There was an 8 year old boy named Bobby. As long as he could remember, his parents fought. He always knew when he heard their voices starting to raise that he should either run outside or put his head under his pillow. As far as he knew this is how his parents always had been and always will be. But one day he had a chance to talk to his uncle. His uncle told him how his parents had first met and how they fell deeply in love. He told him about how much fun they used to be and some of the vacations they took together. Little Bobby was amazed. And he never knew his parents could get along like this. He thought they had always fought. He taught there was no hope. But now he had hope. If his parents had gotten along before there was the chance they could to get along again. And so he started encouraging them to be kind to one another. He decided he would do everything he could to make them love each other again. Did it work? You decide, this is just a made-up story.

But the point is that when he learned that the past had been much different, it gave him hope. And the creation account we read this morning has a similar function. Ancient people all recognized that human life was hard. Imagine living 3000 years ago. Your life expectancy was perhaps 40 or less. There were several important women in your extended family who had died during childbirth. Many of your siblings did not make it into adulthood. Some years you barely had enough food to survive. The world was always full of robbers and soldiers, and the latest war could bring untold disaster. All ancient people recognized this. And so they wondered, why was life so hard?

Today we are able to shield ourselves from the harshness of life that is still experienced in many parts of the world, but life is still hard. Not as many of us die in childbirth, but we all still die. We all get tired of our jobs at times. We all long for an easier time, a happier time, etc. And mankind today wonders, why are things so bad? Have they always been this way? Was there always so much hatred and killing? Was there always so much unfaithfulness? And today we have various theories for overcoming the evils of human life. But there is a deeper question. What is the source of all this suffering? Who made the world this way?

The Israelites certainly would have wanted to know if their God, the Lord, had made the earth this way. All the nations around them taught that good and evil had always existed. The nations around them taught that there were many gods in conflict with one another, and human existence was generally some sort of compromise between these gods. Life was so terrible that it would be natural to assume that God had always intended life to be this way. But if that was the case, how could we really say that God is good, when he allowed so much evil?

So God the first thing God revealed to his people was how it was in the beginning. And just like it did in our story for little Bobby, it gave them hope. Because in the beginning, everything was good. In fact, very good. And humans were not an afterthought or a compromise like the other nations assumed. They were the crown of God’s creation. That had all been ruined, of course, and we’ll study that in 2 weeks. But if things had been so wonderful before, they maybe they could be that way again. It would take a major reconciliation, but that is exactly what God was promising to do for them. And so as it gave them understanding and insight into how things got so messed up, so it gave them hope as to how things could be restored.

That is true of the first three chapters of Genesis, but today we are going to focus on the first chapter. We will not even get to the fall. We will just see how God designed human life. And even though humanity is now fallen and the world is now cursed, the basic structures that God set in place cannot be moved.

**1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.**

 **3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.**

 **6 And God said, “Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water.” 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.**

This section tells us so much, by what it says, and by what it does not say. First of all, notice that neither here nor any the rest of the Bible does it try to tell us where God came from. All the other nations started their creations stories with the creation of the gods, but the true God is so beyond our understanding that we cannot even begin to explain him. He simply exists. He is who he is. He always has been, and he always will be. And in the beginning this eternal, all powerful being created the heavens and the earth.

When he first created it, it was just a dark, watery mass, but already God’s spirit was hovering over it. It’s pretty cool for us Christians that we can see the holy spirit at work already in the second verse of the Bible. The Holy spirit’s main job? What would you say. To give life. Not only does he give us life at the beginning of life, but he continues to sustain our life through the end. At the beginning of creation there he was, infusing this new substance with energy and getting it ready to go.

And what was the first thing God created? Light. Now think about that. There was still no sun or moon, but there was light. In our experience, you never have light without a source. That should tell us something right away. We can investigate the universe scientifically as long as we want, but we will never be able to deduce God’s creation account from the evidence. When God was creating, he was not following the rules of physics, or perhaps even time and space as we think of them. It’s not until day four when he attaches the light to the sun and moon. And so we should not be bothered when scientists come up with different numbers for the age of the earth. They are just making the best guesses they can based on their very, very limited data. Since creation was supernatural, and scientists have to assume that everything happens naturally, there will always be a division between the two. But God is the only one who was there. He has to reveal this to us, and we believe it based on faith.

