

As God Designed It

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[0:00] This is a sermon from King's Church West Lothian. Hi everyone. Just as we get started, completely unrelated, so I just want to give you a little! bit of encouragement for something. So yesterday with my new work I wound up at the This Is Alpha! conference in Perth and it was just a really nice day. Just want to let you guys know basically there was 250 people from across six, seven denominations just coming together to discuss and learn and grow and how we can share God with people who don't know him, how we can answer difficult questions to people who are just coming to faith. And yeah, I just want to encourage you as we get started this afternoon that when we talk about God moving or God doing things, it's not just here. It's not just in this room or in our denomination or our family of churches. It's everywhere, through everyone who believes in him, everyone who loves him, he's working.

And he's working through Scotland now. It was a really, really powerful time of worship. I unfortunately had to miss part of the seminars because like I said, I was there for work, so I had to actually go and do stuff. But yeah, it was just a really encouraging time. I want to encourage you that God is moving in Scotland. I know it sometimes feels like we're fighting a bit of an uphill battle, but we're not. He's here, he's moving, and he's the one who does things that can't be done.

So yeah, just wanted to encourage you that before we get started. And it wasn't just the still time before my notes loaded back up. So today we're going to go through Genesis 2 today, okay?

So over the last couple of weeks, Luke and Mike have led us through Genesis 1 really well. And Genesis 2 kind of retells the story a little bit. So we kind of go back to the beginning, but this time we get the creation narrative instead of in the kind of DIY instructional step-by-step.

We get the creation narrative with the creation of man at the centre, okay? So you retell the story, but this time focusing on Adam and Eve and the creation of humanity. We also get a glimpse of life as God intended it. This little snippet of life in the garden, post-creation and pre-fall.

[2:10] Just this little glimpse of the perfect existence, this perfect plan. We get the first human relationship. We get the first attempt to woo a woman through poetry. And yeah, like I said, it starts with a retelling of Genesis 1. So I think we should have...

Genesis chapter 2 verses 5 to 9. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.

The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis chapter 2 verses 15 to 25. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

The Lord God said, Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky.

[3:47] He brought them to the man to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave the names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs and enclosed up the place with flesh.

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

So, you may have noticed, if you're paying attention, if you're reading alone, that we missed a little chunk in the middle there. And that's not because those verses are not important.

[4:49] It's because if we stopped at every single verse through this, this talk would be like four hours long, and nobody wants that. So we're going to go through the verses here. We're going to stop at some bits a little longer than others, but we're going to just sort of dive through them together.

I don't have, I know it's very unusual for myself, but I don't have a snazzy title today. I don't have three bullet points that start with the same letter. I know, it's shocking.

But we're just going to take a little trip through Genesis 2 together. So the verses should come up on the screen as we go through. We start Genesis 2, 5. No shrub yet appeared on the earth, no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no one to work the ground.

I actually had no idea until I went back through to this. This is the first time that we actually see the patent for a sprinkler system here in Genesis. There's no rain, it's coming up from the ground, it's all very, very raw.

This is the beginning of creation still. And then if we move on to verse 7. The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

[6:04] This is the creation of man. Let's have a go straight in. This version of creation in Genesis 2 focuses on the creation of humanity. And if you flip this and look at it compared to verse 19, where he starts to talk about where he created the animals, the animals are made.

They're formed from the ground. It's the same word there that they use. It's the Hebrew word yatsar. Just advance warning. That is not going to be the only time I mispronounce a Hebrew word in the next 20 minutes or so.

The word is yatsar. It means to mould or to shape like a potter, to take care, to intricately form something. And we're made in the same way. We see humans being made, animals being made, but the difference that we see here is at the end of verse 7, where humans are breathed into. Animals are made with the same care, the same love, the same attention. They're sculpted in the same way, but they're not breathed into by God in the same way. As Luke shared last week in Genesis 1, man made in the image of God.

And I want to kind of jump back into that because this is what we're talking about here. The difference if animals are made and human is made in the image of God. And this is the difference we're given in Genesis 2, is that men, humans, are breathed into by God.

[7:25] So what does it really mean to be made in the image of God? It is a big, heavy question. I think it is the second biggest question in the world.

For myself, the first biggest question that I really want an answer to before I shuffle off is at what point does it become archaeology and stop being grave robbing? Because there has to be a definite year, month, week where you don't go to prison for digging that person up.

