

Creation: God Makes

Genesis 1:1

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December 3-4, 2016

Prayer Time – Let's pray for Rick Williams and family in the death of his father and Janet Janacek and family in the death of her mother.

I've been fascinated and frustrated about something for many years (just ask my family). Have you noticed how companies have shrunk the size of their products while keeping the packaging and pricing the same? Let me demonstrate.

- Cans of Coffee. How many of you remember when coffee was sold in 1-pound, 2-pound or 3-pound sizes? The weight of most of the small cans is now only 11 ounces.

BTW, if you want a guaranteed one-pound bag of java the student ministry is making Caribou whole bean and ground coffee available for a suggested donation of \$12 for regular and decaf and \$15 for mint chocolate. Pastor Kyle and the students weighed each bag to make sure they are exactly one pound! The students will be going on two mission-related trips this summer and this money will be used to help supplement their costs. Speaking of coffee, Tim Buk Brew will be serving free coffee between our three services next Sunday in the gym.

- Bars of Soap. Have you noticed that there is now a chunk of soap missing from each bar that you buy? This one makes me laugh because it also has 8 holes on the bottom. The marketers are calling them "lather pockets." I'm surprised they didn't call them "laughter pockets" to express their delight in duping consumers.
- Peanut Butter. In 2000, Skippy and other manufacturers reduced the standard size jar from 18 ounces to 16 ounces by adding a concave dimple in the bottom without changing its height. Thankfully we shop at Aldi and they've not reduced the size. The jar I have here has slimmed down to 15 ounces!
- Ice Cream Containers. Several years ago a number of companies subtly changed the size of their containers from ½ gallon to 1.75 quarts and now the standard size is down to 1.5 quarts. When consumers started complaining, some manufacturers explained that the smaller size fits better in the freezer! It's almost like they're doing us a favor!

By the way, when you see “Same taste, new look,” on a label its likely code for a downsized container. “Healthier” may simply mean there are fewer calories because there’s less product in the packaging. “Greener” might mean they used less plastic in the smaller size and “portable” could mean that it’s now small enough to fit in your pocket!

Interestingly, the packaging industry has dubbed these new containers “cheater cups” because they’re designed to confuse consumers. One thing companies are counting on is that it’s easy to sneak subtle changes past people. This is really seen with cereal boxes...

- Cereal Boxes. Companies can change the height or width of the boxes but consumers would notice so they instead shrunk the depth. These boxes have now become shallow and feel hollow but look the same on the shelves.

Sounds like what’s happened in our culture related to Christmas.

Have you noticed that the observance of the nativity has shrunk in our nation? [Demonstrate by bringing hands together] The depth is now gone and been replaced with seasonal sentimentality.

Actually as Christians, we’re in danger of shrinking Christmas as well [Demonstrate by bringing hands together] when we focus only on the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke and then only during the month of December. We need to go deep and wide and long. And that’s our aim in this series. Christmas doesn’t begin with the manger and it doesn’t end with the wise men. Christmas is rooted in Creation and finds its fulfillment in the final Consummation.

I want to highlight our December service schedule again because it’s different from other years. Next weekend, our focus will be on helping people find hope. We’ve combined our children and adult choirs, along with our strings and brass ensembles. We’ve added an extra service to help you invite more people – Saturday at 5 and Sunday at 8, 9:30 and 10:45. On Christmas Eve we’ll have two services at 3 and 5 pm. And then on Christmas Day, we’ll have one service at 10 am. There will be *different music and a different message* on these two days. Since Christmas is on a Sunday, we have the joy of remembering the birth and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. While some churches are cancelling services on Christmas, we’re committed to worship together. If you can make it, we’d love to have you!

The best way to understand the Bible is not just looking at small sections but by seeing the overarching meta-narrative. God’s plan and the plotline of the Bible stretch from Genesis to Revelation – all 66 books are woven together by a single storyline.

Check out [this graph](#) that visibly shows how connected each verse of Scripture is to the story of redemption. The Bible begins with an account of a couple in a garden and it ends with a narrative about numerous people in a garden city. The bar graph on the bottom represents all the chapters in the Bible. The length of each bar represents the number of verses in the chapter. And a single arc depicts each of the 63,779 cross-references with the color corresponding to the distance between the two chapters, creating a rainbow-like effect.

One of the most helpful resources for children is “[The Jesus Storybook Bible](#).” Our daughter and son-in-law have started reading this to their 5-month old son named Pip. Have I ever showed you a picture of Pip?

