



God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven & Earth Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #1

Genesis 1:1—28a

Pastor David Sunday

September 4, 2011

Behold Our God Lyrics:

Who has held the oceans in His hands?
Who has numbered every grain of sand?
Kings and nations tremble at His voice
All creation rises to rejoice

Chorus

Behold our God seated on His throne
Come, let us adore Him
Behold our King—nothing can compare
Come, let us adore Him

Who has given counsel to the Lord?
Who can question any of His words?
Who can teach the One who knows all things?
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds?

Who has felt the nails upon His hands?
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal, humbled to the grave
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign

You will reign forever
Let Your glory fill the earth

This song so beautifully introduces this new series. It captures the theme of these next 15 months here at New Covenant Bible Church—“**Behold Our God. Come, Let us Adore Him.**” Let’s start in the very first verse of the very first book of the Bible—Genesis, which means beginning.

Genesis 1:1-28a (ESV):

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the

light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them.

Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, our Rock. Our Redeemer. Holy Spirit, would you illuminate our minds and empower my speaking so that God's glory can be seen in the face of Jesus Christ and our lives be more and more transformed into His image, we pray. Amen.

Everything in our world has a beginning. The giant oak tree begins as a tiny acorn. The tall bright sunflower begins as a small grey seed. A white squawking chicken begins as a fluffy little chick. A green jumping frog begins as a small black polliwog wriggling from an underwater egg. A butterfly hatches from a cocoon. The cocoon is made by a caterpillar. The caterpillar hatches from a tiny insect egg no bigger than a dot on a piece of paper.

Everything in our world had a beginning. You had a beginning. The day you were born is celebrated. But before that, you were a tiny human being living inside your mother's womb. There was a time when you were so small, not even a microscope could have seen you and not even your mother knew that you were living inside her.

Everything in our world has a beginning. The world itself had a beginning. There was a time when the world itself did not exist. There was nothing, absolutely nothing! Not even a speck of dust, let alone a spark of life. We have a hard time understanding this, because the world we see now is so vast and so full of life. It is teeming with all kinds of majesty and magnificent, creative beauty. We can't imagine that at one point there was none of this. Where did it all come from? The answer is here, in the first words of the Bible: "*In the beginning God...*"

God was there *in* the beginning. God was there *before* the beginning. God was there *without* a beginning. God is eternal. He had no beginning. He will never end. God was there in the beginning. God was the beginning.

Now I patched some of those words together from a book called *Genesis: A Commentary for Children* by Nancy Ganz. I read lots of different commentar-

ies about this passage and there is a voluminous amount of material written on Genesis 1. But in reality, out of all the things I read, this one for children gripped me the most. I wonder if it's because in order to appreciate Genesis 1, we need to see it afresh through the eyes of a child. We need to approach God's Word with a simple, child-like faith; with wonder and astonishment.

Adults tend to debate Genesis 1, argue over Genesis 1, analyze Genesis 1, and struggle to believe Genesis 1—especially, in our era of modern philosophical naturalism. So let me be clear: I believe Genesis 1 is a real account of history. This is no myth—this is straightforward history, a simply eloquent, beautiful account of God's creation of the world out of nothing.

I believe that the Bible is God's Book. I also believe that the Created Order—nature—is also God's Book. These two books of God do not contradict one another. They both speak eloquently and accurately and harmoniously of God's glory. If we see what might look to us like a contradiction between God's Book of Scripture and God's Book of Nature, it's simply because we're not yet understanding God's Book of Scripture well enough or we're not understanding God's Book of Nature well enough or we're not understanding either one of them well enough. This is my Father's world, and this is my Father's Word—and they both speak to me of my Maker's praise. So there is no contradiction or conflict ultimately between science and Scripture.

It is fascinating to explore Genesis 1 from a philosophical and a scientific vantage point and if we were to do that, you'd have to have someone else preaching today. Instead, I'm going to help us do what I think Genesis 1 is first and foremost designed to do. Without this, we can't go into any other kind of exploration. It's designed to cultivate and evoke praise and worship to our great God. That's what we're going to do with Genesis 1 this morning.

