

It's God's World
King Jesus, Pt. 2
Ch. 1 - The King Rejected
Genesis 1:26-31

Allan McCullough
Grace Hill Church
May 5, 2019



I. INTRODUCTION

a. Last week we began a new long sermon series called King Jesus...

i. ...where we are going to work through major themes from cover to cover of the Bible to discover what it really means to follow Jesus in this life.

- And last week we talked about the importance of the church being a non-anxious presence in an anxious world.
- That God has revealed to His people – the church – the story that every single human longs to know.
 1. Who are we?
 2. What is our purpose?
 3. Why is our world the way it is?
 4. Is this all there is?
- And because we know the story, we have hope and we have answers.
 1. We can be a non-anxious presence in an anxious world.
 2. We can love our neighbors with truth and hope.

ii. And the whole point of this sermon series is for us to do a comprehensive study of that story and be very clear and very bold as to how that story should impact the way that we live our lives.

b. So, this is what we are going to do.

i. Over the course of the two first chapters of this series as we study parts of the Old Testament and the Gospels...we are going to build a theology.



- What is theology? Theology is simply the study of God.
 1. I want all of us to form a simple, memorable theology of who God is and who we are through this series.
 2. Then, when we hit the third chapter of our series and begin to talk about what it means to follow Jesus today as the church...I want us to very specifically apply this theology to very specific areas of our life.
- For example, we might ask the question...
 1. As a Christian, how should I view friendships, money, sexuality, work, marriage, singleness, mental illness, politics, whatever it is...think of any specific topic.
 2. And what we are going to do is grab the theology that we formed together and apply it to that topic.
 3. And then get a simple and clear answer about how our theology...what we believe about God...impacts the way we live.
- Because this series would be pointless and theology is pointless if we all gain knowledge but have no idea how it should inform and change the way we live our lives.

c. So, this morning, we start at the very beginning of the story.

- i. And here is what I want every single one of us to take away from what we are going to talk about today...here is the first statement that we are going to insert into the theology that we are building.



- *In love, God created me to not be the center of my story.* (Repeat Together)
 1. Because God loves you, he intentionally created you to not be the lead actor in your own story.
- If there is a statement that our culture today would categorically and philosophically reject it would be that.
 1. We live in a culture today that says that your pathway to a better life and to more joy is found in yourself.
 2. Mark Sayers says that our culture preaches to us that: *"The great quest of life is to discover who you really are - to ignore what those around you say, break past the barriers and definitions and rules placed around you, and flout any external authority. To look inside, find your true self, and self-create."*
 3. And anyone who would even suggest that that kind of potential does not exist in you is hateful, ignorant, and a contagion to be eradicated from society.
- And at Grace Hill, we have an unapologetic vision to be a church where all people can find joy in Jesus because we believe that your joy is found in Jesus not in yourself.
 1. And in love, God created you to not be the center of your own story.
 2. In love, God created you to not be the most important part of your story.
 3. And we love you enough to preach that.

¹ The Disappearing Church, Mark Sayers, Pg. 60.



- And I want to unpack this because this will become a fundamental truth that will weave itself throughout the entire Bible and the theology that we're building.
- ii. With that said, let's make our way over to the first chapter of the first book of the Bible – Genesis.

II. GENESIS 1

a. The first three words of the Bible – **“In the beginning, God created...”**

1. ****I know that's five words but it's three words in the Hebrew. ****
- i. The story begins with God and we are going to see that the story will always be about God...he will always be the center and the point.
 - And I want us to see that that is really good news to us this morning.
 - That God is at the center of His story. That it is God's world and in love he gives us a significant role to play in it.
- ii. And as we study part of this first chapter of God's story, there are three questions that we must get answers to:
 1. Who are we in God's story?
 2. What does God want us to do in His story?
 3. Why did God create us?
 - Fundamental questions about who we are:
 1. Who?
 2. What?
 3. Why?



III. QUESTION #1 – WHO ARE WE IN GOD’S STORY?

a. Now, Genesis 1:1-25 detail for us the first five days of creation.

- i. The Bible tells us that simply by speaking a Word, God sparked the universe into existence.
 - That everything in creation from galaxies that contain a hundred thousand million stars to protons/neutrons/electrons holding matter together was designed and engineered in an instant.
 - That everything that we would call beautiful from a lush forest, to an orange sunset, to constellations in the sky was created and brought to life within God’s imagination.
- ii. From the first verses of the Bible, we are presented with a God who is so vast, so creative, so artistic, so powerful and authoritative that he speaks and life emerges.
 - We are presented with a God who is clearly at the center and the origin of all creation.
- iii. And the first 25 verses of chapter one describe the first five days of creation where God speaks the world as we know it into existence.
 - And after five days of God’s creation, God has declared his creation as good five times. It is a masterpiece.
- iv. And in v.26, we read about the sixth day of creation where God creates humanity.
 - This is where I want us to jump into the text together



b. Read Genesis 1:26-27

- i. So, we get a very clear answer about who we are.
 - The text says that God created humanity in his own image.
 1. We are image bearers of God.
 2. Every single human being is an image bearer of God.
 3. It does not matter your gender, your ethnicity, your social or economic status, your mental capacity, your physical abilities, your talent...
 4. Every single person from the strongest to the weakest is ontologically an image bearer of God.
 5. It is the most basic and simple definition of who we are.

