

Creator And Creatures

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[0 : 00] We just finished our sermon series in the Gospel of John. Steve hopefully wrapped that up last week in my absence. I miss being with you guys. I'm glad to be back to be able to bring God's word to you.

We'll be going through the book of Genesis. We'll finish the book in the fall sometime, and just in time for the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

We'll probably have a different series lined up for that. And Genesis has 50 chapters. It's divided into three major sections. Chapters 1 to 11 are about the primeval history.

12 to 36 is about the patriarchs, the time of the patriarchs, starting with Abraham. And then 37 to 50 is about the times of Joseph. And this book is written not just to recount the beginning of the universe, but the beginning of God's redemptive history.

That's really its focus. of how God began this process of, through Israel, bringing about the Messiah, bringing about his redemptive plan to save and to bless all nations.

[1 : 07] But before we dive into it, we need to first address the elephant in the room. Because in the aftermath of the fundamentalist, kind of modernist controversy in the 20th century, where the fundamentalists were saying that, you know, where the modernists were arguing that some of these antiquated doctrines in scripture need to be modified or dismissed altogether.

And the fundamentalist dug their heels in and then fired back and said that those liberal elites in academia are conspiring to engage in a smear campaign of the Bible and Bible-believing Christians.

So because of this kind of conflict, now we're at a time where evolution kind of functions as a litmus test for Christian or scientific orthodoxy.

So if you believe it, then you're with them, the irreverent atheists. And if you deny it, then you're with them, right? The fundamentalistic ignoramuses, right?

So the unfortunate result of this is that every reader of Genesis 1 comes to the book with Darwin's Origin of Species in mind when the book that was written 3,500 years ago clearly did not have that at the forefront of its mind.

[2 : 22] So let me point out first that science and religion do not have to be. They're not necessarily mutually exclusive. Let me begin with that. A scientific explanation for something doesn't mean that there can't be religious or supernatural explanation for it.

I've used the example before of the analogy used by geologist Frank Rhodes when you asked the question, why is the kettle boiling? There's two proper answers to that question. The first answer is PV equals NRT, the laws of thermodynamics.

You apply energy to the matter and it heats up and then it comes to a boiling point. And another appropriate and legitimate answer is that someone just wanted to boil some tea, right?

Those are both correct answers. And this is why the Bible describes in Psalm 139 that he formed the inward parts and knits us together in the mother's womb, right?

God does that. But we also know scientifically of the process of fertilization, of embryogenesis. So those things should teach us that first of all principle.

[3 : 24] On principle, those two things are not mutually exclusive necessarily. And then secondly, I want to point out to you that evolution does not purport to explain the origin of life. Book of Genesis does, or origin of species doesn't.

It's called the origin of species for a reason. It's not called the origin of life. And Darwin readily admitted this, his profound ignorance of the subject in the book, by using the word created.

And because he used such terms, he was criticized by his peers, his academic peers, because they called it this. He said Darwin resorted to Pentateuchal terms.

Pentateuch is the first five books of the Bible. As the primordial form into which life was first breathed. And Darwin responded to his critics in this way in one of his papers.

Let us face the problem boldly. He who believes that organic beings have been produced during each geological period from dead matter must believe that the first being thus arose. There must have been a time when inorganic elements alone existed on our planet.

[4 : 28] Let any assumptions be made such as that the reeking atmosphere was charged with carbonic acid, nitrogenized compounds, phosphorus, and company. Now is there a fact or a shadow of a fact supporting the belief that these elements, without the presence of any organic compounds, and acted on only by known forces, could produce a living creature?

At present, it is to us a result absolutely inconceivable. Your reviewer sneers with justice at my use of the Pentateuchal terms of one primordial form into which life was first breathed.

In a purely scientific work, I ought perhaps not to have used such terms, but they well serve to confess that our ignorance is as profound on the origin of life as on the origin of force or matter.

With that said, I'm not saying that there's no point of tension between science and religion, and between creation and evolution, and we will see some of those as we go through this chapter.

However, it is important to note that they're not on principle necessarily mutually exclusive. With that said, what should be the proper posture of Christians towards scientific findings that seem to contradict Scripture?