Jonathan Edwards, that great philosopher and theologian, loved to spend hours in the forests of Connecticut sketching spiders, insects and trees. He said, "Every new discovery must necessarily raise in us a fresh sense of the greatness, wisdom and power of God."

John Calvin said, "There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice."

A. Creation is God's Grand Chorale

Creation is His choir and it's calling us to join its ancient chorus of praise to the great Creator. Creation is always lifting its voice and singing...

O worship the King, all glorious above,
O gratefully sing, His power and His love!

O Worship the King (Robert Grant & Johann Haydn)

There's not a plant or flower below, but makes Thy glories known,
And clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from Thy throne;
While all that borrows life from Thee is ever in Thy care;
And everywhere that we can be, Thou, God art present there.

I Sing the Mighty Power of God (Issac Watts & Forest Green)

Creation is saying to us continually, "Come, **Behold our God**. Come let us adore Him. Worship Him." That's how we're going to approach this Grand History of Creation this morning—as a call to worship—a call to "**Behold our God. Come, let us adore Him!**"

Starting right here in verse one: "*In the beginning...*"

Peter Lewis writes, "In the first words of Scripture we are brought to the edge of all we can know and to the brink of all we can never know. We are brought to the beginning and edge of time to look into the abyss of eternity."

When I was a child, I would think about eternity and I thought my brain would explode. It's mind-boggling to think about how long eternity is. Every illustration, of course, fails to describe it but listen to this one:

"Imagine a rock a hundred miles long, a hundred miles wide and a hundred miles high. Once every thousand years, a bird comes and sharpens its beak on the rock. Only when that rock has thus been worn away will one brief moment of eternity have passed."

Eternity—beyond our comprehension. Yet in the beginning God was there. Consider these words from the Psalms:

Psalm 102:25-28:

*“Of old you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
They will perish, but you will remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away,
but you are the same, and your years have no end.
The children of your servants shall dwell secure;
their offspring shall be established before you.”*

Psalm 90:1-2:

*“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”*

We must not miss the fact that the very subject of the very first sentence of the Bible is God. It’s not an accident. This book is about God. And for 36 verses in this story from 1:1 to 2:3, God’s name is mentioned about 35 times.

The Bible nowhere tries to prove the existence of God or defend the existence of God. From the very first verse of Scripture, we are confronted with the reality of God. It’s not our job to figure out how God fits into our world—it’s our job to figure out how we fit into God’s world.

The path of understanding yourself is not what the world says, “Look within yourself.” No, you will not understand yourself until you understand your Maker and you look to Him. The way to know yourself is to know God and the way to know God is to know who you are in relationship to Him. To humble yourself before Him in adoration.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...” we read in verse one. The verb for “created” is a Hebrew verb that is only ever used with God as its subject. We find it three times in this chapter: in verse 1 of the heaven and the earth, in verse 21 of the animals and in verse 27 of man. It is a word that could only be used of God because it speaks of “effortless production.” It speaks of a God who is able to bring something out of nothing simply

by speaking it. We can't do that. Anything we make or create, we need raw materials to work with but not our God. He speaks and it comes to pass.

God is a creative God. His nature is to create. It is impossible to know this God and come into contact with God without encountering His creative activity. That's why William Still says, "A Christian ought never to be dull nor the Christian life drab." We are in communion with the Creator of the universe. And that's why, because of God's creativity, it is a sinful tragedy to be bored. There are some people in my life who sometimes tell me they are bored and sometimes I tell them that's a sin. It's a sin to be bored.

In his new book, *Welcome to the Story*, Stephen Nichols describes our culture as being adrift on a ship of boredom—all the while ironically, we are floating on a sea of wonder. He says being bored is a failure to see the many and varied gifts God has given us in the gift of creation. Boredom begets a loss of a sense of wonder, which leads to a loss of appreciation, which leads to a loss of gratitude toward God. The antidote to boredom, he says, is embracing the doctrine of creation: "When we realize that God made us—that God made everything—life is set in a whole new light. How can we yawn at what God made? When we acknowledge God as Creator of all things, we regain our sense of wonder, we regain our sense of appreciation and we regain our sense of gratitude. We say thank you. We stop yawning through life."