ii. **But, what does it mean to bear the image of God?**

- Well, the word used here in Genesis is the Hebrew word TSELEM which refers to an image, a resemblance of something.
 1. So, in the Ancient Near East, the primary cultural context of the Old Testament, Kings used to view themselves as representatives of some deity.
 2. That is how they claimed authority over the people in their kingdoms...because they claimed to have divine authority.
 3. And they would refer to themselves as being the physical image of some deity.
 4. And then what these Kings would do is make statues of themselves and place them throughout their Kingdom as a representation of their authority, a reminder of their authority...and these statues, or idols, were called TSELEM!



- So, in Genesis 1:26-27, God says – I am going to make TSELEM of myself.
 1. Mankind will bear my image and they will be my representatives in this new creation.
 2. They will rule over creation on my behalf.
 3. I will delegate authority to them in order for them to represent me and rule over my creation under my leadership.
- So, in order for mankind to properly bear the image of God as His TSELEM in creation, they need some attributes that God has in order to do that.
 1. So, God creates humanity to not just be physical beings, like the rest of creation.
 2. No, we are also spiritual beings.
 3. I love how the ESV Study Bible puts it – *“[Some of the] ways in which humans resemble God [are] the characteristics of reason, morality, language, a capacity for relationships..., and creativity in all forms of art.”²*

iii. So, let this sink in...this is who you are...this is your identity.

- You are an image bearer of God.
 1. You were designed to represent God.
 2. And in every sphere of influence that you have, in every relationship, every talent, vocation, and responsibility you have...God has delegated authority and ability to you to represent Him.
- Because God created you not to be the center of your own story, he created you for God to be the center of your story.

² ESV Study Bible Note from Genesis 1:27.



iv. And this gets to our second question...

IV. QUESTION #2 - WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO DO IN HIS STORY?

a. Well, we know He wants us to represent Him, but how do we do that. What does that look like?

i. Read Genesis 1:28-30.

b. So, here is how we represent God...

i. First, be fruitful and multiply...have children. Increase the number of image bearers all over the earth.

ii. Then God says that he wants all of those image bearers to collectively subdue the Earth and have dominion over the creation.

c. And let me help us understand what God means here with this word subdue.

i. This is an interesting word because this word is mostly used in a negative sense in the Bible.

- The Hebrew word is KABASH and it essentially means to exert your authority upon someone or something in order to get something out of that that person or thing.
 1. When it is used in a negative sense...it means to rape or to oppress someone.
 2. When the word is used in a positive sense it means to massage, to squeeze, or to knead.
 3. So, when you cut a lime and you squeeze it...you're subduing the lime in order to get juice out of it.
 4. When you are kneading dough, you are subduing it to get it ready to bake.



- ii. **God tells His image bearers to subdue the Earth...to work the Earth and get something out of it.**
- I believe part of what this means is that God created the Earth with resources and potential so that His Image Bearers could research, discover, build technology, advance in scientific knowledge, create art and culture, and things like that.
- iii. **But, this command to subdue the earth and to have dominion over the creation is interesting here.**
- Because, whether this word “subdue” is used in a positive or negative sense, in order to subdue something, you have to have a will and the power to exert that will.
 1. Think about squeezing a lime.
 2. If I want to subdue the lime to get juice out of it, I need to have the will to do it and the strength to do it.
 3. You also have to have the agenda to get juice from the lime.
 - Or think about it in a negative sense...the idea of slavery.
 1. If you are going to negatively subdue a person...you have to be stronger than that person...so you can overpower them and exert your will upon them to get what you want.
 - So, God commands us to subdue the earth and therefore he gives us free will to have dominion over all of the creation and the power, the strength, and the authority to be able to subdue the creation.



- iv. So think about the freedom and the strength that God has given His image bearers.
- And he says...I want you to use this freedom, use this strength, use this authority that I have given to you...to represent me.
 - I want you to use your intellect, your emotions, your spirit, your language, your mind and reasoning ability, your talents, your personality to represent me.
 - In love, I created you to not be the center of your story...but for me to be the center.
- v. See, God creates a Kingdom where He is the King, He is the center and His people are His Image Bearers who use their freedom and their power to voluntarily represent God.
- It was paradise. A place where there was no pain or death, no depression or anxiety, no relational strife...God, humanity, and creation all in perfect relationship with one another.
 - And in Genesis 1:31 it says God looked at all that he made and he declares it VERY GOOD.
- d. It makes you wonder, what would happen if mankind decided to use their freedom and their power for another purpose than to bear the image of God.**
- i. We'll think about that next week, but this all leads to our most important question this morning...why did God create us?