Here’s how it begins: “...*the Bible isn’t mainly about you and what you’re doing. It’s about God and what He has done...The Bible is most of all a Story...There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The story of how God loves His children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to tell His story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby. Every Story in the Bible whispers His name.*”

Pastor Tim Keller says this: “*Many people think of the Bible as a book of moral teachings with stories sprinkled through to illustrate the teachings. But it’s a lot better than that...the Bible is a single story with teachings sprinkled through to illustrate the story.*”

Let me be quick to add that while the Bible is a story, it’s not make-believe. It doesn’t start with “*Once upon a time...*” but rather with these words: “***In the beginning God.***” It’s also much more than just a nice novel. The Bible is an inspired and inerrant collection of narrative and non-narrative material like prayer, poetry, prophecy, parables, songs, laws, commands and ethical codes of conduct.

The story of Scripture can be told in six acts:

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|--------|--------------------|
| Act I | <i>Creation</i> |
| Act II | <i>Catastrophe</i> |

Act III	<i>Covenant</i>
Act IV	<i>Coming</i>
Act V	<i>Church</i>
Act VI	<i>Consummation</i>

We could say it like this: *The story of Scripture is about the glory of the Savior.* Let's ponder some key passages from the gospels that demonstrate the overarching unity between the two testaments.

John 1:45 – “Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’”

John 5:46-47 – “For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?”

Luke 24:27, 44-45 – “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself...Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” I pray the Lord will open our minds to understand His Word today!

How many of you have a Bible that has the words of Jesus in red? Imagine the Old Testament where every reference, every prophecy, every shadow, every image and illusion to Christ appeared in red. One author says that if such a red-letter Old Testament existed, it would glow in the dark. Others have argued that it would light up a living room! Actually, since *the story of Scripture is about the glory of the Savior*, all of the words should be in red.

Friends, history is really “His-Story” and it’s headed somewhere. The Bible tells one unfolding story of redemption set against the backdrop of creation. Turn to Genesis 1 and follow along as I read the opening verses.

I’ll insert the Hebrew name for God as I read: ***“In the beginning, Elohim created the heavens and the earth.² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters.³ And Elohim said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.⁴ And Elohim saw that the light was good. And Elohim separated the light from the darkness.⁵ Elohim called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”***

This name for God is used more than 2,500 times in the Bible, 32 times in the first chapter of Genesis alone. Elohim derives from the word *El*, which in turn comes from the word for “*strong*.” Specifically, this name means that He is the strong Creator God - He is creatively powerful, completely sovereign, and gloriously great.

There are at least three foundational building blocks in this opening introduction that the rest of the Bible story is built upon.

1. Elohim is Eternal (Genesis 1:1a). *“In the beginning God...”* By the way, this is the first instance of baseball in the Bible – “in the big inning.” This is a declaration that God has always been; He’s had no beginning and He will have no end. This is stated strongly in Deuteronomy 33:27: *“The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”*

Did you notice that Genesis 1:1 is a simple declaration that Elohim exists, and does not provide an explanation or an argument for His existence? That Bible just assumes that He is. As Psalms 14:1 says, only those who are foolish doubt God’s existence: *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”*

Listen. The story of Scripture begins with God, not with us because it’s all about His glory.

2. Creationism is Correct (Genesis 1:1b). Because God alone is eternal, that which is created is not. Look at the last part of Genesis 1:1: *“...created the heavens and the earth.”* The Hebrew word for “*create*” means “*to create out of nothing*.” In Latin the phrase is *ex nihilo*.

He spoke and it was created. He works through His word. Psalms 33:6, 9: *“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 came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm.”*

It is no accident that the first thing God wanted us to know about Himself is that He is the Creator. The whole story of Scripture is rooted in this fact, from Genesis to Revelation. Revelation 4:11: *“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”*

The early church viewed the doctrine of Creation as the beginning point of theology, and a bedrock biblical belief. Its importance is summed up at the very

beginning of the Apostle's Creed: *"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth..."*

3. The Lord made light. Look at Genesis 1:3-5 to hear the first words that God speaks: *"And Elohim said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. And Elohim saw that the light was good. And Elohim separated the light from the darkness. Elohim called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day."*

Six times in chapter one, God declares that what He made was **"good."** In 1:31 we read, *"And God saw everything He had made, and behold, it was very good."* The word good is rich in meaning. It means, *"well-pleasing, morally correct, perfect and proper, with no deficiency or defect."*

Creation is in right relation to the Creator. Everything is good. Verse 26 tells us that man is made in God's image and in 2:18 God declares that it was **"not good"** for man to be alone so He created a woman for Adam. They enjoy the pleasure of paradise as they live in harmony with God, with each other and with creation itself. And then chapter 3 happens.