God did not need to create the world. He wasn't lonely. He is not "*served by human hands as though he needed anything*" (Acts 17:25).

B. Creation is God's Concert Hall

He created the world to be a theater for His glory, to put Himself on display. He invites us, His creatures, to enter into the theater of His glory and stand in awe and be filled with wonder and amazement and joy and delight in Him and in His creation. It's a theater for His glory, inviting us to partake of His joy.

Sometimes we need to shut down the tawdry theater of our TVs and our DVDs. We need to stop glutting ourselves until we're obese with the banalities of this world and we need to get outside into God's creation. Or we need to listen to some glorious music and **Behold our God** afresh and let our souls be filled up with the pure, awesomeness of what He has made. The world wants to turn your eyes away from beholding your God and fill you up with emptiness that will not satisfy.

So, "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*" The earth was dependent on the heavens. We lose sight of that sometimes.

In verse two, we read that "*The earth was without form and void [there was nor order no form], and darkness was over the face of the deep.*" The darkness was so deep that no eye could penetrate it. There was nothing solid, nothing firm. Not even a patch of ground. Yet the Spirit of God was working. He was "*hovering over the face of the waters*" we read in verse two. Like a mother eagle hovers in protection over her young, the Spirit of God who gives to the world the energy of God's life and creative power is hovering over the face of the waters, readying the world behind the cloak of darkness for the grand masterpiece that is about to be unveiled.

C. Creation is God's Majestic Masterpiece

Suddenly, in the midst of the darkness, God says, "*Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw that the light was good*" (1:3-4). God works in dark places. God works in secret places. You may not see what He is doing. You often will not understand what God is doing. The secret things belong to the Lord our God but His work will become visible in due time. He's working right now, maybe even in the hidden depths of your heart. And the God who said, "*Let there be light*" at creation can shine into your heart with the light of the knowledge of His glory and all of a sudden you see things in God that you were blind to before.

God said, “*Let there be light, and there was light.*” If I say, “Let there be light,” I have to go somewhere and turn on a switch, or light a match and light a candle, or get someone else to turn on the switch for me.

I heard a story about a little Spanish-speaking boy who was in a big store and he was standing before the main entrance. He was just fascinated because he kept saying *abre* to the door. He would walk up to it and the door would open. Then he’d back up and it would shut. Then he would approach and say *abre* and the door would open. Then he’d back up and it would shut. He thought his word had that power to open the door. We wouldn’t want to disappoint the little boy and tell him about the motion sensor that was making the door move.

Our word doesn’t have that power to create but God’s Word creates light out of darkness. God’s Word calls things that do not exist as though they do, and suddenly, there they are! They exist. God’s Word has the power to create what it commands.

God does not need a sun in the sky to bring forth light. Isn’t it fascinating that the sun and moon and stars don’t appear until **Day Four** but there was light on the first day. Why is that? Because God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. God does not derive His light from the sun—the sun derives its light from God, the eternal light.

We are told in Revelation 21:23-22:5 that in the new heaven and the new earth, the Holy City “*does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light.*” He is the eternal light.

Remember This: God’s Word Brings Light into Darkness

Do you wonder, “Should I read the Bible on a regular basis?” This is one reason to read it: God’s “*Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Psalm 119:105). God’s Word shines the light of the glory of God into our hearts. It brings light into the darkness. It exposes what is hidden. It gives guidance where we are perplexed. God’s Word brings light.

God's Word that brought light into the darkness now continues to bring order into the chaos. We saw on Day One that the earth was formless and void and dark. And in Days Two and Three, God continues His work by shaping what is formless and chaotic into something good and beautiful. He separates light from the darkness and calls the light "day" and the darkness "night." God is bringing order to time.

Then He separates the waters from the expanse—so we get clouds and sky.

