

EFC

November 14, 2021

“Big Life Questions”

Good morning church family. I'm glad to open God's Word with you this morning as we continue to look at God's big story, which He has revealed to us in His Word, the Bible. We are taking a panoramic view of history, following the story from God's creation of the universe until God brings this age to an end and creates a new heaven and earth. Our desire is to know God more fully, understand who we are in this story, and walk in the fullness of the new life we have been given in Jesus.

Pray.

Some questions in life are weighty, and getting them right really matters. Will it rain today? Not a big deal if we get it wrong. Before sticking my hands into the high power electronics that could kill me, are they turned off correctly? That was a question of life and death. But even more important than questions regarding physical life and death, are the questions that help give meaning and direction to our lives. What is the meaning of life? How do we live in such a way so as not to waste the time we've been given? How can I live life in a way that honors God, and leaves a lasting impact for good on those around me? These are the sort of questions that maybe we don't think about often, but we really should. Because these questions of meaning and purpose set direction for everything about life, and getting them right is of utmost consequence.

Today's passage is going to give us vital insight into big life questions of meaning and purpose. In fact, in **the first few chapters of the Bible God reveals a lot of foundational information for us to know God and live with Him.** They are like a gold mine full of valuable and beautiful insights. In the first three chapters of Genesis we learn where people came from and what we were created for, and we learn what is wrong with the world. This sets the stage for the rest of the story to come – the story of God's redeeming work through Israel, and specifically salvation in Jesus, and new life with God in Him.

Last week John preached about God's creation of the heavens and the earth. This week I'm going to take us specifically through the creation of mankind. And the next couple of weeks we'll focus on man's fall into sin, along with its consequences and God's undeserved grace toward us. **As we look at the creation of mankind this morning, we'll specifically see that we were created by God, we were created for God, and life with Him is abundant.**

If you have your Bibles, please open to Genesis 2:4, where we'll begin by seeing that we were created by God. Towards the end of Genesis 1 we saw last week that God created mankind. Now in Genesis 2, we get more details about our creation.

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. 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- 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. (Genesis 2:4-7)

The first big life question we see answered by God today is, **“Where did we come from?” The answer: God created us, and gave us life.** Specifically, God took some of the dust of the ground and formed the first man, Adam. The Hebrew word for **“formed”** implies design and intentionality. One way the verb is used elsewhere in the Bible is translated **“potter.”** Just like a potter forms a lump of clay into a beautiful pot to fulfill his purposes, **so God formed the first man with intentional design to fulfill His purposes for us.**

Then, once Adam’s body was formed, God **“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”** What once was an inanimate object becomes a living being when God breathes into him! This strikes me as a very personal act of God. He breathed into his nostrils. It makes me think of CPR, and how that requires personal touch and interaction. God is intimately involved in giving Adam life. And man is distinct from the rest of creation, in that he has the breath of life in him. The Hebrew word for **“breath”** is a **specific word used to talk only about God and humans** in the Bible. Human beings are unique from the rest of creation. If we look back at Genesis 1, this uniqueness is highlighted even more. In 1:26-27 we read,

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Unlike anything else in all creation, man is created in the **image and likeness of God**. Human beings represent and reveal God in ways that nothing else does. This does not refer to our physical bodies, because God is spirit (John 4:24). Rather, our imaging of God has to do with our spiritual lives, including things like our moral and ethical sensitivities, our consciences, the ability to reason, our emotional complexities – all the things which give us capacity to represent God as His image bearers.

So, where did we come from? God created mankind purposefully and uniquely. But even as we answered that first big life question, we’ve already begun to answer the second big life question, which is: **“Why did God create us? Why are we here?” And what we’ll find in our passage is that we are here for God.**

As we have already seen, **part of our purpose is to faithfully represent God**. We were created in His image and likeness, so we are meant to be like Him and make Him known faithfully. As you know, I’ve been travelling internationally lately, which highlights the importance of imaging God faithfully. Every time I show my passport to the immigration officer, they look at my picture – my image – to make sure I’m the person the passport belongs to. Imagine the trouble I would have if the image didn’t look like me! **We were created in God’s image, and looking like Him is important!** If He is righteous, we should be. If He is loving and kind, we should be also. If He is creative, or good, or holy, or joyful, we should be as well. This is what we were created for - to image God. **This is really about God’s glory.** To glorify God means to show off the reality of His greatness. When we faithfully reflect God in our hearts and lives, God’s greatness is revealed and He is glorified. Glorifying God is why **everything** exists, and it is a part of our God-given purpose. We were created for God’s glory.

