

Creation

Creation to Conclusion Series, May 29 & 30, 2021 | Genesis 2:4-9
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GOD MADE AND LOVES US.

Would you turn in your Bibles to Genesis 2:4?

We are going back to territory we have already covered together before.

You may think I'm running out of things to talk about. Not true.

Genesis 2:4-9 is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible. It helps to orient us; it tells us critically important things about who God is, who we are, and what God wants for us.

We are starting a new series of messages today, and Genesis 2:4-9 gets us started right.

In Genesis 2:4, we read about the generations of heaven and earth:

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

Genesis 2:4 states that what follows are the "generations" of the heavens and earth.

This phrase occurs multiple times in the book of Genesis and elsewhere. For instance,

Genesis 5:1 begins: *This is the book of the generations of Adam. ...*

What follows then is a genealogical record of Adam's descendants. It's like Adam's family tree. More importantly, we're learning about what happened BECAUSE of Adam, Eve, and their family.

So, the generations coming from something imply a family tree; at the same time, the generations coming from something include the results.

In Genesis 2:4 we read that the LORD God created heaven and earth. Genesis 2:4 says that what follows is what happened because the LORD God created heaven and earth.

Then in Genesis 2:5-6, we learn that creation is not complete without human beings.

When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground
...

Genesis 1 tells us that God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them.

That includes plants, animals, and water.

However, in Genesis 2 we learn that conditions were somewhat different at the very beginning.

While plants and trees existed, there were certain plants that human beings cultivated, and those plants were not springing up until there were human beings to tend them.

Creation was not complete until human beings were created.

Next, in Genesis 2:7, the LORD tenderly created the first human being.

... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

These details seem so intentional and intimate to me.

In Genesis 1, God created everything else by word.

However, when God created human beings, he did it differently. God formed the man from the dust of the ground. The text doesn't indicate the exact method, but it implies that God took dirt or mud and fashioned it into the shape of a man.

Then the LORD God breathed the breath of life into the man through the man's nostrils.

Finally, in Genesis 2:8-9, the LORD thoughtfully prepared a place for us to be with him.

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The LORD God planted a garden in a place called "Eden."

God placed everything human beings would need in Eden.

Eden was the place God made to be face to face with us, with his people.

God's creating human beings and placing us in Eden are the starting points for this sermon series.

WE ARE STARTING A NEW SERIES THIS WEEK.

As you may have guessed, I love history.

I include lots of historical background in my sermons because I like to bring the Bible to life, and the historical details in and behind every passage really bring it to life and help us to understand it and live it out.

I also just love history personally. I've dabbled in history since I was a child.

I've been studying the Assyrian Empire recently.

The Assyrian Empire was a big deal in ancient history, so I was fascinated by it as a kid.

However, it turns out that the Assyrians were truly evil by just about any standard.

When the machine that was the Assyrian Empire got rolling, it conquered other regions selfishly and cruelly. But that's a story for another day. I like history.

This "Creation to Conclusion" series looks at history in the broadest sweep, salvation history.

Salvation history includes the events from the creation of all things to the end of all things.

God is the star of salvation history. It's the history of how God has redeemed his people.

In this series we will look at salvation history with four different questions in mind.

We will look at the **Pieces** and ask: **What are the big truths from salvation history?**

We will look at how these pieces **Fit** together and ask: **How do all the pieces of history fit together in the arc of salvation history?**

We will also look at the **Application** of those big truths from salvation history and ask: **How do those truths help us know who we are and how we should live?**

As importantly, we will be looking at how we can **Share** these truths with others. We will ask: **How do we help others find themselves in salvation history?**

Today we begin with the first big truth from salvation history: God made us and loves us.

That's what Genesis 2:4-9 is saying.

God made us. On purpose.

When God made us, he did it simply because he loves us. He did it in order to love us.

It's a simple truth but profound. It has massive implications, and we have big problems coming to terms with this simple, profound truth. Let's unpack some important implications now:

WE ARE CREATED, NOT SELF-MADE.

Let's look at Psalm 139:13-14 briefly. It adds that God is more involved in creation than some expect.

*For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.*

David wrote Psalm 139 and did so in the first person.

In this Psalm he addresses God on a variety of subjects; in these verses the subject is creation.

As David addresses God from his perspective, he is (in a sense) speaking for us all.

As he does, he reveals how God sees us.

Psalm 139 points out that God's work of creating is ongoing.

