

Creation: Days 6 & 7

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Date: 30 August 2026

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[0:00] This is a sermon from King's Church West Lothian. Genesis 1, 24-28 And God said, Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds, livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals each according to its kind.

And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds.

And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

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 said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number.

Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Genesis 2, verses 1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

[1:30] By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing, so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The sixth day he rested from all his work. Okay. Brilliant. Thank you. Vicky, was that you again? That was me. I mean, it's getting slightly ridiculous, isn't it?

I'm so uncoated. Well planned, Abby, to get Vicky to do all that. That's brilliant. And I've noticed we've had these videos two weeks in a row, and they've both been people from the northeast of England, so that is great.

Any people that aren't from the northeast are also welcome to do a wee video too. But I really enjoy those videos. It helps me to kind of focus on the scripture. I think it's been really, really good, hasn't it?

Brilliant. Well, today you've heard some of our scripture already. We've got quite a large chunk of scripture today. I'll read parts of it, and obviously we know some of it already, but we're in Genesis chapter 1, and then it's the beginning of chapter 2.

[2:37] If you have a Bible with you, you're more than welcome to open it up and have it ready. We will also be jumping into the Psalms at different points. But just to get us started, I was thinking about these verses, and they reminded me a lot, even when Mike was sharing two weeks ago about the beginning of Genesis, and we were listening today, it reminds me a lot of those nature documentaries that David Attenborough makes, doesn't it?

I mean, how old is David Attenborough now? Do you know? A hundred years old. I mean, it's pretty much he was there at the start of creation, I believe. I mean, like, he is old, but he's still churning out these amazing documentaries, isn't he?

And I don't know if you like them. I really enjoy watching them. Whenever I watch these things, I always have at least one or two, like, moments of wow. Wow. Some of the things that you learn and see are just, like, totally crazy, aren't they?

Mind-blowing. I've got a few little facts, whether you'll find them interesting or not. I do. You might not. But I was reading them online. Just a few facts about the world we live in, the creation that God has made.

Did you know there's a bird called the Arctic Tern? And every year, it has a trip from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and back again, in one year. It's 30,000 to 40,000 kilometres of travelling for a bird that's probably, like, this big.

[3:59] It's amazing. I was reading about the deepest part of the ocean. The deepest part of the ocean, if you were to flip Mount Everest, it still wouldn't fit into... It wouldn't fill the deepest part of our ocean.

There'd be another two kilometres of ocean before you get to the bottom. And finally, what about Scotland? There's a tree in Perthshire. I've never seen it, but I'd love to go and see it. Apparently, it's 2,000 to 3,000 years old.

So you can imagine Jesus walking around, and in Perthshire, at the same time, you've got this tree that is there growing, isn't it? Remarkable and amazing. These sorts of things, when I see them on TV, or when I see them in real life, or when I hear the facts, they make me go, wow.

And in today's scripture, we're presented with the truth that all of these wow, kind of wonder moments of planet Earth all come from the hands of an awesome creator God.

And it's amazing. We're going to look at today's scripture in three parts. So part one, we're going to focus on that. We're going to focus on God's creative splendor, all he has done in creation. Part two, we're going to move on to look at this phrase, the image of God.

[5:08] As it's presented to us in scripture, what does that mean? And finally, we're going to look at the last part of our passage, which was read there, which is about Sabbath rest. God bringing about something called the Sabbath rest.

And what does that mean too? So let's go into the first part. So we're going to look at verses 20 to 25. I'm not going to read them out for you, but if you want to have a look in your Bible, you can.

But again, this is this part, which is a bit like an incredible nature documentary of creation. We see the waters and the skies and the land just filled with every living creature.

The NIV translation, which is the one that I've got with me, uses this funny word team, but it's not like a football team. It's T-E-E-M. And it's the idea that the world is just teeming with life.

It's like an overflowing abundance of creatures. Creation at this point was no longer just oceans and land, sun and moon, although that would still be awesome, wouldn't it? But it's now teeming with every sort of life.