Psalm 147 says,

*⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!*

*⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds;
he prepares rain for the earth;
he makes grass grow on the hills...*

*¹⁵ He sends out his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.*

*¹⁶ He gives snow like wool;
he scatters hoarfrost like ashes.*

*¹⁷ He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs;
who can stand before his cold?*

*¹⁸ He sends out his word, and melts them;
he makes his wind blow and the waters flow...*

²⁰...Praise the LORD!

Day Two:

God brings order to the atmosphere and gives us a precious gift without which we could not live. You cannot see it right now but we are all depending on it. You receive this gift every time you inhale. You can catch it and hold it—with your lungs! It's called oxygen—air to breathe. The gift of oxygen. Your lungs take oxygen out of the air and your heart will pump that oxygen to all parts of your body—without it, you die. It's not on any other planet. The astronauts must take oxygen with them to breathe. God gave air to the earth on Day Two, so that there could be life on this planet.

Day Three:

On Day Three, God continued His work because the world was still not ready for Man. There was light to see and air to breathe but there was nowhere for us to be! There was no place on which we could set our feet. We cannot hover over the waters like God's Spirit did, nor can we walk on water like God's Son did. We need a firm place to stand. So God separated the water that covered the earth. And he said, "*Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.*" Let the ground appear.

Psalm 104:5-9 reflects on this and says, "*O LORD my God, you are very great...The waters stood above the mountains [imagine this—the whole earth covered in water], but at your rebuke, the waters fled...*"

They ran into their places and God set the boundaries for the waters and the dry land appeared and He put those boundaries there so the waters could not cross them. That is the magnificence and majesty of our God.

And then on the third day, God looked at that vast, barren land said, "You know what? I like green. I like vegetation. I like flowers." What would it have been like to be there on that day to hear God say, "Let the earth sprout vegetation"? And then God clothed the land with vegetation. Imagine how dismal the earth would be without any plants or flowers! Imagine instantaneously seeing all the flowers appear. Imagine what it must have been like for God to see the earth turn green in an instant!

"Suddenly there are grasses for the sheep, leaves for the koalas, corn for the raccoons, bananas for the monkeys, [I'm reading from the children's book again], nuts for the chipmunks, berries for the bears, carrots for the rabbits, seeds for the gerbils—for every kind of animal God created food to eat—and for the man and the woman, God prepared a luscious feast: juicy red strawberries, golden peaches dripping with nectar, sweet grapes, huge pineapples, plump red raspberries!"

And everywhere you look, there are flowers—flowers still that no human eye has seen but God beholds and they bring glory to their Maker—pleasure to Him.

“There’s not a plant or flower below, but makes Thy glories known,
And clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from Thy throne;
While all that borrows life from Thee is ever in Thy care;
And everywhere that we can be, Thou, God art present there.”

I Sing the Mighty Power of God (Issac Watts & Forest Green)

Now the earth is formed. It is a place of exquisite beauty, a place that will be exciting and interesting for man to live in. There are snow-capped mountains to climb, rugged coastlines to explore, mighty canyons to hike into, windswept deserts to cross, lush valleys to cultivate, rushing rivers to raft.

**Remember this: God’s Word brings light out of darkness...
order out of chaos...**

God’s Word brings light into darkness. God’s Word brings order out of chaos. God’s Word is doing that today in the lives of all who receive it.

Light into darkness, order into chaos. God’s Word turns the wasteland into something that is beautiful and very good and fruitful. And God’s Word will do that in your life if you receive it with faith.

Days Four through Six:

In Days One, Two, and Three of Creation, God is creating form. In Days Four, Five and Six God is filling the void. There is a parallel between Day One and Day Four; Day Two and Day Five; Day Three and Day Six as God fills up the spaces that He has created with verdant life and beauty.

On the Fourth Day, God puts the sun and moon and stars in place so the earth is bound to the fixed order of nature. Now day and night follow each other in strict, unceasing regularity. There’s a regular order of things to govern our lives and teach us to number our days.