[5 : 37] On the one hand, if I think we have both of these, and I could go one side or another as well. On the one hand, if your response to such findings, if your response is immediately embarrassment, apology, and a frantic exegetical acrobatics to explain away everything that's in the Bible, or to disbelieve the Bible altogether, then you need to grow in your faith, and you need to grow a backbone, right, and in your trust in God's Word as the inspired Word of God.

So 2 Timothy 3, 16, 17, It's sufficient for us, and it is all wholly inspired.

So if you have a flimsy, just nominal commitment to the authority of Scripture, then you're merely following the latest fads in pop science. Then the functional authority of your life is not God, but man.

And you're going to be tossed to and fro by the ways of changing doctrine in the world. Scientific discoveries don't happen in a vacuum. They are always influenced and sometimes motivated by the ever-changing spirit of the times.

And it takes decades, sometimes even centuries, to test and establish hypotheses. It took 1,500 years to overturn the Aristotelian geocentric model of the universe.

[6 : 56] On the other hand, if your response is to apparent contradictions between science and Scripture is fear, rigid opposition, and a frantic Google search to find every obscurantist fact to undermine the scientific findings, then you need to grow in your humility and develop some nimbleness.

Because God's Word is truth, and His Spirit is a spirit of truth, so we do not need to be apprehensive of honest investigations of the truth in all spheres of life.

And we need to remember that the divine inspiration of Scripture does not preclude human interpretation of Scripture. The Scripture itself is infallible, but that doesn't mean our interpretation of it is infallible.

So then we should be ready and willing to prayerfully search and research the Scriptures, to reexamine our interpretive traditions.

If not, we may become like the Pharisees whom Jesus indicted of making void the Word of God by their tradition that they have handed down. And I bring to mind also, recall how the Roman Catholic Church once condemned heliocentrism as a heresy that contradicts Scripture.

[8 : 21] It condemned Galileo Galilei, forced him to recant his views. And then in 1992, Pope John Paul II apologized and formally expressed regret for that finding. So then a proper posture as we encounter such contradictions is both unyielding theological convictions about the authority of Scripture and both also a humility about our own interpretation of it and a commitment to search and research the Scriptures with a judicious listening ear to the findings of science.

Now with that said, I don't mean to say that they're equal authorities. Scripture is the prior and more fundamental authority. And so it's not a circle where you keep going back and forth between two competing authorities.

Rather, what grounds us is Scripture and you dialogue back and forth with the goal that you spiral down to the true meaning of the text, what God's Word teaches in the end.

And far from being preoccupied with the age of the earth and the geological, chemical, and biological processes implied by God's creation, Moses is preoccupied with asserting a more foundational truth.

He's frying for a bigger fish with the book of Genesis. And that's this, that God is the sole creator and ruler of the heavens and the earth who appoints man to represent and resemble him on earth.

[9 : 43] That's the main point of Genesis 1. And we'll find out first about God's creation and rule, and then secondly about man's call to represent and resemble him. So God's creation and rule.

So Moses' first order of business is to establish the truth of God's creation and rule. So he begins in verse 1, perhaps the most famous passage in all of literature. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

In the beginning was not some primordial soup or inorganic ooze. In the beginning was God.

God is before all things. And the word and the context suggests absolute beginning, before anything existed, before time itself, from before eternity passed.

This is the beginning that God established. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And it says God created. In the Bible, the word here translated as created is never used of anyone else.

[10 : 47] No one else in the Bible creates. Only God is said to create in the Bible. And in this context, it implies not just any kind of creation. It implies unique, absolute creation.

Creation out of nothing. Right? So, of course, we also create things. We make things. We can rearrange matter.

We can make things react with each other. We can even clone matter. But we can't create out of nothing. That's a uniquely divine prerogative.

And here, God creates. And whether you believe that God created the world in six days or six ages or through the process of evolution, you have to reckon with the fact that it is God who created.

He is the author of creation. He is the designer. And as such, there is purpose, meaning. The world is not an accidental collocation of atoms.

[11 : 52] It was created by God, designed by him for a purpose. And what did God create? It says the heavens and the earth. The heaven denotes God's figurative abode, and earth denotes man's abode.

And this is a literary device called merism, where you refer to two ends of an extreme, two extremes, to refer to everything that's in between. So, for example, when we say young and old, we don't just mean young and old people, but we mean everyone, people of all ages.

So when he says heavens and the earth, he means God created everything. There's nothing that exists that was not created by God himself. In verse 2 and the following, he describes the details of his creation.