[6:14] Now, when we read verses like that, when we read the beginning of Genesis, I sometimes think, how do we read it? You know, what should it be? Our sort of primary response to it?

Well, for me, what I find really helpful when I read Genesis is to look at something that the psalmists do. The psalmists, whenever they think about creation, they talk about it in particular ways.

And in Psalm 104, we have an amazing psalm that is all about God creating the world. And really, it's a meditation. I think it was, I was listening, was it Angelo maybe preaching the other day talking about how we meditate on scripture?

It's like we mutter it to ourselves. It's really helpful to hear that. And the psalmist is doing that. But psalmist is meditating on the creation of the world. It's quite a big topic to meditate on, isn't it?

And if you have a Bible, you can open it up to Psalm 104. We'll just look at a few little bits. And it's all about this, the wonderful works God has done in creation and how he sustains everything he has made.

[7:15] It starts with these words. Verse one, Praise the Lord, my soul. Lord, my God, you are very great. You are clothed with splendor and majesty. And then it begins to describe, kind of like Genesis 1 does, the things that God has done in creation.

Verse five, it says, He set the earth on its foundations. It can never be moved. You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment. The water stood above the mountains. But at your rebuke, the waters fled.

At the sound of your thunder, they took to flight. They flowed over the mountains and went into the valleys to the place you assigned for them. And the psalmist here is recognising that the creator God is the one that orchestrates all created things, puts them in place, orders them in beauty and perfection.

It's not random, but God is at work creating and orchestrating and putting it in place. If you, at home, you might want to read a little bit more of the psalm.

It's a really helpful sort of partner to go with Genesis 1. I think they go perfectly together. We're just going to zoom down to verse 24. Verse 24 says, How many are your works, Lord?

[8:32] In wisdom, you made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. There's the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number, living things both large and small.

So the exact sort of parallel to what we hear about in creation. And the psalmist is reflecting that and saying, actually, it's not random. It's the wisdom of God. How many are your works, Lord? In wisdom, you have made them all. And the ending of the psalm, verse 33 says, I will sing to the Lord all my life. I'll sing praise to my God as long as I live.

May my meditation be pleasing to him as I rejoice in the Lord. And verse 34, that ending verse, I think is a real key to how we can read Genesis, how we can read that first chapter of Genesis. It's saying how good it is to meditate on God's magnificent works in creation. So as we think about the things he's done, the things that he has made, we meditate on it.

[9:30] And so then it leads to us rejoicing as I rejoice in the Lord. So as we meditate on the things God has made, we begin to rejoice in who he is. He is the creator God.

He is the one who brought it all into being. And this is the difference between watching a nature documentary and then reading it in the words of scripture. You know, both can be helpful, helping us to observe and be amazed at what we see.

But in Genesis 1 and Psalm 104 and other scriptures, we are reminded that all of it is the work of God's hands. These scriptures help us to meditate on what God has made.

But they move us towards rejoicing in him. Do you know, created things are really good. We hear that in the Genesis passage lots of times.

But only the creator is great and worthy of praise and worship. And I wonder today as you, and to be honest, I imagine lots of you over the last week or two have been reading this at home, thinking about Genesis.

[10:33] You know, we've been talking about it in our Sundays. I wonder if God is maybe prompting you to remember that, to not take for granted the magnitude of Genesis 1 and not take for granted the magnificence of the world around us, but instead to meditate on what God has made and to rejoice in him as the creator.

He is an amazing, creative God. We're going to move on. We're going to look at verses 26 and 27. I'll just read them again.

Then God said, let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God, he created them, male and female, he created them. Now, Genesis 1 is a bit of like a panoramic view.

So maybe on your phone, you've got a camera and you can kind of like zoom out. I quite like that lens that zooms out. It's quite cool. Or maybe you do a big like panoramic shot. But in Genesis 2, which Dan's going to help with next week, thinking about how it zooms in.

