Psalmist's affirmation of the Genesis account of creation. God said let there be, and every time He said it, there was. He willed it and spoke it into existence. Psalm 148:5 says, "He spoke and they were created." This is where everything came from. It didn't exist before God willed it to exist. He spoke and it came into existence. That is the divine account of creation provided for us from God's Word. Hebrews 1:10 adds, "And You Lord in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of Your hands." Scripture continually affirms God as the creator, and He created simply by willing it and then speaking it into existence.

In the beginning God created everything, everything! Augustine wrote in his *Confession*, "For you created them from nothing, not from your own substance or from some matter not created by yourself or already in existence. But from matter which you created at one and the same time as the things that you made from it since there was no integral of time before you gave form to this formless matter." There was no pre-existing material. Nothing is in existence that God didn't create. John 1:3 says, "All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." There isn't anything that exists that God didn't create. That's a very clear scripture.

Go back to Genesis 1 for a moment, and I want to remind you of something that's very important. All creation began and ended in six days, clearly. There's no argument about it. Look at chapter 2:2, "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done." He created the entire universe out of nothing, from no pre-existing material, and He did it in six days. Then Hebrews 4:10 says, "For the one who has entered His rest has Himself also rested from His works." The Bible always views creation as completed and now He upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3).