The serpent tempts Eve and she begins to doubt God's goodness and fixates on that which is forbidden. We see this in verse 6: *"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."*

Verse 7 describes the shame that immediately follows their sin: *"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."* Because they are suddenly self-conscious, exposed and their conscience is now activated, they try to cover their sin and their shame. Human beings have been trying to manage their sin and shame ever since.

They used to enjoy friendship and fellowship with God, walking with Him in the garden, but sin and shame have now caused separation, so they try to get as far from God as they can in verse 8: *"...and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."* We're still trying to hide from God, aren't we? Adam and Eve could no longer face each other without clothing and now they dread facing God.

I love that even though they are guilty, God comes looking for them! He's not out to clobber them but to offer reconciliation. By asking Adam a question, He's giving him the opportunity to come clean. Look at verse 9: ***"Where are you?"***

Don't miss what happened in Genesis 3:21: ***"And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them."*** Only God can provide the covering we need. The emphasis is on God's initiative, as He takes care of their shame. God continues to seek out sinners! At its core, that's what Christmas is all about! More about this later in the series.

Because these coverings were made of skin, we know an animal sacrifice had been made. Can you imagine the horror that Adam and Eve felt when they witnessed death for the first time? God slaughtered an innocent animal to provide a covering for them. In that very moment they saw how much their sin really cost.

For the first time in history, suffering, sacrifice and innocent blood is shed so that human sin might be covered and community with God could be restored. This is the foretaste of substitutionary atonement. God is setting the stage for the Passover, and later for the death of Jesus as the final sacrifice for our sins. The message was clear: God can only be approached by way of sacrifice because our sins have separated us from Him.

Christmas is all about how Christ covers our curse by dying in our place on the cross! God was sinned against and so He provided a sacrifice for sinners. God made coats of skin to cover sin. Jesus is God with skin on. And when we believe and receive the sacrifice of His Son we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Please turn now to John 1:1-5 as we pick up the redemptive narrative. Check out how these verses correspond to the account of creation because the coming of Christ has always been part of God's plan. *The story of Scripture is about the glory of the Savior: "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 any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."*

1. The Infant is Infinite. For many years I thought that Jesus got his start when He was born. Jesus Christ has always existed according to verses 1-2: ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

He was in the beginning with God.” Jesus is *before* the beginning of time as He said in John 8:58: ***“Before Abraham was born, I am.”*** He is eternal, or infinite because He has always existed. This passage immediately reminds us of the opening words of Genesis 1:1: ***“In the beginning God...”***

The word ***“word”*** is the Greek *“logos,”* which refers to Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity. In Greek culture, *logos*, was that which gave meaning to all things. The philosopher Philo saw the *logos* as a bridge between a transcendent God and the material universe. John is using a term that everyone would be familiar with and yet he expands its meaning. Since a word is an audible or visible expression of a thought, Jesus perfectly revealed what was going on in the mind of God. He’s the bridge between God and us. Check out this mind-boggling quote: *“With the birth of Christ, the eternal broke into space and time.”*

The ***“Word was with God,”*** indicates that Jesus Christ existed in a face-to-face relationship with the Father. Jesus was not only in the closest possible fellowship with God, the ***“Word was God.”*** We don’t have time to explore the majestic intricacies of the doctrine of the Trinity, but suffice it to say that Jesus is not a creation of God, but is God Himself. Verse 2 summarizes and repeats verse 1 in order to make sure we grasp the magnitude of this truth: ***“He was with God in the beginning.”*** The Infant is Infinite.

2. Christ is the Creator. We see in verse 3 that Christ is also the Creator: ***“All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”*** This verse brings us back to the truth of Genesis 1:1 and to Colossians 1:16-17: ***“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. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”*** Jesus is both the creator and sustainer of all things.

Here’s one more verse if you’re still not convinced that Jesus is the Creator. Hebrews 1:1-2: ***“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.”***

Kim Hawkins read a book recently by Henry Morris and passed along this helpful quote: *“Jesus Christ was the Creator long before He became the Savior.”*

3. The Lord is Life and Light. The infant is infinite, Christ is the Creator, and thirdly, the Lord is life and light. Look at verses 4-5: ***“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not***

overcome it.” The story of the Bible begins with physical darkness in Genesis 1. To dispel this darkness God said, *“let there be light.”*

Spiritual darkness spilled into our world in Genesis 3 and can only be removed by the Lord who is life and light. As the light, Jesus shines into the darkness, and those who have not yet received Him are still in the dark and cannot understand Him. Many people today do not comprehend the real meaning of Christmas. It’s because the world in general has no place for Christ.