[11:54] It's funny how Genesis 1 and 2, they're talking about the same thing, but in different ways. So today it's more like the panoramic view. And then next week, we're going to zoom in a bit more. But today in the verses we've just read, you'll notice a phrase that repeats quite a lot.

It's this phrase, the image of God. Let us make mankind in our image. So God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created them. I think the author's trying to get a point across there, isn't it?

Aren't they? Now, the image of God is something that sets humanity apart from all of the other animals. So in the verses beforehand, we're hearing about all these animals, the birds, the fish, land animals of every kind.

And then we get to humanity and it talks about this image of God. Now, I think it means something really important. I think it means quite a lot of different things, but we're going to focus on just one really.

I think it means that humans, me and you, we can resemble God in some ways, in some characteristics. So things like reasoning and morality, language, a capacity to love and commit to one another in relationship, and to be creative like God.

[13:05] human beings are unique in the way that they represent God in creation, in a way that other animals can't do. Then we reflect something of who the creator God is.

The image of God is part of how he has created each one of us in this room and each one of us in this community, every single person on planet Earth.

And it's something that each of us equally receive from God. It's not something that we can earn. It's not something that we can produce.

And I think that's really important. It means that every single person on this planet has value and dignity. Do you know, even the people that we were praying for earlier, it's really sad, isn't it? Thinking about what's happened in Nepal, what's happening on Teesside, for example. Each one of those people is someone that God loves, that he's created, that has the image of God imprinted, stamped upon them.

[14:06] They each have value and dignity. Not because of what they've done, but because that's how God creates. That's how he chooses to work. And every person, whether male or female, rich or poor, young or old, has God-given value and dignity.

And whilst I've been thinking about these Genesis verses, they've gone around my head, I was also just reading my Bible app the other day, and there was a story that really brought it to home for me. And it was about a lady called Corrie Ten Boom. I don't know if you've heard of Corrie Ten Boom. When I was a kid, my mum used to have a book by Corrie Ten Boom. And I always just thought, what a strange name, Boom, what's going on?

It's because she's Dutch. You know, I didn't realise that, but Corrie Ten Boom is her name. And she lived during World War II. She had a long life.

She had died in 1983, it says in my notes. And she was a Dutch Christian. She became famous for helping Jewish people escape persecution. So they used to hide people in their house.

[15:12] And also after the war, she was famous for her message of forgiveness. She used to go in and talk to people about that. But during the war in February 1944, her family were betrayed and arrested for helping Jewish people hide in their home.

And Corrie Ten Boom and her sister and her father, they were imprisoned. And I was reading a story of what happened to her in prison and how she related to other people in prison. So let me read it to you.

So it's a place called Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, 1944. The story said this, A young Dutch woman is in the hospital barracks, giving up hope. Where there remains no courage to live, the body gives up.

Though it's absolutely forbidden to go to the hospital barracks, Corrie and four other Dutch women try to go as close as possible to the young woman to encourage her, motivated by compassion and love.

They know which window of the barracks that she lies behind. When they arrive, the shutters are closed. So they pray that someone will open the shutters.

[16:19] Then one of the guards walks by and opens them. But then the window is locked and they can't open it from the outside. So they pray again and a Polish nurse opens the window from inside.

Now, Corrie walks to the window and starts to encourage this young woman. Again, a guard walks by and slaps Corrie hard on her back. Corrie goes back to the four other women and they pray that no one will walk by anymore.

Then Corrie continues to comfort and encourage this young sick woman and reminds her of the fact that Christ is Victor and he will always be with her. I loved reading that story a few days ago.

It's a story that has lots of different things going on. It's a story about the power of prayer. Isn't it amazing? They just kept praying and things would change and then they prayed again and something else would change. It's a story about the strength of Christian love and compassion and a story of remarkable courage.

But for me, as I've been thinking about these verses from Genesis, I think it also shows the point that every person, because of the image of God stamped upon them, is precious and valuable.

[17:34] Do you know this young Dutch lady, we don't know who she was, she was close to death in these hospital barracks. I can't imagine it was very pleasant hospital barracks. She was hopeless and helpless like so many people.