He says, 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 face of the waters. Now, this doesn't mean that earth and water existed before God's creative work.

Rather, this is the first stage of that creative work that verse 1 told us about. Without form and void, it sounds like what it means in Hebrew.

[13 : 03] It literally sounds like *tohu bohu*. It's like topsy-turvy. That's the kind of way we might translate it. It means that it was wasted and uninhabited.

Or we could call it uninhabitable and uninhabited. It's a chaotic wasteland at first, and then God subsequently imposes his will, his order on this earth.

And like a ray of sunlight pierces darkness, out of the darkness, God speaks in verses 3 to 5, 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. There was evening, and there was morning the first day. Now, we know, having gone through John, that scripture writers often use the metaphor of light and darkness to refer to spiritual light and darkness.

And so here, there's a distinct preference for light expressed, because God doesn't say that the darkness was good. He says the light was good. He separates the light from the darkness.

[14 : 09] Now, here in verse 3, verses 3 to 5, really, we find the standard kind of creation formula that you see over and over again, that repeat throughout the book, throughout the chapter 1.

So first, there's the announcement of God's speech, and it was really helpful to have Sarah and Will read that together, because you could really see those patterns. And the first is the announcement of God's speech.

God said. That's the first formula. And that occurs a total of 10 times, but if you count only his creative speech, it occurs 7 times.

And that's intentional. Secondly, there's the command itself, Let there be so and so. That occurs 8 times. But once again, if you count only his creative speech, and not the time when he says, talks, and says, Let us make God in his image, that's 7 times also.

Now, third, there's the fulfillment, and there was so and so. So God said, Let there be so, and now there was so and so, or and it was so. That occurs 7 times. And then there is, fourth, there's the observation or description of God's creative act, and God made something, something.

[15 : 18] That occurs 7 times. Fifth, there is God's delight, in his creation. God saw that it was good. That also occurs 7 times. And sixth, there is a subsequent naming or blessing.

God called it so and so, or God blessed them. That also occurs 7 times, as you can guess. And seventh part of the formula, there is an observation of the number of day.

The first day, the second day, and so on. And that also occurs 7 times. And usually, it's preceded by, and there was evening, and there was morning. There is an intentional symmetry at work here.

Right? The purposeful groupings of 7. Well, you might say, well, of course, there's going to be groups of 7, because the creation happens in 7 days. Well, that's actually not exactly what's going on, because there's only 6 days of creation.

There's some parts of the formula that's missing in other parts, but it's supplemented in other parts to make, still make, fulfill the number 7. So, seventh paradigm is intentional. And why does Moses, whom we believe is the author of the book, write it this way?

[16 : 30] Because, we know from Exodus 20, 8 to 11, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. 6 days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God, on it you shall not do any work.

And the reason given for it, for in 6 days the Lord made heavens and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day. You have to remember that the original intended audience of the book of Genesis, of course, is intended for us in the future as well, were the Israelites in the wilderness.

And so, this paradigm of 7 days of creation, or 6 days of creation, and 7th day of rest, is the paradigm, the pattern that the Israelites are invited to follow. So, these days represent God's working days, and the 7th day represents God's rest, day of rest.

He chooses this intentionally. And if you think about it, the 7, the week that we observe, the 7 days in the week, is very unusual, and it's very unnatural, actually, right?

It's, there's only cultures in the world that have a word, for the word week, are cultures that have had some contact with Christianity, with the book of Genesis. Like, a year makes sense, right?

[17 : 40] Astronomically, because that's how long it takes for the earth to make one orbit around the sun. A month makes sense, because it makes, it's, it refers to lunar cycle, the moon cycle.

A day makes sense, because it's how long the earth takes to rotate on its axis. All of these make sense, astronomically, except for a week. Why would we have a week? It doesn't make sense, astronomically, but because God intended, as a pattern for us, who work, to rest on the 7th day, that's why we have a week.

And that rest, also points to God's eternal rest, which he talks about in Hebrews 4. That God blessed the 7th day, and made it holy, because on it, God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

In fact, the Sabbath day, the 7th day, is the first thing in the Bible that is called holy. It's made holy. It's hallowed. So there's a God-ordained rhythm of work and rest, and there's a blessing and consecration promised to us in observing that.