So does being made in the image of God mean that God looks like all of us? Or that we all look like God? If you will talk about kids being the spitting image of their parents, like Ellie looks like Abby, and Rudy looks like me, and I look like my dad.

Is that what we're talking about here? Because if it is, based on this church, God's somewhere between 411 and 622-ish. He's got no hair, receding hair, long hair, short hair, blonde, black, grey. Yeah. Formerly ginger, Mike. So if we're all made in the image of God, does that mean God looks like all of us? We all look like him, and he's this amalgamation of us?

[8:37] No, is the short answer. Okay? For a longer answer, we need to take a little bit of a deeper look at who the original readers of Genesis were and what they would take this to mean. So Moses writing this for the early Israelites, they would have been used to seeing images of gods as they went through.

Other tribes during time in Egypt and the slavery, they would have seen statues and carvings and images of gods everywhere. People would have gone to temples and prayed statues of their gods because they believed that where the statue was, their god was.

And in the Ten Commandments later on in Genesis, God specifically tells Israelites that they are under no circumstances are they to do this. And the reason why is that they don't have to. They don't have to make an image of God because God already has. He's made living statues in his image. He's made us to be his image here on earth.

See, like I said, we don't look like God, but we bear his image. We reflect his spirit back out into the world. Like I said, we see God here in Genesis 2, breathing the breath of life into Adam.

[9 : 49] Now that concept of breath in Hebrew is actually a bit of an interesting one. And we're going to get nerdy here. Bear with me. The word breath here in verse 7 is neshama in Hebrew.

That's mispronounced Hebrew word number two. And this does mean breath. But it can also be taken to mean soul or spirit. And it's specifically in this case, spirit referring to a human God-given spirit, neshama.

If we jump back to Genesis 1-2, you see the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. The word used there for spirit is ruach. Now that word does mean spirit.

It is a good translation of the word, but it also translates as breath or wind. Going forward into Genesis 3, the cool of the day, that peaceful breeze that blows through Eden, that word is also ruach.

See, that concept in Hebrew, in ancient Hebrew specifically, of breath, spirit, wind, they're effectively interchangeable. You can kind of rotate through the three of them and find the translation that works best.

[10 : 58] So when God here breathes the breath of life into Adam, this isn't some form of heavenly CPR. This is him breathing his spirit into him. See, that is what it means to be made in the image of God.

That's why we are made in the image of God and the animals were just made. We have his spirit inside of us so that we can reflect him back out to the world. Every one of us from birth has his spirit in us and we are made to reflect him in his image.

The more that we spend time with him, the more that we get to know about him, the closer we are to him, the more obvious it can be, the more that we can reflect his spirit and his love and his goodness back out.

But it's there in everyone. Paul comments on this in 2 Corinthians 3.18, where he talks about the believers in Corinth being transformed through glory into the same image.

And this isn't a church that's just starting to look alike. They're not all cutting their hair the same.

They're not just becoming a Corinthian. They're all just starting to look a little bit more like God.

[12 : 03] They're all just starting to display his image a little bit more. Now that's great and it's, you know, pseudo deep and it sounds important. But what does it actually mean?

What does it mean to display God, to reflect God's spirit out to the world? On these first two chapters and as we keep going a little bit further through today, we can see quite a bit about God, about his ideals and his character.

We can see that God is creative, that he values relationships, that he's intentional in how he acts. He's extravagantly generous, he's loving and that he took time to rest and enjoy all that he had done.

And it's not a full picture of God by any means. It's not a full picture of him and who he is and all of his glory. But it's a good start. And to me, that sounds like a really nice, really good way to live.

Again, like we said last week, God, and Mike said earlier today, God, when he finished creation and he rested, he wasn't tired. He wasn't, you know, bent over, it wasn't like me when I ran more than 10 yards.

[13 : 08] He rested, not because he was tired, because he wanted to give us the example of how to live, to show us how we should be living. Even here in Genesis, thousand odd pages before Jesus, God is showing us how to live life as he planned it.

That love and care for others and that rest for ourselves is key and it's so important for living in his image on earth. Over the years, here and various other places, I've been blessed to encounter people who just radiate God out from them.

