

Creation (Genesis 1)

Valleys Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 30th August 2012

Intro

- We are only just beginning to explore the wonders of this universe, as images beam back to us from Curiosity which is on Mars we are just scratching the surface, and yet, as the Hubble telescope has shown us, space is far deeper and more colourful and more spectacular than we had ever previously dreamt.
- What is even more incredible is that the God who created all this universe, and holds it in the palm of His hand, should be even remotely interested in a relationship with us, and yet He is.
- This morning we are going to look at creation and see aspects of our creator God that will inspire us to live lives pleasing to Him. We will see that knowing Him really is the key to living our lives effectively.

Read Gen 1:1-2:3

God is the source of family- v1'God (plural) created (singular)'

- Elohim= plural (literally 'gods') but takes singular verb i.e. 'He (singular) created', therefore we see the Trinity in this first statement. So God is revealed as family- later in v26 'let us make man in our image'. Some say God speaking to the heavenly host here, but this can't be as v27 says 'so God created man in His image' (i.e. God, not the angels).
- John's gospel recognises the Trinity here when it opens with '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 nothing was made that was made.' (John 1:1-3) At the time of Jesus people spoke Aramaic, but the Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew, so when it was read in Synagogue it would be translated into Aramaic. Some of these translations were eventually written down. The interesting thing is that they would also paraphrase the text, putting an interpretation on what was read. Whenever God did something that humans might do (anthropomorphisms) like speak, see, hear, laugh etc. it would be changed to 'the Word of the Lord' did such and such so that God did not appear to have human attributes. So here in Genesis when God said 'let there be light' it was changed to 'The Word of the Lord said 'Let there be light''. John speaks into this and says the 'Word' they are speaking about is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- So we have the Trinity here in the first few lines of the Bible- God the Father creating the Heavens and the earth through His Word (Jesus) by His Spirit (brooding over the waters). So we have God revealed as family.
- Some people believe in a God who is aloof, Deism- an unknown cosmic force. When I spoke once to a Rabbi in Jerusalem he did not believe in a God who was close to His creation or in whom we could have a personal relationship with, but this is the crux of Christianity, and it is also what we see in this Genesis account of Creation. The Spirit of God is hovering over the waters- brooding, flapping (onomatopoeic feminine word merakepheth)- the nurturing aspect of God here, like a bird brooding over it's young. Used of a description of the Lord being to Israel like an eagle in:

"But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; 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 (merakepheth) over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions" (Deut 32:11)

God is prepared to get close- dip His feet in the water, go into the darkness for a purpose. Intimate with His creation- coming close like a kiss. He had creation of humans in mind (v26) ultimately as He did this- relationship.

'..even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world' (Eph 1:3-4)

- The incarnation- God becomes a human being- lives amongst us, up close to us.
- The Spirit of God came down in the form of a dove at the waters of Jesus' baptism and settled on His head (just like when He hovered over the waters at creation). In Eph 3:14-15 Paul says that family comes from God the Father- he makes the point that the Greek word for family 'patria' comes from the Greek word Father 'patera'. He is not just playing at words here but making the statement that family has its source in God.
- **Application-**
- 3 ways we need to apply this
- **Our adoption by God the Father-** whatever upbringing we have had, whether we had good parents or not obviously does have an effect on us. However, what has more of an effect is how we choose to see God right at this present moment. Do we see Him as our loving Father, interested in relationship with us? Do we choose to believe the truth of His word or are we relying on our changing feelings and experiences in life?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom 5:8).

God loved us even when there was very little it would appear to love in our lives- even when we were God-haters by our actions He still loved us- enough to die for us- that is some love!

God is the source of family- we look to Him to learn how to love in reality. He is gentle and will teach us if we are willing to learn. His example, His grace to us and His Holy Spirit are all keys to us to excel in family life. God gave His Son in love to save us, Christ laid down His life sacrificially for us, God reveals Himself as Father and adopts us into His family even though we don't deserve it and He fills us with His Spirit (just as He hovered over the waters at creation and rested on Christ at His baptism) as a sign that we are His children, by which we cry 'Abba', 'daddy'. A slave would fear the wrath of his master if he ever dared to be over-familiar as if he were a member of the family- they were forbidden to use the word 'Abba', 'daddy' or 'Imma'- 'Mummy'. However, under Roman adoption all this would change and an adopted slave would have more inheritance rights than a natural child who had gone astray. We are not slaves forbidden to use the word 'Abba', no, our master has chosen to adopt us and we can now call Him 'dad' (Rom 8:15-17). These truths will revolutionise the way we do family, just as they did the early Church.

- **Our physical families-** We have a responsibility for our immediate family. How 'pro-family' are you/we? Are we investing into our families? Time, patience, love. Spiritual truths are fleshed out into their practical outworking within the family unit in the epistles.

-Husbands are urged to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Eph 5:25), not to be harsh with them (Col 3:19), and to be considerate and treat them with respect as heirs with them of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder their prayers (1Pet 3:7). Wives should, therefore, be ideally able to describe us as loving, sacrificial, gentle, and respectful. Are we?