Especially in our urban and career-driven context in Boston and Cambridge, and especially in the fast-paced culture of New England, the temptation to gloss over this and neglect it is formidable.

[18 : 51] But we neglect it to our detriment. And in flaunting it, his vision for order, his vision for rhythm and rest in our lives, we invite disorder and dysfunction to our lives.

So in light of these realities, if we're only asking ourselves, is it 7 literal 24-hour days, or 7 ages, or eons, how long did the creative process take place?

And we're missing the main literary point, the theological point of Genesis 1. I don't think that's the concern here.

And I think it's shown in several ways. Because if you take the days to be literal 24-hour days, first we have to make sense of why the sun is not created until the fourth day.

How do you account for days, the evening and morning, without the sun on the fourth day? I don't think that means that God didn't necessarily create it during that period of time, but I just don't think that's the concern of the book of Genesis.

[19 : 56] Or look ahead to chapter 2, verses 5 to 7, which says that there was no plant in the field because it had not rained, and there was no man to work the field.

Well, the plants were created on day 3, man was created on day 6, so how does this work out? If man had to be created for the plants to come about. Or if there were no plants when man was created.

So, what's the point then, that the author of Genesis is trying to make, if it's not about the age of the earth? If you examine the six days of creation more carefully, you notice a pattern.

The days 1, 2, 3 of creation correspond to days 4, 5, and 6 of creation, respectively. On the first day, God creates light and separates light from the darkness.

And then on the fourth day, God creates the luminaries, the sun, moon, and the stars, to populate the day and night that he created. On day 2, he creates the heavens by separating the waters from above, the waters above, the clouds, from the waters below, the seas.

[21 : 08] And then on the fifth day, the corresponding day, God creates the birds to populate the heavens above and fish to populate the oceans, the waters below. And on the third day, God creates dry land and vegetation.

And then on the corresponding sixth day, God creates land animals, classified into three categories, livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth, which refers to domestic animals and small creeping animals and wild animals.

And then as the culminating act of his creation, on the sixth day, he creates man to populate the dry land and consume the vegetation he created on the third day for food. So then the pattern is this.

On days 1, 2, 3, God forms habitats. And then days 4, 5, 6, God forms the inhabitants to occupy those habitats.

This pattern then witnesses to God's remedy of the formless void that was on earth in its initial state in verse 2. The earth was uninhabitable and uninhabited.

[22 : 11] And in the first three days, he makes it inhabitable and the next three days, he makes it inhabited. He first fills, I mean forms the earth and then he fills the earth. That's the pattern.

That's the theological point. That he's trying to make. And God does this in spectacular, ordered, and beautiful way. And what the book of Genesis has in mind are, are not what we have in mind when we come to the book.

He's thinking about the other ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, their origins of the universe, and what they taught about how the world came to be. So in Rival Cosmogonies, they wrote about sea monsters, dragons, and gods that the Canaanite gods have to conquer before they can create the world.

So the Babylonian epic, Enuma Elish, writes about the god of chaos and sea, Tiamat, wreaking havoc and reducing other gods to cowardice and submission. And then Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians, comes and takes charge of the gods, defeats Tiamat, and out of his carcass creates the heavens and the earth.

In Genesis, there is no such conflict. Instead, we see God alone in sovereign control. There's no contest to his authority.

[23 : 31] And God doesn't have to reuse the carcass of a god to create. He creates out of nothing. And even the sea creatures that these engineers and cultures feared is just another one of God's creatures, it says in Genesis 1.26.

The other engineers and cosmogonies also describe a struggle among the gods to separate the lower waters from the higher waters. You see no such struggle here. It happens by simple, divine fight.

He says, let the waters be separated and it's done. And other religions at the time worshiped the sun and moon.

And intentionally, the author of Genesis does not even deign to name them as sun and moon. He just says, greater light, the big light, and lesser light, small light.

That's what he calls them. These things you worship, God created them. They're just creatures. It's a pointed critique of the surrounding nations' idolatry.

[24 : 41] In Mesopotamia, also the seventh interval of the month was considered unlucky. But here, Genesis teaches, no, it's not unlucky.

It's consecrated for God. And finally, in the Babylonian tradition, the creation of man is an afterthought. Marduk creates the world from the carcass of Tiamat and then the other gods complain.