You spend 30 seconds with them and you can spot his love and you can see his hand on them. And I'm not going to name drop people today because I'm not that cruel to embarrass you from the front, but you know who you are.

And we all love you for it here as a church. Now as we move on, verses 8 and 9. Thank you.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden. There he put the man that he had formed. The Lord God made all kind of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

[14 : 19] In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There's a real intention in these verses. I don't know if you caught it there, but the garden doesn't just pop up.

God's not making the most of what he's got. He doesn't drop Adam somewhere that looks vaguely luscious and say, tend this. Make it work. Create a garden from this.

He plants, if we go back a verse, he plants the garden. He chooses where it goes. He intentionally plants it. And then in verse 9, we see that the trees are made to come up from the ground.

None of this happens by chance. None of it is left to opportunity. This is God's intention, forming the world with the same precision and care that he sculpted us.

It's also where we see the first real example here in Genesis 2 of God's ridiculous, over-the-top provision. Because it would be one thing to make food. Because we need food.

[15 : 21] It's good to eat and that's important. But God could have just made spinach, potatoes and apple. And there you go. There's your protein, your iron, your carbohydrate, your fibre, everything you need, done.

Have your three, carry on. But he doesn't. He makes all kinds of trees to grow out of the ground.

And here we see trees that are pleasing to the eye and good for food.

It would be one thing to make three things that could sustain us. It's another thing to give us variety and choice and incredible depths of food to sustain us. It's another thing, again on top, to make the trees that produce that fruit be beautiful.

Something to look at, to sustain our soul. God is creative and artistic. That's why, I think at least, trees that were pleasing to the eye comes first.

Trees are pleasing to the eye and good for food. It is important to be creative. God is a creative, artistic God and we are a creative, artistic people. And I don't want anyone sitting here to say, I'm not creative.

[16 : 27] I can't do it. No, I don't play instruments. I don't paint. I don't sing. I don't write poetry. If you can solve a problem, if you can force something at your work to work, if you can take software that's broken and find a problem no one else saw, if you can give a three-hour meeting at work without people throwing themselves out the windows, that is creative in your everyday life.

That is God's creative spirit working in you. And you might say, Dan, what do you know? Why would you listen to me? I am a self-proclaimed idiot standing up here sharing to you about how you're creative in your everyday life.

But if you don't want to take my word, Rick Rubin, who is a legendary music producer, he has won nine Grammys across four genres, he is the most decorated music producer in history.

And he wrote that exact sentence in his book. That if you are working and you are solving problems in any kind of situation, you are using your creative gift, your creative spirit.

So if you don't want to listen to me, listen to him. And you can just about count these Grammys on two hands. So we move on to the end of verse nine here. We see in the middle of the garden with the tree of life and the tree of knowledge and good, knowledge of, try it again, sorry, with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[17 : 50] And skipping on to verse 15. Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Which is 16 and 17 as well, please. And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

So there's two, in Genesis 2, there's two main landscaping features that we're told about. The first is the river that splits in four and flows out from Eden and that's the bit that I mentioned earlier that we're not going to cover today because I at least want to get home for dinner.

Ask me questions about it later before I realised how long it was going to be. I wrote a whole thing about the four rivers. If you want to come and ask questions, feel free. The other landscaping feature where we really get pointed out is these two trees in the centre of the garden.

So we already know there's all sorts of trees in the garden and all of them are good for food. All of them are beautiful to look at. So why do these two trees get names? Why are they worth

mentioning?

[18:57] Adam is told that he's to work and tend the garden that he can eat from any tree including the tree of life except for one. So he's told that if he eats from the tree of knowledge of good and evil that he will surely die or certainly die.

Side note, ancient Hebrew didn't have punctuation. It also didn't really have a word for certainly or surely. If you wanted to emphasise a point and really hammer home the intensity of something you would repeat the word across tenses which means if you want to go back to Hebrew this sentence is actually if you eat eat you will die die or eating you will eat and dying you will die to cover all of the tenses across but yeah eat eat you will die die just to really hammer it home.

So what's special then about this tree if this is the one we're not to eat from? Was it just a durian tree and God's protecting them, telling them not to eat it just don't put yourself through that? At this point in the story we aren't actually told much about it just that something about acquiring this knowledge will lead to death.

They're given one rule for existing in the garden don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and we'll look more at that next week see whether they can keep that rule or not.

