

A Beautiful World

Today marks the beginning of the liturgical calendar. It is a new year for the church. It is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is a time of expectancy. We anticipate the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

For Christians, this expectancy has a dual meaning. First, we look forward to the first coming of Jesus. The world celebrates in some fashion with either nativity scenes or Santa. The second meaning is reflected in the anticipation of Jesus returning to earth. During the season of Advent, the suggested scriptures usually start with the second coming and then move to the pastoral scenes that unfolded in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago.

This year, I have chosen to a slightly different track. Not to be surprised, a song title suggested to me the track and theme for this year's advent series. For the next four weeks, we will approach this season of expectancy with focus on "Joy to the World."

For the first week, we will consider that God made and gave to us a beautiful world. This may seem a little strange as a beginning in the season when we typically turn to the birth of Jesus. Hopefully, we can appreciate this perspective as we look in the Bible.

Certainly, there are many places in the Bible where we are reminded of God's hand in events long before the foundation of the world. Perhaps one of the most familiar is found in John's account of the life of Jesus.

Rather than starting with angels visiting Mary or Joseph, John starts before the world was made. The first five verses of John's gospel tell us that Jesus was with God at the start of our world.

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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp (or overpower) it. (John 1:1-5 NASB)

Here we see that the word was in the beginning. The word was with God and, in fact, the word was God. The word participated in the creation. We are told that without the word, nothing would have been made. Then, in the 14th verse, we learn that this word is Jesus the Christ.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NASB)

So, as we look with anticipation toward the coming Messiah, we see that the Messiah is God and has been on the scene of our world since the beginning. The beginning of our world is recorded in the first book we find in the Bible. Some totally dismiss this account of the beginning as myth or fairytale. They cling to the popular, yet unproven theory of evolution.

I say unproven because there has never been nor will there ever be an explosion which will result in building worlds, plants, and animal. They cling to it happened over millions of years yet cannot explain how chaos became perfect symmetry and order. Nor can they explain the origin of the building blocks or the source of the explosion. They have no answers.

Others will suggest that evolution is still valid while some master controlled and directed the activity. Those who hold to this are trying to merge the Genesis account with the evolutionist. In essence, they are trying to make God fit into their science.

The personal battle which I experienced made me realize that, at some point, I must have faith. Hebrews 11:6 tells me: **And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He proves to be One who rewards those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6 NASB)**

So, I must have faith if I am to please God or draw near to Him. While we are in Hebrews and looking at the 6th verse of chapter 11, let's move up just a few lines to the 3rd verse.

By faith we understand that the world has been created by the word of God so that what is seen has not been made out of things that are visible. (Hebrews 11:3 NASB)

From my perspective, it appears we have three choices when we view Genesis' account of the creation. 1) There is no God and everything happened due to some random chain of events. These events triggered nothing moving against nothing to create everything; 2) Is much like the first only now we introduce our view of God and say that He helped these events and, to some degree, controlled them until we have what we see today; and 3) we believe: **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 NASB)**

As I stated earlier, this is the battle that played out for me. Our message for today is not a justification of any view of the creation. Rather, we are seeing the first evidence of a loving merciful God who has and always will give us the best.

One final word before we leave our discussion about the validity of the creation as recorded in Genesis, are the days literal days or just a span of time that may include thousands or even millions of years? After all, we are told that a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. Well, for me, that is still trying to make option 2 (shown above) work. The God whom I serve is a powerful God. If He tells me He did something in a day, then it was a day. I don't need to interrogate God.

Let's open our Bibles to the first book and the first chapter as we read from Genesis 1. We will not read the entire chapter but we will hit some highlights as we see the beauty of what God has done for us.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was a formless and desolate emptiness, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness He called "night." And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (Genesis 1:1-5 NASB)

We could build a sermon off of the fact that without God there is darkness. That is what existed when we first see God. The first thing God did was to create light. He then called this marvelous creation "good."

We will scan over the next few days in the sequence of creation. On the second day of creation, God made something that we have later learned must be in place for us to survive on earth. He made the protective atmosphere. Listen to the record of the second day.

Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." God made the expanse, and separated the waters that were below the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse; and it was so. God called the expanse "heaven." And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. (Genesis 1:6-8 NASB)

The Hebrew word that is translated as expanse in the NIV and NASB may be translated as firmament as it appears in the KJV. What we are seeing here is that God took some of the water that was present at the beginning and placed it in the sky to form a protective barrier.

On the third day, God separated the land from the sea and created vegetation. The various plants and trees were designed in such a manner that they all produce seeds that allow them to replicate. In Genesis 1:12, God declares the work of that day was good.

On the fourth day, God created the sun and moon and other stars. He ordered them in a manner to divide night from day and to define the various seasons. He once more declared the work to be good (Genesis 1:18).

On the fifth day, God created fish and other creatures to live in the seas. He also created birds. Each of the creatures was made with the ability to reproduce and they were charged: **“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”** (Genesis 1:22 NASB)

We now are ready for the sixth day. Let’s read this day’s record in Genesis 1:24-31.

Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kind: livestock and crawling things and animals of the earth according to their kind”; and it was so. God made the animals of the earth according to their kind, and the livestock according to their kind, and everything that crawls on the ground according to its kind; and God saw that it was good.

God is on a roll here. God has placed all these animals on the earth and given each the ability to reproduce and he calls it good. Now God make humans.

Then God said, “Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls 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. God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every animal of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food”; and it was so. And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:24-31 NASB)

As we begin this season of expectancy, the season of Advent, we must understand that God loves His creation and has made it in such a manner that it provides for the creatures whom He created in His own image. As we look toward the coming Messiah, we know beyond all doubt that God provides good things for us. The psalmist about the nature of God when he wrote: **You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and kind in all His works. (Psalm 145:16-17 NASB)**

The writer of the Hebrew letter reminds us that it is God who **upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3 NASB)** It is God who hears us up and sustains this creation.

While we admire the beauty of this earth and all that God has given, it is a constant reminder that God will provide even more than we can possibly understand. We should stand in awe of what is coming from God. The creation shows us the power of God. It also points toward His love in providing everything that we need to sustain on earth. We have much to anticipate from this loving and powerful creator.