-Wives are urged to submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Eph 5:22), as is fitting in the Lord (Col 3:18) so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives (1Pet 3:1). Husbands should be ideally able, therefore, to describe their wives also as respectful, as well as supportive, trusting and having a quiet, submissive spirit. Is that true of you?

-Children are urged to submit to their parents, for this is right (Eph 6:1) and to obey

them in everything, for this pleases the Lord (Col 3:20). The world should look to us for the model in how to bring up children. Are they? If they are still alive, what is our attitude to our own parents? Are we thankful for them, whether they are believers or not, and whether they have done a good job or not? Are we being good children to them, and caring as they get older?

-Siblings- often there is sibling rivalry in families, trying to outdo each other for the parent's affection. As Christians we need to rise above this in love. It broke my heart when I heard a tribute on the news of a boy who had lost his brother when he was hit by a car and said 'although we were always fighting I really loved you'- we need to express love whilst we still can.

-Parents (the father is addressed but also applies to mothers) are urged to not embitter their children or they will become discouraged (Col 3:21) and not to exasperate their children; but instead, to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Parents should be able to be seen by their children as encouraging, fair, giving them recognisable boundaries as well as a foundation of instruction in the Christian life. Is this true?

-We are urged to live in harmony with one another. Let's sow into our marriages and family lives.

- **Our Church family-** Jesus said that as He has loved us we should love one another (John 15:12)- He then said the greatest sign of love is to lay down your life for your friends, and those who obey His commands are His friends. We know that Jesus laid down His life for us. John goes on in his letter to interpret all this for us: he says that what all this means in reality is that we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another (1John 3:16). For many, this became a reality as they sought to see new Churches being planted across the Roman Empire, it is also the same today throughout the world as people seek to Church plant. How about us? Have we caught Jesus' love for His Church? Paul said 'I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church' (Col 1:24). Paul was willing to both suffer and die for His love for Christ and His Church. Legalism will only get us so far regarding sacrifice, but when love gets a hold of us, the love of Christ, we are willing to sacrifice for that which is dear to us. How do you feel about God's Church? Do you miss your brothers and sisters when you are away? Is there a longing to be with the family of God? Do you have an earnest desire to see your brothers and sisters flourish and reach their full potential? Is there a strong desire to see others come to know Christ and be adopted into His family?
- As we come to know God relationships are restored because He is the source of family. We must forgive because we have been forgiven etc.

God is the source of order- v2 'the earth was without form' (until God got hold of it!)

- Not only is God the source of family, He is the source of healthy order and He brings order into our lives.
- 3 days of forming followed by 3 days of filling. In the forming God is tidying what is there, putting everything in the place it should go and setting boundaries for it that it cannot cross so that chaos does not return. In this way he separates day and night, clouds and sea (may have been a water canopy at the time, as 2:6 says there was no rain, just a mist vapour), sea and land. Are the days literal 24-hour period's? It would appear so from the fact that
 - There is 'evening' and 'morning' each day
 - The Hebrew word for day ('yom' always means a 24-hour period if accompanied by a numeral as it is here each day)
 - There is a literal period of 1 day after 6 that God commands Israel to keep in

memory of the time He rested after working for 6 days in creation (Ex 20:11).

- God creates the first week of 7 days, and this cycle has continued to this day- He is the author of routine. Healthy routine versus unhealthy routine. Psychiatric nursing saw people locked into unhelpful routines due to guilt or fear, overly cleaning their houses, whilst others who were depressed losing sense of their normal routines, sleeping at the wrong times, not eating, neglecting personal hygiene etc.
- Are your routines healthy? Do you have a balance in your life? Are you sensible in your sleep routine/diet/exercise/hygiene/budgeting/devotions to God? Some need to have more routine in certain areas, others need to be released from bondage to routine. God will guide us and bring us into helpful liberty. Sometimes we need prayer, good teaching & accountability to help us. A healthy routine allows God to break in and mould according to His leading. An unhealthy routine rules us.
- God worked for 6 days and then rested for 1 day. He established this as a healthy pattern for us. We need to work and we need to rest. If we don't work we become depressed- that's why people need Occupational therapy when they become ill- we have self-esteem needs that God designed to be met through a healthy level of work. If we over-work we burn out. Either extreme is not glorifying to God.

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1Thess 5:14)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you..." (2Thess 3:6-8)

...For even ..when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. (2Thess 3:11-15)

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt 11:28)

And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. (Mark 6:31)

If we are unemployed then we still work hard- applying for jobs, helping others, voluntary work and God will bless us in this. We are to learn what it is to work hard as Paul did, but making sure we take our rest and work in His strength and everything we do should come from a place of rest- a realisation that we are more than conquerors, that we are accepted in the beloved (Eph 1:6 KJV), we are righteous in Him etc. We don't work for His favour, we already have it, but we work hard because we appreciate it- our whole motivation and work ethic comes from an appreciation of His grace and by seeing that God initiated work even before the fall- God worked and He commanded Adam to work.