Tree of Life is a slightly different story see Adam and Eve are allowed to eat from the tree of life verse 8 tells us like all the other trees it was beautiful to look at and it was good for food but again why does this one get a name?

[20:32] Again at this point in the story there isn't a huge amount of information here on the tree of life but if you jump with me we skip a few bits and we go to the end of the story in Revelation 2:7 whoever has ears let them hear what the spirit says to the churches to the one who is victorious I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God skipping on again Revelation 22 which talks about the restoration of Eden the new city down the middle of the great street of the city on each side of the river stood the tree of life and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations the tree of life is the opposite to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil it doesn't bring death it gives life its leaves are for healing the nations the whole biblical story that starts here in the garden goes full circle and ends again in the garden Adam and Eve had a choice from which tree they were going to eat from so do we do we spend our time and our attention on things that bring life that are healing for us or on things that we know are not good for us speaking from personal experience

I have had many unhealthy coping mechanisms over the years and they don't lead to anything good in the end so to quote Trainspotting choose life tree of life bookends the bible in the garden where Adam and Eve could have lived forever with God and in a new Eden where all who believe can live forever with God and his people and be together it's bookended by the tree of life together is a key word because we move on through verse 18 to 25 Lord God said it is not good for the man to be alone I'll make a helper suitable for him now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals all the birds in the sky he brought them to the man to see what he would name them whatever the man called each living creature that was its name so the man gave names to all the livestock the birds in the sky and all the wild animals but for Adam no suitable helper was found so the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man and he brought her to the man the man said this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man this is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh

Adam and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame do you know the verse 18 there is the first time in the Bible that God declares something not good all through Genesis 1 it is good good good good good and then very good verse 18 we see him say something is not good for the first time it is not good for the man to be alone I will make a helper suitable for him that word helper in Hebrew is ezer and it translates as aid an aid that surrounds and supports and protects it's used throughout the Bible but a lot of the time it's used in the Psalms and it's used by the Psalmist to describe God stepping into a situation or asking God to come and step into a situation using the word helper can sound a little bit patronising can sound like when Ellie helps me in the kitchen or Abby helps me carry boxes so you're here today you're going to get crossfire it can sound a little bit patronising but it's not it is a real genuine help it is the word used to describe God stepping into situations here and we need that help because we're not designed to be alone we're designed for community the Christian life is a team event you're not running an Ironman it's not a triathlon you're

not yourself against the world it's a bit more it's out of my wheelhouse sporting metaphors are not this specific sport it's like the Cambridge and Oxford rowing race you're all in a line together you're working together you need to pull at the same time go the same way and Jesus sitting in the back of the boat is the coxswain calling keeping the tempo keeping you right you can't do it yourself the Christian life is a team sport so to solve the problem of Adam being alone

God starts to go through the animals with him for companionship I would imagine you start with the classics don't you he starts with his dog and his cat doesn't work moves on maybe he goes left field maybe he goes for ferrets or maybe he goes to Steve Urban route and his crocodiles I have a friend who swears that her pet snakes are the best companions she's ever had I've slept in her spare room surrounded by ten terrariums of massive snakes it's not companionship it is it is fear it is half an hour of sleep and lots of coffee in the morning but she swears they're good companions so maybe Adam gave them a go as well but even after going through all the animals the livestock animals the wild animals the birds no suitable helper was found so what do we do what does God do he makes something new he doesn't find anything that suits from what he's got so he makes something new he puts Adam into some form of spiritually induced coma he does some surgery on his side and then uses one of Adam's ribs to make Eve and if you're me at this point or you're like me at this point you're wondering why a rib the poet in me wants it to be breath from Adam's lungs or a piece of his heart or some of the spirit in Adam pulled out to make this new being so why a rib Matthew Henry in his commentary in the Bible put it this way the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam not made out of his head to rule over him nor his feet to be trampled upon by him but out of his side to be equal with him under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be beloved see that's the plan that's the right model of companionship we see in this perfect existence working together protecting each other loving each other someone's at the door God brings Adam this perfect companion and how does he respond?

