

A Story of Creation

Sermon Overview (A Story of Creation)

There is something captivating about a good story – to be able to lose ourselves in our imagination. Stories connect with something inside us, a longing for something more than we can currently see – something greater than the sum of our lives. However, there is a story which is far greater than anything man could imagine. The Biblical story is where we can find our identity, meaning and purpose.

Society has lost the idea of a grand narrative – a story which connects us all together. Instead, our lives are replaced with a story of the individual. Each of us is the master of our own story – and so any suggestion of another different story is offensive. Our culture wants us to be happy and pursue our own happiness – so any story that suggests any other purpose does not fit.

Reading the Bible, it is easy to find things that offend us. The Old Testament is filled with judgment, war and violence which does not fit with our view of life. The New Testament speaks of the high standards we are called to live to which get in the way our own desire for happiness.

Our Origins – Finding Ourselves in the Past (Genesis 1-3).

Before the beginning, God existed – eternally existing, self-sufficiently, enjoying union with one another, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The goodness of God wanted to create a people to share Himself with – not out of any need, but a choice made by God. He created a world, with Sun, moon and stars, created the oceans brimming with sea-life, created a sky filled with birds, created the land with all manner of creatures. God saw His creation – and saw that it was good. Then God created man – Adam and Eve. In the Garden of Eden, a place set up for the flourishing of man. God walked with Adam and Eve. It was a place of affection, peace and love. There was no pain, no shame and no death.

It is in our origins that we can find meaning. There is a reason each of us exist. We have been created by God, for God. This story doesn't suggest man is here by chance – the result of a cosmological sneeze. The Bible doesn't go into the full detail of how we came to exist – but gives us insight into why we were created.

In our origin we can find identity. The Bible shows that we are made distinct from the animals. Humanity is the pinnacle of God's creation, made in the image of God. We have been made a little lower than the angels (*Psalms 8*). There is a special identity that we have as image bearers of God – children of God.

Our origins also tell of our purpose. The God who conceived creation, who created it all, gave us a purpose. God – who could do everything – chose to partner with us. We have a mandate to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the earth. This is not just about gardening, but about creating something which glorifies God.

Our Hope – Finding Ourselves in the Future (Revelation 21-22).

In the book of Revelation, John records a vision God shared showing the restoration of creation. A new creation, where everything is made new. Adorned like a bride, adorned with every jewel imaginable. A river, clear as crystal, flows from the throne of God, through the middle of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, with healing for all nations. No death, no pain, no shame – instead there is peace, joy and satisfaction where God will reign forever.

The New Creation – the Garden City – is like the garden at the beginning of creation, where God will dwell with man. We are His children, and we will know His love. We will see Him face to face, as creation began – this is what we were designed for. We are not at this new creation yet, but the story completed in Revelation concludes with an invitation (Revelation 22:17). Our future hope comes from this invitation to return to the dwelling place of God.

Our Tension – Finding Ourselves in the Here and Now (2 Corinthians 5: 16-21).

So, what happened after the first creation that means that we need this new invite back into the dwelling place of God? A serpent came into the garden, Satan, the deceiver, and he tricked God's children, he twisted God's words, and they disobeyed them, bringing upon themselves a curse. God didn't immediately cast Adam out when he saw this disobedience – but continued to invite him into relationship. Yet there were still consequences. The whole Old Testament talks about the Fall of Man, and how tragic life is outside of God's presence. We were made to worship God, but the Old Testament shows how man began to worship themselves more and more.

Despite this, God chose a people for Himself – a promise given to Abraham of a people that were given a hope and a promise. A seed of sin continued to turn people from God – but the way was prepared for Christ. While man put himself in the place of God, now Christ put Himself in the place of man – making a way for His people to be reconciled to God.

God does a work of creation again, creating a new heart for those who are in Christ. In this tension, we have a new purpose. Just like in the Garden, God asks us to partner with Him – to be ambassadors for Christ. Our purpose isn't to judge the chaos, but to love. As Christians, we are not called to criticise or condemn – but to invite everyone in to the reconciliation for which Christ has made a way. God made it, people ruined it, He rescued it, and He will finish it.

Suggested Questions to Consider

These questions are designed to help you consider how the full story of creation affects each of us.

- What parts of the Bible do you struggle with and find offensive? How does knowing the whole story help?
- How can Christians get caught up in an individual faith and miss the wider mandate to seek the flourishing of the world?
- Do you spend the more time thinking about what you've been saved from, or what you've been saved for?
- What role are you playing in this story? How can you partner with God and engage with His creation?
- Does your prayer and devotional life focus mostly on how you feel before God, or the mission he's given you?
- Are you giving everything which Christ has saved you for – back to Him for His glory? What is holding you back?