Yet God is clear about telling us that this happened in six days. The pattern is simple. In the morning, God gets to work. He finishes as the end of the day. Then there is evening – a time of rest, presumably, then there is morning, when the day is over and the next day begins. I don’t know why God would choose to make the earth this day. I realize that science will never point us this direction, because God did not use normal, natural processes if he did this all in 6 days. He would have to move things around thousands or millions of times faster than we are used to. But he tells us that this is how he made first light, and then the sky. I think he would know.

So, we don’t have to criticize scientists. They are doing their best, at least, the best of them are. But when they talk about things that happened millions or billions of years ago, they are simply beyond their competence. They are trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle when 90% of the pieces are lost. Sure, some of the data fits their theories, but if you start looking into it, there is a whole lot of stuff science cannot adequately explain. God understands that we could never figure this out how it all started, and that’s why he told us.

The final point to make is that the light was good. It is interesting to me that all the things God calls “good” still have power over us humans. Since we were created in the image of God, we also instinctively recognize their goodness. Light is beautiful. Who doesn’t like to gaze at a sunrise, a sunset, or the stars at night, a campfire, or the city lights from a distance. Light gives warmth and life to this world. God must be so amazingly good to have invented so many good things. Let’s praise him now by reading Psalm 8, which marvels at the way God has honored mankind.

Part B

  **9 And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.**

Again, who doesn’t enjoy sitting, staring at the ocean on the beach, quietly watching the waves? Who doesn’t get a thrill driving through the high mountains? God’s creation is good.

 **11 Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. 12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.**

Plants are also beautiful. And they are amazing. One little seed can become a giant tree? How does this miracle happen? Where does its life come from? It just grows. The evolutionists still cannot find out where life came from, nor will they ever be able to figure it out, because it came from the supernatural voice of God, calling out to the land and blessing them.

 **14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.**

Here is the day when the light is attached to the sun, moon, and stars. Their job is not just to give light, but also to mark the calendar. Isn’t it amazing that the cycle of the sun, the moon, and their earth all fit perfectly together to sustain life on planet earth? If our rotation were just a little slower or fast, the temperature variation would be too much and we would all die. God designed it all perfectly.

 **20 And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.**

Now finally God makes the birds and the fish. This is not a scientific categorization like we think of it. God is filling things up, and he fills the sky and the sea before he fills the land. Why? Because he is slowly working his way up to mankind. And who does not enjoy watching fish swim by in a river or a flock of birds fly overhead? Because we were made after God’s image we instinctively see that these things too are good. What a good creation God has made. Let’s praise him for it with the following hymn.

Part C

 **24 And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. 25 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.**

Are you a dog person? A cat person? Maybe a horse person. Since God has made us in his image, we recognize their goodness. The next time you put your dog, realize that the instant bond and appreciation you have with that animal comes from God, and thank him for it. But now we get to the high point of creation:

 **26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that 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.”**

 **27 So God created mankind in his own image,**

 **in the image of God he created them;**

 **male and female he created them.**

God highlight’s mankind’s importance by pausing and having a conference before making us. He did not do that with anything else. Christians have always seen a hint of the Trinity here when God says, “Let us” instead of “Let me…” And how are we made? In God’s image. But what does that mean?

In the ancient world, images were very common. The king would have his image in statues and engravings that represented his authority. But even more common, all the false gods like Baal or Zeus had their own images. And the pagans believed that these images of the gods represented their power. In fact, when you worshipped these images, in a sense you were worshipping the gods themselves: they had a very close connection.

The true God has his images too. But they are not made of wood or stone. They are made of flesh and blood. Human beings were created to rule over the earth, representing God. In other words, we are his managers. This has a few implications.

First of all, we can relate to God. We are sort of like him. Unlike the animals, we have reason. We are capable of making choices; we are not subject to pure instinct. We are supposed to use our minds to take care of the animals and the earth they live in. Like God, we are capable of appreciating the goodness of creation. And since we are God’s managers, he made us as spiritual creatures who are supposed to work closely with him. We are capable of communicating with him and obeying… or… disobeying. Originally Adam and Eve would have been holy and righteous, reflecting the glory of God. But we will see, this was lost in the fall, only to be regained in Christ.

