

Being a Creation Gospel Church

5 weeks ago Francis preached the Creation gospel, laying out the good news that Creation by God brings us.

I'll start by reminding you of a bit of what he said. It's a while ago. For next week he is asking you to consider questions about the whole Gospel series so this may help you with digesting the Creation Gospel a week ahead.

He started with the question: How do we account for our existence? How is it that this world exists and what is our place in it? The various accounts from different cultures over time have often described creation from darkness to light, from nothing to something. The people of God recognized the goodness of God in their history and in creation and the dignity of humanity; that the steadfast love of the Lord never changes, his mercies never come to an end. Out of that they told their creation story in contrast to the stories being told by the peoples around them. The stories around them were definitely not good news, with humans being the drudges of creation, living at the whim of a horrible god or gods. The modern materialistic account for our existence also has no good news for us. God's people told their story in light of their experience of God and his covenant relationship with them. The two stories of creation at the beginning of Genesis were told to rebut the other creation myths; they related everything to the one true God rather than the idols of the surrounding peoples.

The good news conveyed by these stories includes:

- All existence is intentionally created, spoken into existence by God's will. It's no accident!
- God is a person apart from creation itself
- Creation is profoundly ordered from the beginning, step-by-step, which leads to the possibility of scientific investigation. Yes, Genesis made science possible!
- Humanity is the pinnacle of creation made for friendship with God, to collaborate with God in caring for, and enjoying God's creation and continuing creativity within creation. God breathed his own spirit/breath into us. We taste his life.
- Everything was created very good.

The story of creation is referenced to Jesus at the beginning of John's gospel. He emphasizes that Jesus, the human being who lived among us on earth, was the reason and rationality of the universe, the Logos, the word spoken to create, the source of life, the light of all people.

I want today to look at the implications of this Creation Gospel, this good news, for us in our relationships with God, creation and each other. What are the implications for us as God's people, his church?

Let's begin with our relationship with God. Our reading from Romans today points to one implication. When someone creates something there is always something of themselves to be seen in what they have created. An artist or musician can make a social or political statement through their work. Your creation of a present for someone, a cake, a useful object, or whatever it is, shows your affection for them. Creation of a picture or photograph you frame on the wall may reflect how you see the beauty or interest of the original scene. There are so many ways in which this reflection of the creator is seen in the creation itself. So what do we see of God in the created Universe? Paul in his letter to the Romans points to God's eternal

power and divine nature. The power, the energy, the magnificence of the universe reflects a creator who has this power at his fingertips! His divine nature, that he is God, something totally other than humankind, is shown by the universe being so far beyond anything mere human beings could conceive of – even today's best science is barely scratching the surface of what can be known about it, for example. This is where our awe, in the fullest sense of that word, our fear of the Lord, is a fitting response. BTW This is where fear of the Lord comes from – not from an idea of a vengeful punishing God! The Creator of the universe is a fearsome being. What we know now through our little scientific exploration of the universe from its largest to its smallest arenas amplifies that feeling. The Biblical writers knew so much less of how awesome the universe is. **PPT** They didn't know that there are about 200 billion galaxies of on average about 100 billion stars each. They didn't know the complexities of the biological systems in the human body or how tiny the components of the atoms that make up matter are, when there are more than a billion trillion atoms in every gram of anything. Lets just take a moment to let that awesomeness sink in. God you are terrifyingly awesome!

PPT We also see even just in creation what God has provided for us: a world that can produce food and clothing, water to drink, sunshine to warm us, beauty we can enjoy from the smallest flower to the mountains and seas, sunsets and stars, a way of being human in families and with each other that nurtures us, so much more. These are just features of the world God created, and they reveal a caring creator, providing for us as the pinnacle of his creation, even though they are often masked by the effects of the fall.

The most wonderful feature of his creation of us is that he created us for relationship with him. We were made in God's image and he breathed his Spirit into us. This means that, even though he is so much other than us, we have the capacity to relate to God in person to person ways.

And the God we are to relate to has revealed Godself to us. God is Father, Son and Spirit. God himself, within himself, relates person to person. Genesis and John's gospel point to how God, three in one was involved in creation: The Spirit of God hovered over the waters. All that is came into being through the Logos/Word of God, who later dwelt among us. So as human beings, the pinnacle of God's creation, we are invited to join in the relationship of God in Godself, the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit together.

We are created to be in relationship with the awesome God who cares for us and provides for us. What a wonderful amazing revelation this is!

This in itself has implications for how we relate to our fellow human beings. Every one of us has been created to be in that amazing relationship with God. The rest of the gospel, the fall, redemption and transformation is all part of this. But just the fact that each of us is created for this has implications for how we treat each other. Every human being has the dignity and honour of being someone whom God wants to relate with. So who are we to treat anyone any less? Society today speaks much of 'human rights', as if just being human meant that we should have our basic needs met by each other. But that only makes sense in the light of us acknowledging that it is our creator who has bestowed the honour of such value upon us. And it is our creator who provides for us and gives us the responsibility of ensuring that that provision is shared with each of the human beings he has made, as equally privileged to be provided for by him. You could say that even the good news revealed in creation shows us that we should love our neighbor as God has loved us.

It is that value, that dignity and honour that God our creator has given us, that is good news we can share with those who do not know him and relate to him now. Surveys have shown that most people in our surrounding society want to have some sort of spiritual life. Almost everyone feels something of the spiritual when they see something of beauty in nature. But most these days do not recognize the characteristics of the creator behind it. That recognition of beauty, a spiritual experience that we all share, can open up the opportunity to speak together of creation and the awesomeness and provision of the creator and his desire to relate to us – good news a lost world needs to hear.

PPT Then some more implications for our relationships from the end of Genesis 1. Humankind was created in the image of God as both male and female. Males and females together are in the image of God. This points to their equality before God and that God in his character embraces all that is male and female. This is reflected in the many expressions of the character of God throughout scripture that relate to one gender or the other.

Finally the responsibility God gave us to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, to have dominion. These point to us continuing in God's creation with him. He expects us to be growing in creativity and the development of human society – while caring for all of the life on earth. He gives us responsibility for this – and intends us to do this in relationship with him, which alas we have not done.

PPT Caring for our planet is not a new idea. God gave us that role in this world. He also did give us the role of inhabiting the whole earth and developing human civilization as we might call it. But that balance between humans inhabiting the earth creatively and looking after its life is supposed to be in relationship with him. As those who do relate with our creator we need to work on this in our society. We have a reason we can give for doing so which is not just based on our own survival and the survival of humanity.

So in the light of the good news of Creation we have particular relationships; with God, our awesome provider, each other as fellow creatures, and the world and all it's life. Let's be a church that reflects those relationships in all our life together as God's people.