

God
Series, "The Gospel"
Genesis 1, Romans 1:19-20, Luke 15:11-32

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(Open Bibles to Genesis 1)

Trip to zoo with Mae...who's Jesus? I dunno. God/died on cross for you. Why? The first thought in my mind was "I'm a complete failure as a father!" The second thought was, "What do I want the first words out of my mouth to be when my daughter asks me, 'Why would Jesus die for me?'"

There are as many beliefs about God as there are people on Earth.

And yet, those of us who trust Jesus also believe that we've been entrusted with representing God to the people around us.

So when you talk to people about this Savior you love, what do you want your first words to be?

- I once heard a woman describe her husband's conversational skills: "He's an expert at getting conversations into the air, it's just that he takes off with no clue where he's gonna land!"
- Sometimes, I think we have the exact opposite problem. I know where I want to land. I'm just not sure how to take off.
- But God knows where to start. He's shown us where to start: in the beginning.

Let's look at Genesis 1 together

Today's focus will be a narrow one: Who God is as He relates to us as a creator, Father, and Savior. And even with this narrow focus, we'll be far from exhaustive!

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth."

The very first sentence that God inspired Moses to start the Gospel story of the Bible with turns the beliefs of that day on its head.

- Egyptian religion: creation creates god who creates other gods
- Sumerian religions: a god created Earth and many other gods to rule at his bidding.

But in this very first verse, Moses says "There is one God, Who has always existed and all things come from Him."

Here's why that's important: God is at the center of the universe, not me.

- And this is a good thing for me: the God Who has all power also *Loves*.
- *Not* "one of many" impersonal, distant gods. The one and only Father.

- He didn't *have to* make us. No other "over-god" was telling Him what to do. God has complete power and freedom. He chose to. He wanted to.
- Moses begins to paint a picture of the character and personality of this one God.

Genesis 1:3-27

In verses 3-27: God's process of taking an uninhabitable Earth and making it more and more fit for humans to thrive in.

At each point of creation that God makes Earth better and better for man, we see Him look at what He's done and say, "This is good!"

And then, in verse 26, we see the grand unveiling of this masterpiece He's been building this beautiful home for:

Genesis 1:26-31

"Then God said, 'Let us 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.' So God created man *in His Own image*, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. *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.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the Earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the Earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the Earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. 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."

So what does this all say about the personality and character of God?

- God created us because He wanted to, not because He had to.
- God is a Father who wanted to share His goodness with sons and daughters
- God created us *in* a place that was perfect for us to have relationship with Him and each other.
- God not only created us, but He has feelings about us: "Very Good"

In short: **God is a Father: He created me, He loves me and He wants me**

THIS is the beginning of the Gospel, not my sin problem, that comes later.

And this statement is NOT a testament to how great I am.

The Gospel does not lead us to a celebration of self, but rather, the celebration of a glorious God whose love is unfathomable.

- The Gospel is a testament to how great *God* is and how *loved* I am.
- Some might argue, "But didn't all that change when we sinned?" Doesn't our rebellion change the way God feels about us? Doesn't it change our worth to Him?
- The short answer: "Not one bit"
- Certainly, our sin has separated us from God and makes us deserving of His wrath because He is holy. We will explore devastating reality of sin in 2 weeks.

But there's a difference between being broken and worthless.

Doodle: Difference between Broken and Worthless (Unloved)(Flawed)(Loved)

Story: I broke my hand playing tether ball / File of "art" my daughters made

- *Something that is flawed and you have no love or value for, you throw away.*
- *Something that is flawed but you love and cherish, this you keep and restore.*

And God has gone to great lengths to chase after and restore us:

Romans 1:19-20

"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

Even in our broken, sinful rebellion, God is chasing us with relentless mercy. He wrote His existence and goodness into the very fabric of creation like a gigantic flashing billboard saying, "I'm here! I'm real! I love you! Stop resisting my mercy! Come to Me and be healed!"

So great is His pursuit of us, that if we die while still rejecting Jesus, we are literally without excuse. And His wrath is more than just.

But has His love and desire for us changed because of sin? No! Because:

God is Unchanging: My flaws can't change God's affection.

John 3:17, Jesus Himself says: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him."

Our sin is real and has poisoned and changed *our nature*, but NOT HIS.

And if you have a hard time believing this, maybe the words of God's Son, Jesus, will convince you.

Prodigal Son Story

I want to tell you a story that Jesus told me.

The Gospel means good news. And the reason it is such good news is because at the center of the Gospel stands not a philosophy, *but a person*.

God is the Gospel: God, Himself, is the Good News

Every truth we believe and teach emanates, not from a philosophy, but from a person. These truths are vitally important. But they are not a replacement for the person they describe.

It's not about just knowing *something*. It's about genuinely treasuring and trusting and surrendering to *someone*.

The Gospel is truly, deeply and profoundly GOOD NEWS because of the one who stands at the heart of it all: A Father God Who cherishes and chases after His children.

Conclusion

When we think about the people in our lives who don't yet trust Jesus, what is their mindset toward God?

- I'm not sure many of the people I know have many *or any* thoughts about God at all. So when we consider what they think about God, the answer may be "nothing"

And those who do think about God-what is their concept of Him?

- Some of the people I know aren't thinking in terms of being loved by God. I think a lot of them are just trying to be good enough to stay off of His screen. "If God notices me it's because I've done something wrong."

So going unnoticed by God may be their best-case scenario.

- Others may be so swallowed up in shame of what they've done or what's been done to them, that to them, being loved by ANYONE unconditionally seems like a fairytale.

If this is the way the people around us think about God, then where should the conversation start? If we're truly representing a person and not just a way to think, how should we proceed?

- Do any one of these people benefit from a "Gospel" story that leaves out the beginning...that God made us, loves us and wants us?
- If this is where God's word started the message of the Gospel, then I'd say yes...start there at sin.
- But this is not where God's Word to mankind about His thoughts and feelings and intentions for them starts.

It starts IN THE BEGINNING, with a Father Who made me, looks at me as a good creation and Who runs after me, throws His arms around me and invites me into His family.

The whole world is yearning and craving and waiting to meet a Father like that. And the very first glimpse we have of God paints such a picture.

It really is ok for us to start there at the love of God and lay a foundation of love first.

Is there something I can actually **DO** with **this** amazing, joyful good news?

Tell and Show

- *Tell* this to yourself, tell your kids, your roommates, your coworkers, your friends at the coffee shop: that they are treasured creations of the Father, loved and wanted.
- And *show* that this kind of love is possible, by being there for people, loving people through the hard things and never giving up on them.
 - You have flaws and you have limits. But even your flawed, broken love can be the small sample that there is a greater feast to be had in our Father God.
- Make it your mission this week to intentionally tell and show one person that they are loved and wanted by God and by you.

Invitation to salvation

"And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt

compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

Luke 15:11-32 ESV