As we continue reading in Genesis 2, we **learn more of why we are here**. Continuing in verse 8 we read,

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. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:8-17)

This passage reveals more to us about our God-given purpose as human beings. Specifically, God put them in the **Garden of Eden to “work it and keep it.”** This echoes what God commanded Adam and Eve in chapter 1, when He commanded them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion....” Part of God’s purpose for Adam and Eve was to join God in His work of establishing godly order in the rest of creation. Given the fact that they were to care for the garden that God placed them in, this certainly included tending to the plants God had planted for them.

So, what this means is that all of us need to go out and become farmers! No, not really! The two words used for “**work it**” and “**keep it**” are used throughout the first five books of the Bible to refer to our **spiritual service to God. Specifically, they refer to keeping God’s Word, and serving Him.** What this tells us is that our God-given purpose in life is to obey God and worship Him (Jesus ties service and worship directly together) – which may include farming for some of us, but is much broader than that. We are to obey God and worship Him in every aspect of life. This is what we were created for. We were created for God!

So far we have answered two big life questions: Where are we from, and why are we here? **The last big life question we’ll consider this morning is this: “Given that God created us for Himself, where can we find abundant life?”** Everyone is looking for satisfaction and joy in life. Just look at how we are so easily tempted to idolize more money and bigger houses, the perfect physical appearance, acceptance by the people around us, health and comfort in life, or anything else we think will make us happy. We are all looking for life - and what we find right here is that **abundant life is found with God.**

Did you notice, when we read about the Garden of Eden, **just how amazing it must have been?** God planted the garden He placed Adam in. He provided plants that were “good for food.” Maybe like the Pitahaya I’ve grown to really enjoy, only so much better! He also provided plants that were beautiful as well. Food would have been enough, but God generously gave him rose bushes and mighty oaks and daffodils so Adam could enjoy the beauty of God’s creation as well. God desires our joy, not just our survival. The description of the four rivers paints a picture of abundance and fertility!

We already heard that **God also gave Adam work to do** - working and keeping the garden, as a part of subduing the earth. This job was a great gift that **gave significance and dignity to humanity, as we were designed to join God and contribute** to His work in this world.

What is more, God also gave Adam **specific boundaries so that Adam would live and not die**. God gave every tree to Adam for food, except for one tree. God knew that if Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die in separation from God. So God warned Adam and set boundaries for him, for his own protection. God's desire was for Adam to live and enjoy life to the full.

If we peek ahead in the story, we also see that **God Himself was present with Adam and Eve as they lived in the Garden**. Can you imagine walking with God in the coolness of the day? Wow.

And there is **one more significant way that God lovingly provided abundant life** for mankind, as we fulfill our God-given purpose of subduing the earth as an act of worship and obedience to God. Picking back up in Genesis 2:18, we read

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 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. 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. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18-25)

God provided the perfect complement for Adam – a helper fit for him. He made Adam's rib into Eve, so that together, male and female, they could fully represent God, fill the earth, and subdue it, out of obedience and worship of God. Now, I don't have time this morning to dig into all the details about marriage and society that this passage teaches us. But I'll simply say this: Both man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God, and together they are created to fulfill God's purposes for mankind. Within that understanding, God established marriage between one man and one woman as an important part of obeying and serving God. This is **not to say that a single person cannot fulfill God's purpose for their life**; certainly not, for even Jesus was unmarried and He alone perfectly fulfilled God's purpose for His life. But what we learn here is that male and female together, including in the context of marriage, image God and were created to fulfill His purposes for creation as we obey God and worship Him.

We were created by God. We were created for Him, to glorify Him as we serve and worship Him in all of life. And life with Him is true life, abundant life, life to the full. This is who we are. This is what we were created for. And He is where true life is found. These are big life issues that make the difference between life and death, as we'll see next week.

I want to wrap up by briefly drawing out a few observations for our lives from this passage.

1. God is God, and we are not.
2. God is loving and generous, and gladly provides all we need.
3. God is sovereign and has the right to command and be obeyed without reservation.
4. God has created us with great dignity, and has created us for Himself. There is nothing better!
5. We were created for relationship with God, for He is our source of life - true life is found with Him
6. We were created to worship God and obey Him. We were created for His glory.

Pray.