Like, what are you doing? You know how much work it's going to be to keep this up? Can you imagine that God's creating something and then being worried about being able to keep it up? Right? And then Marduk, this is his solution.

I will bring together blood from Tiamat to form bone. I will bring into being a lowly primitive creature whose name shall be man, on whom the toil of the gods will be laid that they may rest.

The creation of man is an afterthought. They're created to do, to bring food to the gods. That's their purpose. How radically different from the Bible's portrait of the creation of man.

[25 : 47] In Genesis, man is not an afterthought. Man is the pinnacle of all creation. And that brings us to our second point. Man's call to represent and resemble him. Verses 26 to 27 of chapter 1.

Read it with me. Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. So verse 27 is a piece of Hebrew poetry in this prose section.

It has three lines with identical meter and each line has the word create in it. And as I mentioned before, creating is something that only God does in the Bible. And it's used at strategic junctures throughout the first chapter of Genesis to refer to God's creation.

creation. First, in verse 1, it indicates God creating something out of nothing, right? So there's nothing in existence, but now there is existence. And in verse 21, God creates conscious beings, animals, which is separated, distinguished, from unconscious creation.

[26 : 59] And then finally, in verse 27, to distinguish humanity from the rest of creation, the word create is used three times, once in each line, to emphasize and highlight the special attention that God gives to a creation.

And now, this highlights both, this emphasis on the fact that man was created by God highlights both the creatureliness of man and the personhood of man, right? First, the creatureliness refers to our lowliness before God.

We're just creatures. We're not the creator. We're not the masters of our own fate. This is a sobering and humbling reality that we need to keep in our heads.

Psalms 8, 3 to 4, talks about this beautifully. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?

We are creatures, not autonomous, unaccountable masters of our own fate. God is the creator of the heavens and the earth and we are one of his creatures.

[28 : 06] And how small are we in light of the universe? Do we realize, live with the recognition of our relative insignificance before God?

The creatures are meant to do the creator's work. Right? Humans, when we make things, produce things, we don't worship them, do we? We don't serve the things that we make, do we?

That's why it's considered the height of ignorance that in the Bible, people craft gods in their own image, make things, and then bow down to them to worship them. As creatures, we ought to trust in God as our gracious and good creator.

His plan for us is good. Right? And remember that pattern throughout the book, the first chapter, God saw that it was good after each act of creation. And at the conclusion of it all, in verse 31, God says, Behold, he wants to showcase his work.

Behold, it was very good. Right? The goodness of creation suggests its quality and fitness for the purpose for which God created it, but also it reflects the goodness of God because the Bible describes that God, that goodness is a unique attribute of God.

[29 : 21] That's why Jesus says in Mark 10, 18, No one is good except God alone. So then the goodness of creation reflects the goodness of God, its creator. And that's connected to the fact that God also blesses all of his creation after he creates them.

The word bless and create are very similar. They both have three letters and the first two letters are identical. And when they're written right next to each other like this, it's very, it pops out at you and it suggests that when God creates something, he blesses it.

He gives, endows it with blessing. He does what is intense for its good. And his goodness is reflected in the orderliness of creation. Look at all the separations, right?

God separates life from darkness, the water, in the dry land. God separates things and orders things and this prepares the way for the rest of the Pentateuch where after sin we become disordered, the world becomes dysfunctional, right?

And God gives painstakingly detailed instructions throughout the rest of the Pentateuch to separate what is unclean from what is clean, what is profane from what is sacred in order to preserve the sense of orderliness of God's creation, that there is beauty and intention in God's plan for us.

[30 : 33] we live with the recognition that his design and purposes for us is good, for this world is very good. I don't know about you, but occasionally I have a stroke of genius and I try to jury-rig something for a purpose for which it was not originally designed.

And for me at least, the experiment invariably goes awry and I either break it or I can't use it for anything afterward. The original maker, right, the product designer knows best how the product ought to be used.

Perhaps you're more mechanically inclined than I am, but I can guarantee you that no one knows better than God the creator himself of what the design and purpose of this universe and of your life was supposed to be.

Do you aspire to fit into that plan for your life? Or are you ever flailing your arms in resistance, railing against God's plan for you, his design for your life?

When you find teaching in scripture that you find disagreeable with your spirit, are you striving to discover the goodness of it, the goodness of God's creation, or are you prone to assuming that you know better?