[27 : 14] with poetry how else do you respond? he meets a girl he falls in love and he produces this Valentine's card where the stanza right off the cuff so when you were young and you were cheesy and you wrote love letters don't be embarrassed it is entirely spiritual it's entirely biblical to write love letters when you fall when you first meet someone the ESV translation here if we skip forward to this flesh of my flesh the ESV translation starts with at last he's been searching through all the animals waiting for this perfect companion and he rejoices when he finds her bone of my bones flesh of my flesh they are as one and we see in this final verse they were both naked and were not ashamed and that's not just because body shaming wasn't a thing yet or just that they were both like really ripped or anything they're not ashamed because there's this perfect trust and vulnerability and honesty between them this perfect example of human relationship is created by a God who exists in relationship with himself as father spirit and son and it's how we're supposed to exist together and with him to trust him to trust each other to be honest when things are hard to be vulnerable to come and say that I'm not doing well to come and say this has been a really hard week can you pray for me to come to God and put it in front of him and say God this sucks

I know you're in it with me I know you're doing something but it's really hard and I don't like it can you please take it off me can you please help be there with me just come in the last couple of minutes here this perfect Eden existence it doesn't last long or not that we see here in terms of verses it doesn't last long human weakness and human sin start to creep in far too soon and that is a slight spoiler for next week but this perfect example of relationship trusting and depending on each other in this way is why we see Christ the church referred to as the bride of Christ throughout the New Testament so like Adam Israel was waiting for the right helper all throughout the exile throughout time in Egypt crying out while in exile in Assyria and Babylon when they're conquered by Rome they're crying out for this saviour this helper this messiah thousands of years they've been waiting and crying out and praying and then at last

Jesus comes he doesn't come as they expected he doesn't come as they wanted he wasn't a warrior king coming to drive off Rome and slay Israel's enemies but he came as a perfect image of God preaching love and generosity forgiveness calling people into relationship with God so he lives this incredible life full of all this love and peace and everything he leads by example he takes regular times of prayer he comes away and he rests by himself with his friends who prays in the garden separate again giving us this example of how we're supposed to try and live and I'm aware that me standing up here preaching about rest is a little bit hypocritical and it is something I'm working on God's perfect we're not he leads a perfect life he willingly dies a criminal's death so that

he can remove the barrier between us and God and invite us back into this Genesis 2 perfect relationship with him like all relationships it does need work you need to spend time together you need to be open and honest and vulnerable and if that is your relationship with God perfect brilliant if it's not and you'd like it to be then pray ask God to help you draw close to him ask him to break down whatever it is that's holding you back and help you allow yourself to be honest and vulnerable with him you're not bothering him with things when you lay them before him he wants you to come and be honest with your life if you just take a look at the Psalms page upon page of lament of heartache of pain of God will you step in because I need you to because this isn't working you don't have to have it all together you don't even have to pretend to have it all together just come as you are and let him love you as you are that's what we're designed for that's what he designed you for I am going to pray for all of us in a minute but if you would like prayer at the end if that's not your relationship with God and you want it to be and you want prayer individually speak to myself or Mike or Luke or just someone you trust someone you know who loves God and they'll be delighted to pray for you we'll be delighted to pray for you they'll be delighted to pray for you if you're sat here and it's not that you're or you're listening online it's not that your relationship with God needs work it's that he's never really you've never really entered into that relationship you've kind of dipped on the edge or you've skirted around or you've never really stepped forward now's as good a time as any he loves you he cares about you and you are designed to be in relationship with him

Matthew 7 ask and it will be given to you seek and you will find knock and the door will be opened to you there's no conditions in that verse there's no knock and if you're worthy the door will be opened ask and if you've done enough it will be given to you seek and if you look in exactly the right places on the right day under a full blood moon you will find no ask and it will be given seek you will find knock and the door will be opened he's waiting for you he's got his cheesy love poem written he's waiting with his arms open wide all you've got to do is ask and he will welcome you home at last shall we pray God I just thank you that we don't have to clean ourselves up to come to you that we can come to you as we are warps and sins and fears and all that we can come and lay ourselves before you and be open and honest and that you love us as we are that you take us and you welcome us home and you pull us into relationship with you

[33:43] God and just thank you for everyone here and I just pray that you whether it's the first time the thousandth time that you would just draw close to them that you would just remind them that you're there that the door will be opened that you're waiting for them God we love you we thank you that you're here with us this afternoon be with us as we go through the rest of this week help us to be honest and open to be ourselves with you in an open honest trusting relationship with you God in your name man