But this didn't diminish or in some way ruin the image of God in her. She still had such worth. And that's what her friends, Corrie and her friends, as Christians, recognised.

Do you know, I imagine that they might not even thought of it that way, but internalised in them as Christian believers, they would have known this person has value and dignity. The competing ideology at that time would have been the Nazi party's ideology.

They would have said that this young lady was worthless, not valuable. But the Christian theology points to the image of God in every single person.

I wonder if that resonates with you at all today. I wonder if it affects the way that you see someone in your life.

[18:45] Maybe it's someone that's actually really annoying you. Maybe it's someone that's really causing you grief at the moment. Or maybe it's someone that is suffering. Maybe it's someone that is sick.

Maybe it's someone that is nearing the end of their life. I wonder how the image of God in them affects the way you think about them and how you relate to them.

Do you know, amazingly, after World War II, Corrie ten Boom was able to shake the hands of a former guard at that very concentration camp. She talked about it, she found it extremely difficult, but she chose to forgive him.

And do you know, that's the transforming power of Christ's forgiveness, but also acknowledging that every single person, even our enemies, have the image of God stamped upon them.

We can't change that. That's how God has made it to be. Next week, as I said, we'll think more about what that might look like. Let's look now at part three of our scripture.

[19:54] Now, there are verses which we just can't talk about everything. In verse 28 and 30, or 28 to 30, sorry, we have this part of God's giving human beings purpose, and he's talking about how he provides for all creatures, provides food.

And again, Psalm 104 is an amazing place to go, so a bit of something you could do this week if you wanted to. Head there and look at what it means for God to care for his creation. And perhaps what it means for us to be carers for creation too.

But we're going to read from verse 31 now and head into chapter 2 for the final part. So, verse 31, it says, God saw all that he had made and it was very good.

See, at this point, he's done it. He's done everything now. Now it's very good. And there was evening and there was morning the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

I love that verse. By the seventh day, God had finished the work he'd been doing. So, on the seventh day, he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

[21:15] In these verses, we see the very first Sabbath rest. God had finished his work of creating. He declared it very good and then he took the day off and put his feet up.

What's going on? It's a bit strange really. What is going on? Well, firstly, I think one thing we see from these verses and others in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 is that work as God intended it to be is a really good thing.

I know that tomorrow I might not think that when I have to turn off my alarm clock but the biblical vision of work is largely informed by this vision of God creating, forming, filling, being at work and declaring it good and in Genesis 2 God is depicted as being at work planting and tending a garden. So, gardening is a good thing guys. Gardening is the thing we should all be doing. Only after the fall in chapter 3 which we'll get to I guess in a couple of weeks does work turn into toil but originally work is a good thing.

Now, work is a big topic. Lots of us spend many, many hours of our lives doing it and it deserves more time than we can give it here but I would say obviously in some situations even though I've said that work is a really good God-given thing that doesn't mean that every part of work is good.

[22:45] Sometimes work can be exploitative. Sometimes work can be bad for our health. That is the reality isn't it in a fallen world. Not everything about work might be good but work itself is a God-given gift to us and it's a pattern of life for us.

I remember reading someone writing about work and saying it's one of the few things in life that we can spend hours and hours and hours doing and it's not really that bad for us it's actually quite good for us. If you were to plough yourself into other things it probably wouldn't be so good for you but work is something we have a capacity to do a God-given capacity.

It's modelled by God himself but why does God then institute this day of rest? If work is such a good thing why does then he say he rested?

You know we sometimes sing that song that worship song you are an everlasting God you do not faint you don't grow weary and I suppose the obvious question is was God tired from all of that work?