[32 : 06] We are creatures that belong to you and are accountable to our creator. And until we submit ourselves to his plan, we will never find rest and true fulfillment.

So this threefold repetition of the word create emphasizes our creatureliness, our relative lowliness as human beings, but it also emphasizes our personhood, that we are special creatures.

Verse 26, God says, let us make men in our image, after our likeness. Right? Verse 11 said that the vegetation, plants, and trees were created each according to its kind.

Verse 21 said that all the fish and the birds were created according to its kind. Verse 24 says the livestock, all the animals were created according to their kinds, but not so with humanity.

We're not created according to our own kinds. We're created in the image of God after his likeness. It is no wonder that man is the only creature with whom God deigns to speak in this passage.

[33 : 15] and to initiate a relationship with. Verses 28 to 39, it says, God said to them, he speaks to us personally, and he provides food for us personally.

We're creatures, but we're not merely creatures. We're persons created for relationship with God. And the words, image, and likeness are related.

When used together, they build on each other and convey the unique call of humanity on earth. The word image refers to representation. Something that stands for something.

In particular, Egyptian and Assyrian texts written around the same time as Genesis describe kings as the image of God. God. And they believe that the idols or images, statues of their gods placed in temples were indwelt by the gods themselves.

And this idea is behind the creation man in God's image. Humanity is endowed with rationality, morality, will, and aesthetic sensitivity, the ability to communicate and form fellowship, and all of this so that we can rule over creation as God's representative.

[34 : 30] We're supposed to represent him. And we too were intended to be eventually indwelt by the spirit of God. But even here, there's a polemic against other ancient Near Eastern philosophies and perspectives because Egyptians and Assyrians believed that only kings were made in God's image.

Only the rulers. But this, here, that philosophy pays away for human domination of others, one another. Exploitation of one another.

But according to God's word, every human being is created in the image of God and endowed with the capacity to represent God himself.

And the word man here is the same word as the word Adam, but because it's used with the definite article, we know that it's referring to humanity in general. And we know from the context because it says later, so God created man in his own image.

In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. Both genders are created in the image of God. And when he says man, it means he's referring to humanity in general.

[35 : 37] And the staggering implications of this truth, this idea was without precedent when it was first written. And to this day, it's without paralleling its ability to promote human flourishing.

From the least to the greatest, from the weakest to the strongest, from the least educated to the most educated, from the youngest to the oldest, from white to black, everyone is created in the image of God.

So we don't care if someone is the most powerful human being on earth or the most beautiful human being on earth or the wealthiest human being on earth, he or she still has no claim for superiority over any other man or woman.

And if you don't believe that we were created in God's image, then what is the foundation for your concept of social justice, for equality?

If the world really is just an accidental collocation of atoms, if there's no purpose, if there's no design in what God has done, then why not exploit, abuse, use other human beings for our advancement?

[37 : 11] Why not? What gives us the right to consume, harvest other animals for our consumption? What gives us the right to use animals to test for advancement of human medicine to care for humanity?

What gives us that right? Nothing does unless God created us in his image and gave us the commission to rule over the world. If it's a dog-eat-dog world, if might makes right, then you can't have social justice.

You have no basis for the equality and the community you seek unless God created us in his image. And in order to represent God well, we must resemble him.

So to this end, it says God created us in his likeness. Now, there's something amazing going on in here. Look carefully at verse 26. God says, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

But isn't there only one God? Isn't this before the creation of the world? So who is God addressing here? Some people think that God is talking to the heavenly court, that God created angels before this time, that he's now addressing the angels.

[38 : 36] Let us go create in our own image. But this runs into two insurmountable problems. First is Isaiah 40, 14, which teaches clearly that God did not consult with anyone else in his creation.

It says, whom did he consult and who made him understand? No one. And secondly, the verb create throughout this passage is used in the singular, not in the plural.

So there's only one creative agent. What then can this mean? Notice how God speaks everything into being in this passage. God said, and it was so.

God's word, unlike our words, is efficacious. And for us, you could say, let there be light, but nothing will happen unless you walk over and do something about it. For us, we have phrases like, walk the talk, because it's possible for us to walk one way and talk another.

But for God, this is impossible because every word that proceeds from his mouth is efficacious, it's effective, it's powerful. What he speaks comes into being. So he says, let there be light, and there is light.

[39 : 46] And you know why that's the case? It's because God's word is a person. It's the word of God, Jesus Christ, that John 1 talks about.

He says, the word was with God, and the word was God. And he was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything that was made.

And that's true. If you look at Genesis 1, there's nothing that is made without God's word, his speaking. So that's the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God.

And also recall how in verse 2, the Spirit of God is hovering over the face of the waters. The Spirit also means breath, the breath of God, the breath that carries the word of God.

And the word hover is avian language. It's a language that is used to describe a bird hovering in protection over the eggs that are about to hatch.

[40 : 46] That kind of hovering presence, getting ready for birth, new birth. And this word is used only one other time in the whole Bible, and it's used at the end of the Pentateuch.

So it's used here at the beginning of the Pentateuch, and at the end of the Pentateuch, in Deuteronomy 32, 10 to 11, where after delivering Israel from Egypt, it says of God here, that he found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness.

Again, the waste, wilderness, that sounds similar to the creation account. And then he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters or hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions.

So the Spirit of God is the manifestation of the presence of God that accompanies his people. He was there in creation, and he's there again in redemption. The triune God works together in all ways to bring about this world, and to bring about a new creation as well.

So the plurality that we find in let us make man our image, I think is best seen as a reference to the Trinity, which is kind of a veiled reference at this time, but becomes with the fuller sense that we are able to understand it when Jesus comes to reveal the Trinity to us.

[42 : 05] Three God, three persons in one God, three persons in one God, Trinity. Trinity. And there is in us and in all the world a profound, unshakable yearning to be, to fit into this creation, to represent him well, to resemble him, to be like him.

And renowned French philosopher and Jewish Christian Simone Vey writes about this unfulfilled longing with regard to creation. She says, at the present time, the beauty of the world is almost the only way by which we can allow God to penetrate us.

A sense of beauty, although mutilated, is present in all the preoccupations of secular life. The soul's natural inclination to love beauty is a trap God most frequently uses in order to win it.

And the beauty of the world is the cooperation of divine wisdom in creation. The beauty of the world is Christ's tender smile for us, coming through the matter. He is really present in the universal beauty.

The love we feel for the splendor of the heavens, the plains, the sea, and the mountains, for the silence of nature which is born in upon us its thousands of tiny sounds, for the breath of the wind or the warmth of the sun, this love of which every human being has at least an inkling, is an incomplete, painful love, because the beauty of the world makes us yearn for some universal beauty that does not seem to respond to us.

[43 : 36] we see the beauty and order in the world and long to be a part of it, to become one with it.

This is the basis for all the misguided practices of the new age movement, but we are incapable of it, because something about us and our relationship with creation and the rest of the world is fundamentally misplaced, because our relationship with God has become disoriented.

Yet there's hope for us. C.S. Lewis hints at this hope in his essay, Weight of Glory. At present, we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door.

We discern the freshness and purity of the morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see, but all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so.

Someday, God willing, we shall get in. There's another place in the Bible that begins with the famous word, in the beginning.

[44 : 44] It's John 1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of man.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. What is God's plan to bring us back into that relationship with him? It's through Jesus, his Word.

Genesis 2, at the end of it, it says, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the rest of them, and on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done, and he rested.

You know another place in the Bible where God says it is finished? finished. The end of the Gospel of John, chapter 19, verse 30, where Jesus is dying on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sins to satisfy the Father's wrath, and to make a way for us to once again fit into God's plan, to be redeemed again, and to be a part of that new creation.

And Jesus says it is finished. It's finished. And it's only through him, by believing that Jesus died and rose again for our salvation, to lead us to victory from sin and death, that we can be reconciled to our creator once again.

[46 : 09] We can fit into his creation plan once again. We can partake in the beauty, the harmony, and the order of the creation once again. I pray God draws you all to that beautiful, beautiful harmony.

Let's pray together. God, that is our prayer this morning.

Lord, we don't want to be just convinced rationally, logically, of your reality, and that you are the creator. That is a woefully inadequate way for us to know you.

And to love you. But we ask, not just cognitively, but that you would capture our imaginations. That you capture our loves. That you would draw us irresistibly with your beauty, with your love, so that we can be reconciled and be agents, your ambassadors, your representatives here on earth, to bring our neighbors, the rest of the world, back into the world, back into that relationship that you intended us for.

Help us now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.