- Made in His image (v27) to rule- i.e. govern and bring order- our bodies, our families, society etc. Starts with us- have we subdued our bodies and brought them into God's order or are there areas our bodies are dictating to us in? God who brought order to the chaos in creation will also help us. Let's learn to rely on Him.
- In Church life we are all to find our place of service- in Eph 4 it says the saints are equipped for works of service- have we found a place to serve and are we doing it diligently to God's glory?

God is the source of life- v3 'God said 'Let there be Light'

- God is the source of light and He is the source of life. It is interesting that the sun,

moon and stars were not made until the fourth day, but light was made on the first day and plants were made on the third day. This flags up some questions. How is there light without the sun or stars? How do plants grow without light?

- The answer to these questions lies in God as the source of light, not the sun as the true source of light. God was hovering over the dark deep and said 'let there be Light' so the light was His glory shining on the globe of the world as it rotated- The plants then on day three photosynthesise using God's light! We often say 'what a glorious day!' but what a glorious day that must have been- the first Son-rise as the earth rotated to face the Son! I bet you wish you were there to see that? We shall see it- in the new Jerusalem- there will again be no need for the sun as the glory of God will illuminate it- the Lamb is it's light (Rev 21:23, 22:5).

The Rabbis were aware of this issue of light before the sun and they said it was the light of the Messiah and that when the Messiah appeared this light would again be seen as it predicted in Isaiah 60:1-2:

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

- We know that when Jesus was born this light shone out to the shepherds. When Jesus was on the Mount of transfiguration it was seen on Him and also when He appeared to Saul. John, again aware of this belief about the Messiah says 'In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not comprehended it'.
- As Christians this light has shone into our lives- Paul says:
'For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. (2Cor 4:6)

We have the understanding of the gospel- like switching on a light- it is God who brings revelation, understanding and illuminates things for us. As we read His Word earnestly seeking Him it will be a light to our path:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Ps 119:105)

Jesus is the Living Word- as we entrust our way to Him in prayer He will guide us in the right path. As we spread his Word and tell others about Him he will open their understanding too.

- After the 3 days of ordering there are 3 days of filling each region with wonderful things- the 3 realms- day and night/ sea and sky/ dry ground God now fills with things in the same order. Day and Night are filled with Sun and Moon & stars, sea and sky are filled with fish and birds, and dry land is filled with animals and humans.
- God wants the void in verse 2 to be filled with wonderful things, so again and again toward the end of this account you read words like 'increase', 'multiply', 'fruitful', 'fill' depending on our versions. God is a God of abundance, variety and creativity.
- Jesus didn't just come to barely give us life, he came to give us life in abundance (John 10:10). This doesn't necessarily mean we will be financially rich in the world's eyes- this isn't a gospel of greed, but it does mean that we see God's wonderful provision in every area of life as we trust in Him. It means we know abundant grace to go through tough situations we face in life, walking through victorious. It means we are secure in Him, always able to rejoice in His goodness, despite at times being sad and weeping- we do not despair or give up our hope, because He is faithful to us.
- God is creative – we see it in the diversity of kinds He has made. Creation is God's masterpiece- for we are God's masterpiece (Eph 2:10). Master painter- nebulae (hubble telescope google earth), master sculptor- design of man and animals and nature. Fibonacci sequence & Golden mean- 1:1.618. Found in seashells, pinecones, sunflowers, hurricanes, embryos in the womb, spiral galaxies, DNA, human body (see examples).
- Learn to gaze in wonder at God's creation & praise Him -'what is this life if full of care..'. Words of How Great Thou Art or George Robinson:

*Heav'n above is softer blue, Earth around is sweeter green!
Something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow, flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know, I am His, and He is mine.
Since I know, as now I know, I am His, and He is mine.*

- Train your senses to appreciate what is before them and give God praise- the colour of shadows, the smell after the rain, the feel of grass, the taste of spices.
- God has made you in His image to be creative Gen 1:26. Church=harmony of diversity- Eph 3:10- manifold (multicoloured, much-varied) wisdom of God
- Children- imaginative (Simeon's play), but we can lose it as we get older- learn to imagine again. God saw (imagined) something which wasn't there (Hebrews 11, verse 3), believe it could be done ('by faith'), desired it ('saw that it was good') and spoke it into being ('let there be'). We can apply this same principle to any area in life.- "I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."- Albert Einstein (1879-1955), physicist
- Deal with discouragements- criticism or people laughing at you- "Creativity is so delicate a flower that praise tends to make it bloom, while discouragement often nips it in the bud. Any of us will put out more and better ideas if our efforts are appreciated."- Alexander F. Osborn (1888 - 1966), advertising executive. Faith- exercise it. By faith God made the world- creativity takes faith- believe beliefs, doubt doubts

Summary

- God is the source of family
- God is the source of order
- God is the source of life

Song

He changed me