I mean I think if I'd done the whole universe I might be a little bit tired was God tired? No no in the gospels Jesus says that the sabbath was made for man so in resting on the seventh day God was providing an example to us for the pattern of our lives and how what our lives should look like we're not like God we are deeply in need of the weekly rest that the sabbath provides I mean I know I am although work is inherently good we must honour the limits that God places on it maybe you can relate to sometimes in your life being consumed by work or I've totally absorbed by it it's easily done isn't it but if that happens we are in a dangerous position physically mentally and spiritually rest is like an essential partner to work it helps us to have a healthy meaningful work life it's a visible statement that our lives are not defined by being productive it helps kill off that temptation we can sometimes have to use work to achieve our personal validation or achieve some sense of worth in this life and rest helps us to remember that surprise surprise we are not the ones running the universe rest helps us to grow and trust that God is the provider he is the sustainer of all things now I've really appreciated reading

[25 : 26] Tim Keller's thoughts on work and rest he's a well he was sadly he died recently but he was a pastor and a writer and there's a free article on the gospel coalition website which you can access called the power of deep rest really helpful and he there's just a short quote that's really spoke to me he said this resting or practicing sabbath is a way to help us get perspective on our work and put it in its proper place often we can't see our work properly until we get some distance from it and re-immersing ourselves in other activities then we see there is more to life than work with that perspective and rested bodies and minds we return to do more and better work I like that I like the fact that he's saying that it's not that rest is good and work is bad but actually they exist best in a healthy relationship with one another and I think for me

I've experienced when that's gone right and experienced when that's gone wrong when I've got that balance right and when I've got it wrong do you know the balance is right when I try to value my daily rest you know when you get a good night's sleep it's an obvious one isn't it and that weekly rest of switching off from work and focusing on other things and that's a challenge I mean this weekend I have worked quite a lot because of the season of I'm in as a teacher I guess and other things so I'm challenging myself that to put myself into other things like friendships or family time or time outside time in nature time with God time in church fellowship when I get that wrong I really struggle you know I think the things I struggle with are having a good perspective on life having refreshment having purpose I think God's designed that day of rest or those moments of rest to give us those things perspective refreshment purpose and I wonder if God is reminding you of that today I wonder if there's anyone here that needs to be radical about rest it's not really what you think about is it I think it's so important to be radical about rest to not let it slide not let yourself just go through this life in a certain pattern of life going back to God and the scriptures and thinking is this right well today as we wrap up we've looked at three things from Genesis 1 and 2 first of all meditating on the wonders of creation and rejoicing in our creator God the two was valuing each person each person in your life each person on this planet because of the image of God in them and three was holding work and rest together in this healthy balance because God has instituted rest as something so important and these three things highlight a pattern of life that Genesis 1 and 2 show us before sin comes in and wreaks havoc in

Genesis 3 and the reality is just as we finish I know that our lives and I know that this world don't always reflect the beauty of how God has made it to be it's just reality isn't it we can sometimes be left broken or feeling hopeless or feeling restless as we finish I'm reminded of Jesus's words in Matthew 11 Jesus said this come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest come to me all you who are weary and burdened I will give you rest do you know the biggest takeaway we can have whenever we really come to church when we gather is come to Jesus come to Jesus you know if you're feeling broken in some way if you're feeling a bit hopeless maybe maybe it's even things that are going on in the news as we've highlighted this afternoon maybe that leaves you feeling a bit hopeless or feeling like God what are you doing maybe you yourself feel restless well Jesus says come to me come to me it's only through giving our lives to Jesus and being transformed by him that we can experience true freedom true joy and true rest I wonder could we just pray as we finish let's come to Jesus thank you Lord thank you God I want to thank you for your word Lord how you speak to us Lord we may have many questions about the word we may have many questions about the world in which we live in Lord help us to bring those things to you help us to be taught by you and shaped by you Lord we thank you that you are the

awesome creator God we praise you that you love each person on planet earth you've put your image in them and Lord we thank you that you care about us so deeply you provide for us that you provide a day of rest for us that we might be refreshed and orient ourselves around you and towards you help us

[31 : 09] God help us in our weakness help us in our temptation to do other things help us to see you as who you are God fill us with your Holy Spirit and lead us your way God in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen!