

TSOG - Week 1 - Creation  
Genesis 1 + Colossians 1  
April 3, 2022

### Introduction - Series

Tim. Pastor. **EASTER WEEKEND + Invite Cards.** **Genesis 1.** Gonna take me a bit to get there but I promise we will. There's a lot today, alright? Stick with me - we're going to fly at 30,000 feet for a long time and then I'm going to land the sermon plane hard at the end ok? That analogy makes 0 sense I know.

### **PRAY.**

**Lion, Witch, Wardrobe.** In 1950 C.S. Lewis released *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The first in a larger epic story about - Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy during WWII are evacuated from the city of London to the countryside, moved into an old house. While they're there they find a secret world called Narnia that they enter through the back of a giant wardrobe and there they find all of these mystical creatures and snow, all this stuff. I know that many of you have probably read it or seen the movie.

And what's fascinating if you kind of zoom out is that so much of the plot of the first book is these kids just trying to figure out what's going on. They're transported into this incredible new world, but the story doesn't start with them arriving. There's been wars happening, there's good guys and bad guys, there's all of this back story and folks are on two different sides. And pretty much right away the kids are split → Edmund thinks the Queen is right, the others think Aslan is right.

**The majority of the first book is them just trying to figure out what's up and what's down, what is the story they now find themselves in, what's right and wrong, what has happened and where is it all headed?**

***Isn't that an incredible image of what it means to be human?*** We're born into an already developing story. The world didn't begin to exist on October 24, 1991. My birth wasn't the pinnacle moment of time beginning - and neither was yours. We're born into a story. And so much of the experience of living as humans, not just in the modern world but throughout time, is figuring out the same questions as the kids in Narnia.

**We find ourselves asking these questions:**

- 1. Why am I here?**
- 2. What's broken?**
- 3. How do we make it right?**
- 4. Where is it all headed?**

These are the questions of the human experience. What we're looking for, whether we would use this phrasing or not is a **metanarrative - a larger story of the world in which we can place our individual stories.**

Something to make sense of our lives, to make sense of our purpose. To make sense of evil and joy. And whatever metanarrative you decide, whether cognitively or functionally, is the story of the world, is going to dictate how you live.

Because → **Everyone lives out of the story they believe.** If the queen is right - we fight for her | Aslan - we fight for him.

However you answer those 4 questions (above) - will determine the direction and outcome of so much of your life.

### Modern Stories

Now, there is no shortage of metanarrative options offered to us in the world today. We could spend the entire time today just breaking down our various options. But the largest metanarrative we face as Modern 21st century Americans, I would argue, is that of western secular liberalism.

**Western** - coming out of western democratic theory on the inalienable rights of the individual

**Secular** - a world devoid of God or even the supernatural

**Liberalism** - not the political left (liberal), the traditional definition as that of freedom and autonomy

This is the metanarrative calling for your attention all over the place. It's basically the default operating system of those of us here in America in 2022. And this is how it answers those questions...

- **Why are we here?** Our origin is that of random chance, a result of a rapid expansion from a single point of nearly infinite energy. But now here we are, the universe has chosen to grant us life, so our responsibility and purpose is to live as true and authentically as we possibly can to our truest self while trying not to harm others in the process.
- **What's wrong?** Limits. Anything that stands in the way of me living for myself, living my truth, living how I want with what I want. Anything stopping me from being my full self - authority, government, friends, family, whoever.
- **How do we make it right?** We throw off all limits, restraint and expectation. Cut off the relationship, be your own boss, move to the other city, follow our hearts. We live by the words of my daughter's favorite Scandinavian scholar - "No right, no wrong, no rules for me..I'm free. Let it go!" We do what we need to do to be happy.
- **Where is it all headed?** Towards this future version of utopia where we're all fully and freely ourselves in limitless love and perfection.

In the words of philosopher Charles Taylor (if you've never read him you need to) - **"This is the understanding of life...that each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one's own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority."**

The goal is to be happy and enjoy life by living out our most authentic truth.

And this is rampant. It's on offer everywhere in our society to buy into this story...including within the church. There's a Christianized version as well...It's what Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith called **"Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."** Where the primary goal in life is still you and your happiness and your authentic self-expression, God just becomes a means by which you might get there. God wants you to be happy and yourself - He exists as sort of this far away genie like figure who swoops into your life occasionally to help you do you.

And yet for all of its promise of a utopia and personal autonomy and freedom and happiness, we have more than enough evidence to know that this metanarrative of western secular liberalism just doesn't work.

- Depression is through the roof. Loneliness rates are ridiculous. Burnout from hustle culture.
- Addiction across the board is at an all time high.
- Prescription medication (anxiety, sleep) use is at an all time high.

*It's just not delivering on what it offers. Maybe you even feel that on a personal level.*

So it begs the question - **Is there a better story? Is there a better metanarrative by which to put our smaller stories?**

As followers of Jesus we would say - **yes there is.** Not only a *better* story but what we would argue is the *true* story.

That story, we believe, is → **The story of God.**

So that's what we're talking about over the next few weeks - 3 Sundays and Good Friday. We're looking at the big story, the metanarrative of God. And we're going to answer these questions together - Why are we here? What's broken? How do we fix it? And where is it all headed?

### In the beginning, God...

So tonight - I want to begin where the story begins. **Act 1 - "Creation: The Kingdom of God Begins"**. Let's answer the first question together - **Why are we here and where did we come from?** Page 1 the very beginning. Genesis 1:1.

#### **1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**

Pause there. Before we get to everything that follows I want us to consider those first 4 words - **"In the beginning, God."**

Now, there is a lot that is uncertain about the first couple of chapters of Genesis. There is so much richness and depth and mystery that we could be here for hours and hours and hours just talking about this chapter, or even this one verse.

And in these chapters there are a number of theological questions:

- What is the genre of this part of Scripture - is it historical narrative to be taken literally, is it poetic, is it mythology?
- Is it a literal 6 days created with an appearance of age, is it six 1,000-year periods, or is this some form of weird hybrid creationistic evolution?

And faithful followers of Jesus, to be honest, are all over the map. I have my viewpoints, I'm sure many of you either have yours or maybe don't care at all.

But one of the things the Scriptures are not unclear about and theologians don't disagree on is who comes first in the story and who this story is centered on, built around, and emphasizing. **In the beginning, who? God.**

Every story needs a main character. For this story - the metanarrative of the entire universe - the big story by which every smaller story makes sense - **the main character is God.**

**The story begins with and is about God.** Not humanity, not us, God. GOD IS, God exists. It's not "in the beginning, nothing" or "in the beginning, us". It's in the beginning, God.

And you'll notice, we are not given anything as to the origin of God, that is because he has no origin. God is eternal. In a profound mystery of God, He has always existed and always will exist.

As God says about Himself in **Revelation 22:13 - "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."**

In the beginning, as always was and always will be - **There is God. God is the point. The story starts with Him because the story is about Him.**

**It's the story of God.**

### God Creates

Now notice what God does...

**Genesis 1:1-2**

\*\*Giant implications here about the Trinity. God is 3-in-1. One God, three persons - Father, Son, Spirit. They are all living together in perfect relationship and community. (Don't try to use a metaphor it won't work). Father, Son, and Spirit - all God, living in perfect love - and it is out of the overflow of that love that God creates.

### **Genesis 1:3-23.**

God begins this creation pattern. There's this sort of rhythmic pattern of God speaking, life coming forth, God distinguishing his creation from each other.

- Light + Dark
- Heavens + Earth
- Water + Land
- Sun + Moon
- Winged Creatures + Water Creatures

### **Genesis 1:24-25**

And what you get as you read this text is a few things - **(1) God's power.** God just keeps speaking and it's flowing out of Him. He's not lifting a finger. Just talking. "I want this, some of these, need some of this. Palm trees? That sounds good. A rhinoceros? OH YEAH." Bam. Bam. He's not even pointing, just speaking.

**(2) God's nature and character.** There's an order to what he's doing. There's beauty in the differences of the earth, the creatures. He's a creative God, a good God. He's creating out of the overflow of Himself and His goodness.

But not only that - **(3) God's purposes.** Everything is exactly as it should be. Ordered correctly, fine-tuned for life. There's a distinct precision in the creating act of God that makes life able to be formed and survive. We like to pit science and creation against each other, but science backs up the argument of a creator here because things are just too perfect.

***If you were to change anything by a miniscule amount - from oxygen to gravity to carbon - by the tiniest amount the world would be unable to sustain life as we know it.***

The universe is so perfectly fine-tuned it would be like taking all of the parts it takes to make a car, which I understand none of, but it's a lot. And tossing them all into a giant blender, pressing "go" and expecting a car to come out as a result. It's impossible. Too much intentionality, too delicate of a balance, everything has to be exactly exactly right.

Or, to put it in the words of Steven Weinberg, an agnostic Nobel Laureate in Physics - **"...how surprising it is that the laws of nature and the initial conditions of the universe should allow for the existence of beings who could observe it. Life as we know it would be impossible if any one of several physical quantities had slightly different values."**

As followers of Jesus we look at Steven Weinberg and we say - great observation, but it's not surprising, it's God. It's His purposes. His goodness. His design.

This is why we look at creation, we hike trails and look out over mountains, we look up at the stars at night, and we don't think - "Wow! What a coincidence!" We're meant to say "wow, look at God! Look at his power, His nature, His purposes!"

We say with the Psalmist in **Psalm 19:1 - The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.**

God out of his abundance, love, perfection creates this magnificent, incredible, down to a T ordered world. He declares after each creation act - **"It is good."**

### Humanity - Gen 1:26-27

But then God gets to His greatest act of creation. Gen 1:26:

**26 Then God said, "Let us (again, reference to the Trinity) make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

Skip over to chapter 2:7...

**7 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.**

Skip down to 2:20...

**20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.**

God spends 5 ½ days setting up this whole world - land and sea, night and day, birds and fish, plants and vegetation. But on the 6th day there is a special act of creating. Where everything else was spoken into existence, God now gets down into the dust and breathes life and behold - man. And then he makes the man fall asleep and he takes a rib and uses it to create a woman.

And in both the creation of man and the creation of woman we see a most essential doctrinal reality → humanity was created ***in the image of God - the imago dei.***

Though the rest of creation reflected God, pointed back to God, displayed the attributes of God - nothing else in all of creation was created ***in the image of God***, except for you and me.

We reflect God in a way that is utterly unique to humanity. We have a soul. We have a conscience. We bear His very imprint. In our maleness and femaleness we reflect the distinction of the trinity - equal but different. We're not just animals, we're not just a collection of atoms and molecules and DNA. We are marked with the image of God. We bear the likeness, as creation, of our Creator.

***But it gets even better. There's layers to it.***

### Cultural Mandate - Genesis 1:28

Look back at v27+28...

**27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**

Theologians throughout church history have called this the **“cultural mandate”**. And in order to fully understand what’s happening here, you have to understand another layer to what it means to bear the **image of God || and have dominion**.

### **IMAGE:**

In ancient Bible times, most nations and civilizations were ruled by kings or monarchs. And in order to make claims over their territories or kingdoms, this was before the days of intricately drawn maps with latitude and longitude all of that, they would make statues of themselves to spread out all across their kingdom so you know if you saw a statue, who was the king over this particular area.

In Hebrew, the word for these statues was the word **tselem**, often translated as “image.” It’s the exact same word used in Genesis 1:27 - God created man in his own **tselem**. Mankind was an image bearing God’s own mark and resemblance.

So this is part A of the cultural mandate → That as Adam and Eve had some babies, more humans would come on the scene and as they would start spreading out across the world, that they would be reflections of God’s glory declaring to everyone - this is all God’s. This is all His Kingdom. His domain. This is all under His rule and reign.

### **DOMINION:**

But then God tells these image bearers to “Have dominion”. The hebrew word here is **“radah”** - **“To rule or to reign for the good of the one being ruled”**

So they’re to spread out and declare “The earth is God’s” as his image bearers. AND...they are to join God in their exercise of **dominion - of ruling and reigning**. That they would be like God, working under His authority, to rule and to reign over creation.

**Did you notice → God doesn’t create the world fully formed.** He could’ve placed Adam and Eve down in a fully formed city with culture, commerce, trade, food falling from the heavens as a continual gift from Him. But instead he created Adam and Eve placed them in a garden full of potential and raw materials and gave them work.

It’s all there and it’s good, but it’s not complete. God has a plan and a purpose - this is all leading somewhere. So He takes Adam and Eve, He puts them in the garden surrounded by all of this potential, bearing His image, and calls them to have dominion. To take the raw materials of what’s around them and join Him in the work of creating and cultivating.

Christopher Wright - **“When God created the earth, he created human beings in his own image with the express mission of ruling over creation by caring for it—a task modeled on the kingship of God himself.”**

To put it simply → **Adam and Eve were meant to join God in taking the world somewhere.** To cultivate, to help flourish, to build and develop - to spread out around the world creating more humans, more civilization - not as a means to an end for humanity, but as a way of spreading image bearers of God across the planet declaring - This is the Lord’s!

Richard Pratt - **“God ordained humanity to be the primary instrument by which his kingship will be realized on the earth.”**

### **Conclusion - “Very Good”**

And this is how this part of the story ends...

**31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that**

**he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.**

Seventh is the number of completion in the Scriptures. God saw everything He had made and on the 7th day he steps back and he declares over it - **“Meh-ode Tove”** - Abundantly pleasant. Exactly Right. Very Good.

It's shalom - flourishing. The dwelling place of God was with man. They had a deep relationship as Adam and Eve lived in God's perfect design. They had a purpose and a calling - to join God in taking the world somewhere.

And God steps back and rests. Not because He was tired, but to declare - this is right.

### **SUMMARY:**

Let me summarize everything we've just seen → God, dwelling for all eternity in a perfect loving relational community of the Trinity - Father, Son, and Spirit. Out of His abundance and overflow creates out of nothing. Makes a world that reflects His goodness, proclaims His handiwork. The pinnacle of that creation is mankind - male and female. Created in His image. Designed to join Him in His work of ruling and reigning over the earth, bringing more and more flourishing, reflecting Him over all creation that the world would know He is God and claims it all for His Kingdom.

***That is the beginning of our story.*** That is how things were meant to be. That is the design you and I were meant to live in, flourish in, enjoy and celebrate God in forever. That was how it was supposed to be.

### **Why Are We Here?**

**So where did we come from and why are we here?**

**We are here to join the creator God on His mission in the world.**

***We are here from and for God.*** That is why the first act in the story is called Creation - The Kingdom of God Begins. Not the kingdom of humanity. Not the kingdom of us, the kingdom of God.

God is the main character, God is the hero. God is the author. The entire story is about God.

Everything you see around you - it is all meant to point back to Him and His glory. It's all meant to put His magnitude, His love, His power on display.

**Isaiah 6:3 - “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”**

**Isaiah 43:6-7 - “Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”**

**Col 1:16 - 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.**

All of life exists for the glory of God. Including you. Which means...

***You're not the point!***

- Infinitely valuable...of course.
- Full of worth and dignity...absolutely.

- Created with purpose and calling...for sure.

**But you're not the point.**

He created you for Him. Not the other way around. You live for Him, you exist for Him. You are created in the image of God, He's not created in the image of man. You were made to join the work He is doing in taking the world somewhere.

**Greg Gilbert - "The fundamental truth of human existence, the well from which all else flows, is that God created us, and therefore God owns us."**

*Everything in your life...*

- Your job is about God.
- Your marriage is about God.
- Your money...
- Your time...
- Your house or apartment...
- Your weekend...
- Your friendships....
- Your children...
- The list goes on and on. It's all...about...God.

And it's one challenge for us to believe this story. To trust that it is true and better (more on that next week), but it's a whole other issue to learn to place our smaller story into this bigger story. To actually live functionally as if it is all about God.

Because if you're anything like me, the default posture of your heart as you go about your day, week, month is not - how is this about God and how will it bring Him glory?

The default posture of my heart is:

- What's best for me?
- Easiest for me?
- Most comfortable for me?
- What gets me ahead? What do I want? What do I need?
- What makes the most sense for me?

To proclaim with my mouth - Jesus is Lord.

And to live out in my story the lies of western secular liberalism or the Christianized version - moralistic therapeutic deism. Where I say God is the point and I live for His glory and His mission, but I live like I'm the point and God is the servant to help me be who I want to be, do what I want to do, live how I want to live.

And it's not just that those narratives are not true, **they go against the very fabric of creation.**

It's trying to turn it upside down and inside out. It's not true and it doesn't work. We'll see next week that everything broken in the world comes from us trying to turn the narrative upside down and put us at the center instead of God.

That's the pull of the human heart, and yet in the very first four words of the Holy Scriptures we are told, we are reminded - **This is the story of God.**



The reminder for us today - it is all about God. He's the King. He's the Creator. He's the author and main character. He's the point. He invites us to join Him.

**What a chance we have to remember that together right now through the act of communion.**