Since Genesis 2 when God created us, it's easy to assume that the natural, biological processes have taken over. Adam and Eve then created their children who created their children etc.

That's not what Psalm 139 tells us. Instead, Psalm 139 lets us know that while parents may be involved in the creation of each new generation and each new person, God is still the one who is actually doing the creating.

Let's get even more practical. We have a debate between nature and nurture when it comes to who we will become in life. We wonder to what degree DNA determines who we will be and to what degree our environment determines who we will be. While Psalm 139 doesn't comment on that specific question, it does say that before and behind DNA and environment, God shapes us just as he did the first man and makes us into who we are. Psalm 139 speaks of God "knitting us together."

God doesn't just create the first two humans and then let nature take its course. God creates each and every one of us.

Psalm 139 goes even further and tells us that we are shaped at the deepest level.

Psalm 139:13 speaks about God's forming our "inward parts."

That's an attempt to translate a concept that is very difficult to render in English.

The "inward parts" speak about our kidneys.

To the Hebrews, emotions themselves were felt elsewhere.

However, the kidneys were the most sensitive, vital organ in the body.

Our deepest emotions started in the kidneys and were then felt elsewhere.

Our moral knowledge—our sense of right and wrong—came from the kidneys.

Our "inward parts" are knit together by the LORD God. God shapes us at the deepest level.

However, we are inclined to believe that we are entirely self-made.

Rather than being created, some philosophers have told us that we were produced by the struggle to survive. Our distant ancestors were more successful at clawing their way out of the primordial goo than others. They came out on top in the struggle to survive and so are entirely self-made.

Plenty of philosophers have applied this survival struggle to life. Take Italian Renaissance man, Niccolò Machiavelli, for instance. He thought deeply about the nature of life and leadership, and thought it was all a struggle to win. He wrote: "The lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves." It's all up to us!

Whether we believe that philosophy or not, many of us live as if we were in a struggle to survive and a mad-dash competition with everyone around us. It's an eat-or-be-eaten existence.

That leads to a thought that we have gotten everything we have by struggle and by hard work.

Then let's take that thought one step further. We are still struggling. We still must fight for everything we want, and we will only get it by determination, hard work, and winning. In fact, there is a blind panic behind us, driving us because we fear that we might lose everything.

Instead, Healthy Christians balance gratitude and responsibility.

We know that we aren't simply self-made. We know that God created us in the first place. We know that every ability we have is a gift from our good Creator.

Beyond that, we know that God created the world around us and filled it with good things.

We can't claim credit for any of this!

God directs us to work and to work hard. God created us for a purpose, and God has given us these gifts for a reason: he expects us to work hard and do things with these gifts. That's responsibility, and God expects us to be responsible. The Bible advises it repeatedly.

However, our responsibility must always be balanced by gratitude. We start from the point of saying "thank you" to God for making us in the first place, for giving us abilities, and for giving us good gifts. Healthy Christians balance gratitude and responsibility.

WE ARE CREATED THE RIGHT WAY.

Psalm 139:15-16 praises the LORD for intentionally creating each of us.

*My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,*

*intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

Psalm 139 says that the perceived distance between heaven and earth doesn't matter in creating.

These verses talk about what we think the story of life is: we are conceived and grow and are born in very human, very natural, and very earthy kinds of ways. In fact, we think we can observe, measure, and describe just about every aspect of our creation. That means we think we can account for every aspect of our creation.

However, Psalm 139 tells us that there's more going on than we think.

First, these verses say that God sees and knows everything about our creation, that nothing is hidden from him. God sees our bodies as they are forming and growing; God sees our days and knows every one of them before they happen.

These verses add that God is intentionally involved! Our frames are made and intricately woven; they don't just happen, the process is overseen by a master craftsman. Our days don't just unfold; they are written down by a master author.

We think that there is a distance involved here, the distance between heaven and earth. God is in heaven. We don't know where that is exactly, but we get the sense or thought that it is far off, that God is busy there, and that he doesn't have time to watch over details so far away.

However, Psalm 139 collapses the distance we perceive between heaven and earth.

At first glance, Psalm 139 seems to be filled with a foreign cosmology where human bodies are shaped "in the depths of the earth," like that's some subterranean cavern that we have never heard of.

That's not what Psalm 139 says at all. The term used for "earth" here doesn't imply cosmology. It implies land and dirt. God, who got his hands dirty in the making of the first human being, is still getting his hands dirty in the stuff of earth when he makes each one of us.