The story begins in Genesis 1 where we learn that *Elohim is eternal, creationism is correct, and the Lord made light*. In John 1, the narrative continues with these truths: *The infant is infinite, Christ is the creator, and the Lord is life and light*.

I have more that I want to say today but for the sake of time, I want to give four quick points that have wowed me this week and helped me recapture the wonder and majesty of Christmas. I hope they do the same for you.

- 1. God the Father is well pleased with His Son.** The word *“good”* from Genesis 1 means well-pleasing. Do you remember what the Father said about the Son at both His baptism and transfiguration? Mark 1:11: *“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”* Matthew 17:5: *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”*
- 2. The gospel is good news.** The word *“good”* is also at the root of the word gospel, which means the *“good news.”* This is exactly what the angel said to the shepherds in Luke 2:10: *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”*
- 3. You are either “in Adam” or “in Christ.”** The Bible teaches that Adam as the representative of the human race brought sin, suffering and death into the world. Jesus is called the second Adam in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5. He brought grace, forgiveness, peace and life. Adam is from the earth and Jesus from eternity. Adam brings death and Jesus brings life. We’re all born in Adam and need to be born again through the second Adam. That brings us right to the heart of the Christmas story when Joseph was told to name the baby Jesus, *“...for He will save His people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21).
- 4. Birth is both the cause and the cure for our sin.** We need to be born again in order to be brought back into a garden relationship with the Father. The world was created and now we must be recreated. 2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us, *“...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”* As we sang

earlier, Jesus was “*born to give them second birth.*” Listen. *You don’t need to make a new start in life; you need to receive a new life to start with.*

Some of you may be ready right now to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. If so, pray this prayer with me.

Lord Jesus, for too long I’ve kept you out of my life. I confess that I am a born sinner and that I cannot save myself. I’m tired of living in the dark. I repent by turning from the way I’ve been going. By faith I gratefully receive your gift of salvation. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth. I acknowledge that you are infinite; that you’re the creator, and that you are life and light itself. With all my heart I believe you are the Son of God, the second Adam, who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank you for bearing my sins and giving me the gift of eternal life. I believe and now I receive so that I can become your child. I commit to follow you as my Lord and Savior. Amen.

The story of Scripture is about the glory of the Savior. If you received Christ you have entered into the greatest story of all time.

And now let’s prepare our hearts for communion. As we participate let’s look back, way back to creation and even before creation; and then let’s focus on the cradle and then the cross and finally push ahead in our minds to the final consummation.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26: “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

Jesus has come. And He will come again. And that’s no fable because He came in the stable and then died on the cross. He rose on the third day, ascended into heaven and is coming again! A guy named Melito wrote these words in A.D. 170: “*He who hung the earth in place is hanged. He who fixed the heavens in place is fixed in place. He who made all things is made fast on a tree.*” And He did all that for you...and for me.

Communion takes us back to Creation when God spoke through the silence with “Let there be light.”

Do you lament how Christ has been taken out of Christmas in our culture? Listen, the way to keep Christ in Christmas is for us to let the light of Christ shine through us!

Think of it this way. We are containers for Christ! Let’s not become “cheater packages” filled with shrinking spirituality. It’s our job to not live lives of deception. We must avoid going shallow.

For most of us our packaging is not all that beautiful, but that’s OK because 2 Corinthians 4:7 says that we are just jars of common clay: ***“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”*** The key is to allow the light of Christ to shine through all the cracks. When we’re smashed by trials [didn’t Jason Crosby do a great job preaching last weekend], the light of life can be seen through our lives, much like when the army of Gideon smashed their pots to let the torches shine brightly.

The Bible calls us to examine ourselves before we take communion. Let’s do that right now.

These small containers [hold up cups] remind us that the *Infant is Infinite, Christ is the Creator and the Lord is Life and Light*. He lived and He died for us, in our place, to restore us to right relationship with the Father and with others.

With the Bread we proclaim His life and with the Cup we proclaim His death.

Welcome to our World

New Member – Alexis Byrge (10:45)

Closing Application

- **Invite people to our services this month.**
- **Consider hosting a Christmas Cookie Open House for your neighbors.**
- **Pick up some coffee bags in the lobby.**