If you’ve lost your sense of wonder, just go out west a couple hours and look into the night skies and see the vast universe and say within your heart, “Lord, when I look into the night skies and see what you have made; when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, *‘the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man [who am I?] that you are mindful of [me]?’*”

(Psalm 8). You know my name. You care about my needs. You sent Your Son to save me. You crown me with glory and honor.”

On Day Five, the earth is filled with good gifts from God, but there are still no living creatures. Fields and forests are moving in the wind, declaring their Maker’s praise, but not a creature is stirring, not even a mouse.

Then God looks at the vast oceans and lakes and rivers and their waves are crashing up against the shorelines and God says, “I want to see some life in those oceans.” So God says, *“Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures...”* And suddenly dolphins and porpoises start jumping up all over the place; and seahorses and starfish; and eels; rainbow trout and perch; sharks and the great blue whale—the mightiest of all of earth’s creatures that is so big it can swallow up a human being like mosquito and not even choke!

D. Creation is God’s Unceasing Hallelujah Chorus

God created all this says on Day Five, “I love those fish.” He hears their sound; He can hear what is going on under water but there is not yet music in the air. We needed to hear an unceasing Hallelujah Chorus, day and night for the rest of our lives. So God said, “Let there be birds. Let the air be filled with the sound of the praises of these creatures flying above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” If you ever get annoyed when you wake up in the morning and you hear the chirping of the birds, remember what they are doing. They are praising God. They are inviting you to join the chorus.

Martin Luther said, “When you listen to a nightingale, you are hearing an excellent preacher.” Join in the chorus of creation’s praise.

Finally comes the Sixth Day, the final day of God’s work in verse 24. Amazingly, miraculously, from the dust of the earth God makes all the living creatures that move along the ground. Insects, reptiles, mammals—millions of different species, each having its own place and related to its own kind.

I’ll read again from the children’s book: “On this sixth day there was a new energy and activity upon the earth, as countless creatures began living and

breathing and moving by the Will and the Word of God. Now bright butterflies were fluttering above the flowers; tiny busy ants were tunneling in the ground; spiders were spinning silvery webs across the branches. Now glistening green frogs hopped through the grasses; heavy tortoises trudged along the sand; clever multi-colored snakes scampered over the rocks. Now there were fat funny hippos wallowing in the water; there were graceful deer leaping through the woods; there were kangaroos bouncing across the plains. Now mischievous monkeys swung by their tails and striped zebras galloped across the land and enormous elephants waved their long trunks through the water, splashing and spraying each other happily and noisily in the world which God had made for them. 'He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited,' Isaiah says—and now the earth was inhabited with every imaginable kind of creature ... except for one."

They were all doing what they were created to do. They were all bringing pleasure to God who created them by His Word. They are all praising Him and glorifying Him and God is delighted with every single one of them. He says of all of them, "This is good!"

It's not like when you find a little tag at the bottom of your new shoes, "Inspected by #28" showing that it passed inspection. No, it's God saying, "Oh, I delight in this. I enjoy what I've made. I take pleasure in My work." He wants us to do the same—to take pleasure in Him as we behold His work.

Remember this: God's Word brings light out of darkness...

order out of chaos...

fullness out of emptiness...

His Word does that for you and me. His Word fills our empty, restless souls with solid joys and lasting pleasures that none but God's own children know. God's Word does that. God's Word fills you and satisfies you more than honey from the honeycomb. More than gold or silver. God's Word that filled the void of creation can fill the void of your life.

When we come to the pinnacle of the story in verse 26, immediately we notice a difference. Up until now, God had created things by saying, “*Let there be...*” or “*Let the earth bring forth...*” But what does He say in verse 26? Look at it there in your Bible. He’s never said this before.

Then God said, “*Let Us make man in OUR image...*” Let *US* do this. This is a very personal conversation that is taking place. We have to ask ourselves, “Who is He talking to?” We sang it this morning from Isaiah 40:14, “*Whom did he consult, and who made him understand?*” God didn’t have a project manager whom He had to consult with in the creation of all these things. God needed no counselor. But what you realize when you read verse 26 is that God is talking to Himself. He’s having a conversation within Himself. He is the God whose Word can create light out of darkness and bring order out of chaos and fill the emptiness of creation with life because God’s Word is alive. God’s Word is a Person. The Father’s Word *is* the Father’s Son.