- And the reason why this is the most important question is because we must understand God's motivation behind creating.
 1. Because if God has called us to be his representatives on Earth, our motivation for everything that we do must be the same as his motivation for everything that he does.
 2. Our motivation for how we subdue the earth must accurately represent God's motivations.

V. QUESTION #3 - WHY DID GOD CREATE?

a. Now, we do not get a direct answer to that question here in Genesis 1 but we get a very clear answer in the Bible.

- i. Because the Bible gives us a perfect example of the image of God.
 - In fact, The Bible provides us an exact imprint of God's nature.
 - If we want to know what it looks like to bear God's image, to represent God, and do that with the same heart and the same motivation as God...we have a perfect example to look at!
 - Let me throw some Bible at you...

ii. Hebrews 1:1-3a

- *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, ^{**}through whom also he created the world. ^{**}³ He is*



the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature..."

iii. Colossians 1:15-16

- *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ **For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **"*

iv. So, if we look at Jesus, we get a perfect example of who God is and what God's motivation is behind everything that He does...because Jesus is the perfect image of God.

- And the Apostle John helps us with this because he looks at Jesus and then he declares this about the character and motivations of God.

1. 1 John 4:7-12 - *⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is made complete in us."*



- John looked at Jesus...and he saw that even though we have betrayed God and sinned against him - (and we'll talk about what that means next week) - God sent Jesus to give of Himself for us.
 1. And that is the definition of love. To give of yourself for another person.
 2. And so John looks at Jesus, the exact imprint of the nature of God, and He declares that God is love.
 3. God's motivation for everything that he does...including creating the world and us...is love.

b. And if we go back to Genesis 1 with this knowledge about the character of God, we actually see clues of God's love.

- i. Did you notice back in Genesis 1:26 it referred to God in the plural.
 - It says: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image...'"
 1. In fact the word for God in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word ELOHIM.
 2. It is the word for God but in plural form.
 - So, when God decided to make man in His image, who was He talking to...Himself?
 1. Remember in Hebrews 1 when it said that everything was created through Jesus Christ?
 2. Remember in Colossians 1 when it said all things were created by and through Jesus Christ?
 - See, the Bible is clear that we have one God but He exists in three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - the Trinity.



- ii. And this is important because it wasn't out of loneliness that God decided to create. It wasn't because God needed us. It wasn't because God was on some power trip and need to flex his muscle.
- God created us out of love.
 1. God the Father was so satisfied in the joy He had with God the Son and God the Spirit that He wanted to share it with others.
 2. So, He created others to share it with!
 3. We see this when Jesus prays for the church in John 17:22-23 - *"²² I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. ²³ I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me."*
 - Do you see that. God wants us to experience the joy, the oneness, the glory that He has within the Trinity!
 1. That's why He created us!
- iii. And if love was God's motivation for creating us, then the way that we represent God is we love.
- The way we represent God as we subdue the Earth and rule over creation is we love.
 - The way we relate to God, to other people, and to the creation itself is we love.
 1. We take all the freedom, all the authority, and all the power that God has given us and we use it not for ourselves, but for others that they may thrive.



c. And remember the theology that we're building.

- i. We said in the beginning that:
 - In love, God created me to not be the center of my story.
 1. Because God is the center of our story and our purpose is to represent and point to Him in everything that we do.
 2. We were not designed to be the center of our lives.
 3. And in love, God created us to represent Him as we rule over creation.
 - And because God is love, at the center of His motivation to create us for this purpose is our joy. (repeat)
 1. Which means our joy is found in God being the center of our story and our joy is found in bearing His image and being His representative on earth.
 2. God would not be love if he created us for a purpose that did not result in our joy.

VI. APPLICATION

a. So, what should that look like for us today?

- i. What this means is that there is not one millimeter of your life where you do not bear the image of God.
 - There is not one relationship where you have not been given the purpose of representing God in that relationship.



- In everything...your work, your money, your sexuality, your leisure, your home, your marriage, your singleness, your art, your skills...everything...your purpose if to bear the image of God...represent Him.
 1. It's not to create your own story.
 2. It's not to make something of yourself!
 3. It is all about God!
- ii. And the way that you do that...is you see everything that you have, you see your freedom and your ability, as tools to love God and to love others.
 - To put God...to put other people...before yourself.
- iii. You best represent God when you voluntarily lay down your rights, your desires, and your needs...for God and others.
 - And the secret of creation...the secret of God's Kingdom...is that when you put yourself last...that is where joy is found.
 1. That's where the good life is.

b. It is good news that in love, God created us to not be the center of our story.

- i. And next Sunday, we are going to learn about what happened to creation when mankind decided they wanted to be the center of their story.