So what about people who do not know Jesus? Do they bear the image of God? Sort of. It’s like a mirror. The mirror has been shattered. But all the pieces are still there. They still have reason, they still have this instinct to take care of the earth and to appreciate its beauty and goodness. They are still spiritual beings capable of relating to God, but right now all the pieces lie broken. But when God brings us to faith in Christ, he makes us holy by connecting us to Jesus’ holiness and he puts the pieces back together and restores that original image.

There are a few more interesting details;

 **28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”**

 **29 Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.**

 **31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.**

And so what were the first people supposed to eat? Vegetables. This is important, because death had not entered the world. Death is the worst thing. But there was no death. Even animal death is the result of human sin. This is the main reason we cannot believe in evolution. Evolution says that death is good. Death to evolutionists is the means by which progress happens. With each new mutation and development a species improves. But God tells us that no, there was nothing to improve in the world when he first created. And there was no death. It was all very good.

So what was the job of the first humans? I think it would have been great. They would work in the orchard, do a little gardening and fruit picking, then off to the zoo to take care of the animals. Perhaps do a little falconry or elephant cleaning. Meanwhile they would be having babies and raising children. But their work, we will soon find out in chapter 2, would not have been stressful or taxing. God provided everything, and in return they took care of his earth for him. No doubt they frequently praised and thanked him for creating such a good world and giving them the honor of caring for it on his behalf.

And what is so amazing: God made us specifically so that we could interact him and enjoy his good creation along with him. He made us to watch over and tend it. No doubt he anticipated all the technological advances we have made. In time, he knew we would fill the earth and rule over every corner of it. And God would just sit back and watch, blessing us all along the way.

**2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.**

**2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 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.**

 After this, God was done and he took a break. Now, this is not the origin of our 7 day week. After all, God did not start working again on the 8th day. The point is, everything was perfect and complete. The world was made for mankind, and now they could take over managing the earth on God’s behalf. That way was holy, as were all the days to come. It was to be a holy, happy, amazingly good existence.

Next week we will consider the state of humanity a little bit more closely. But for now, how do we relate this to today? Our society and our personal lives still retain traces of this original creation. Our love for being outside, for experiencing nature. Our desire to care for the environment. Our desire to raise children. All these were programmed into us by God. And when we fulfill these tasks, we are still honoring God and he is honoring us. His command and his blessing did not disappear with the fall into sin, they were only crippled.

At the same time, we now live in a rebellion. We are supposed to be God’s managers, but instead we, as a species, have stopped reading his memos and heeding his instructions. We manage the world—and our own lives—selfishly. Instead of doing what is good, we often do what is bad. We often abuse the earth and its creatures-especially other humans! This is sad. But it will not be like this forever.

In the book of Isaiah and again in the book of Revelation, God promises that he is going to make a new heavens and a new earth. We can kind of look at it as though Jesus came in order to make life on earth very good again. He removed the poison of sin and death that our human rebellion infected the earth with. He rose from the dead to conquer death. And we will rise too, with new sinless bodies, into a new sinless earth. I don’t know what eternity will be like, but it will probably be a lot like our original creation was before sin. We will be enjoying the earth’s goodness at a leisurely pace, thankful to God and united to one another.

But before that day arrives, thanks to Jesus, we can still enjoy the traces of that original good that are left in this world today. We can walk in harmony with God through faith. We can find useful ways to serve God and help manage the earth in our occupations, and enjoy the beauty and wonder of it all. Some of us are farmers. It’s pretty easy so see how that profession fulfills our original purpose. But every good profession, from child-rearing or teaching, to medicine, to engineering, or producing useful things in a company, still fulfill our role as managing the earth. We can enjoy a little bit of that original glory since our sinful lives have been redeemed by Christ. Today we have beautiful weather and some leisure time after church to have a picnic. Let’s enjoy the goodness of God’s creation together. That is what our amazingly good God designed it for. Amen.