We know this beyond a shadow of doubt because there is only one other book in the Bible that begins with the words, “*In the beginning.*” What book is that? The Gospel of John. Listen to how John opens his Gospel. He doesn’t start with the birth of Jesus; he goes back before the beginning of time to the eternal Son of God. He says,

“¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:1-4).

Paul says,

“¹⁵He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:15-17).

What is happening here in Genesis 1:26? God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit who know each other, love each other, delight in each other,

praise each other's glory and share in a fellowship of eternal, indivisible unity and love—this Triune God is expanding the community of divine love and welcoming man to join in to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son and through the Spirit. God is saying, "I have made everything in this creation for two reasons. One, for My pleasure and two for man's benefit."

The pinnacle of creation is man because man alone is created in the image of God to have fellowship with this Triune God and to live for His glory and in the enjoyment of communion with Him. That's what God is doing; He's inviting us to join in the chorus of creation's praise. But to join it in a way that nothing else in creation can enjoy. Because we alone are created in His image.

E. Creation is God's Antiphonal Chorus of Praise

Now friends everything else in creation understands and embraces its design—they praise their Maker with all their might! When God looks at His creation and says, "It is good!" creation responds back and says, "You are good." God says, "You are good." "No, God, You are good" and this antiphonal chorus of praise is going on unceasingly throughout the world as creation praises its Maker. Everything that God has created understands and embraces its design, except for man.

George Whitefield, the great American preacher, once was preaching and he said to the people, "Do you know why the animals growl at us? Do you know why the dogs bark at us? Why the lions roar? Do you know why the birds screech at us?" Whitefield said, "The animals growl at us; the birds screech at us; the lions roar at us; the snakes jump out at us because they know we have a quarrel with their Maker."

F. Creation is Marred by Man's Dissonant Response

All of creation is feeling the dissonance of God's image—God's pinnacle not giving God the honor and the praise He deserves. We as human beings feel such a sense of awe and majesty and beauty and esthetic joy and delight

whenever we see God's creation. We go to the Grand Canyon and watch its awesome vista before us. We stand at the edge of the Pacific Ocean and hear its roaring waves. We stand beside a quiet mountain stream and just enjoy the peace and we know that something deeper is going on than just some natural, godless machine. We see God. We hear His glory. We experience it and we are in awe. We're being called by creation when we see the ocean and the canyon; we're being called by creation, "Join us in praising our great God." And we struggle to do it because we have rebelled and we know that because of our rebellion, instead of God looking at us and saying, "Man you are very good," God sees us in sin and says, "You are under My condemnation. You are under My wrath."

But the good news is this: The God of Creation is the God of Re-Creation, the God of New Creation! Praise God that the God who created the first time is the God who is able to do a new creation. Praise God that the Word who said, "Let light come out of darkness," came and became flesh. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and He entered in the darkness of our sin. Praise God that the Word who created form and filled the void of chaos in this first world is the same Word who came and lived among us and went to the cross and experienced death and dissolution in order to bring us life. Praise God that if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old is gone and all things have become new. And in Christ we learn to live according to our purpose which is to praise our Maker while we have breath with every aspect of our being.

As you read the Word this year...

Remember this: God's Word brings light out of darkness...

order out of chaos...

fullness out of emptiness...

and ultimately this Word is living and active.

Because in this Word we encounter our Savior, Jesus. We behold Him. This Word fills the empty places of your soul with infinite good and delightful pleasure. This Word is living and active! Because this Word is breathed out by a Person and brings you into fellowship with this Person—this Word points you to the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into our rebel world and lived and died in our place so that we might become a New Creation in Him. Let the Written Word this year draw you into a deeper fellowship with Christ, the Living Word.

Lord, we pray that this would be our experience and that through You, Lord Jesus Christ, we would learn to live for God's glory and would delight in singing God's praise and reflecting His goodness with every breath we take. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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