It's ironic, then, that so many of us feel defective.

I suspect that most of us have a nagging sense inside that we're defective in some way.

We look around at everyone else and think how perfectly formed they are. They're better-looking, smarter, wealthier, more confident, and more outgoing than we are. We are almost envious because we think God created them the right way.

But we have the sense that someone made a mistake when they made us.

If life were like an assembly line, and if we were on a conveyor belt going through life, and if we came to the quality control check on that conveyor belt, and if someone examined us closely, then they would toss us in the bin.

If you feel that way, then realize this: you're not alone. Many, many of us feel that way, at least at some point.

Remember this: You are not a mistake.

God made you. He created you the way you are, and he made you the right way.

God gave you the unique and wonderful personality he gave you.

God gave you the gifts you have, and he gave them to you for a reason.

Here's where salvation history opens up a door to share the Gospel with people.

Plenty of people walk through life thinking that they are somehow a mistake. They feel that somehow, when they were created, someone got something wrong. Someone put something in that shouldn't be there, or someone forgot to add in something that was essential.

Taken to an extreme, this is the nature of the issue that transgender individuals face. They struggle with feeling like a woman with a man's body or a man with a woman's body.

When people think they're a mistake of any kind, it's an opportunity to continue the conversation about God. What does that conversation look like?

The conversation must include listening. We want to listen to people who think they're a mistake because it brings them immense pain, embarrassment, and feelings of inadequacy.

We want to be empathetic and understanding. Our own pain at feeling simply "wrong" at times helps because we've all felt inadequate at one point or another.

Pair empathy and understanding with love. We love people because God loves them, and we love people especially when they're hurting.

At the same time, we help hurting people with the truth. None of us is a mistake. God doesn't make mistakes. He creates us as we are on purpose, and we are just what he intended.

You are not a mistake! Remember that and remind people of that!

WE ARE CREATED FOR A RELATIONSHIP.

The Garden of Eden demonstrated that we are created for a relationship.

God put the man and then the woman in the garden he prepared for them.

Then God met with them on a regular basis, face to face.

They shared life together with no want, no guilt, no shame, and perfect intimacy.

Life with one another and life with God—that's why God made us.

The theme of relationship is one theme that unites all of salvation history.

Obviously, it's one of the main themes of chapter one. We were created for relationship.

As we look ahead to the other chapters in salvation history, though, we'll find that this theme runs through them all and helps to integrate them.

When we were broken by sin and disobedience, our relationships were torn apart.

When Jesus died to pay the price for our sin, we were adopted into God's own family.

In the Church, we find that we are part of the Body of Christ, part of the team of those building the Kingdom of God, and surrounded by brothers and sisters in Christ.

When Jesus returns, we will enjoy perfect relationships with one another and with God forever.

The fact that we are created for relationship is one of the themes that integrates all of salvation history from creation to conclusion.

As simple as this profound truth may seem, we have some big reservations about the idea.

For some of us, the thought that we were created for a relationship with God and that we are deeply loved by God and that he calls us to love him sounds entirely **too sentimental**. We like a more practical faith, and we are more drawn to the intellect of knowing God and knowing about God. All this stuff about “relationships” is tough for us to hear.

For others of us, we simply have **too many objections**. We have not been able to know God as loving Father, or as loving Savior, or as loving Spirit. It’s just not God as we picture him. We picture an untouchable God, an accountable Savior, and an unfelt Spirit.

There are even those in our midst with **too many hurts**. We’ve been hurt so many times that our trust is very thin, and we’ve been hurt so deeply that we’re just not ready. The notion that God created us for a relationship is not news we’re ready to receive.

Many of us have reservations about the idea, but it’s important for all of us to hear the Gospel today, and the Gospel includes this simple but profound truth:

God created you for a relationship because he loves you.

God created you in the first place, simply to love you.

When you walked away from him, he didn’t walk away from you.

Instead, he sent Jesus to pay the price for your sin, gain your forgiveness, and create a space for you inside God’s very own family.

God has offered you his Holy Spirit, he has offered you a place to belong on earth, and he has offered you a job in his Kingdom.

He is coming again and would love to spend eternity with you.

Don’t worry if it’s sentimental; some things in life are.

Don’t let your objections stop you; sometimes you have to take a risk.

It’s time to let your hurts begin to heal; a relationship with a loving God is the place to start.

God loves you and created you for a relationship with him. Start today.