

## CHRISTMAS AND THE TEMPLE, ADVENT 2017

Genesis 1:27-28

The Rest of the Story (The God Who Desires the Knowledge of Him to Cover the Earth)

Some of you, like me, remember hearing a distinct radio personality come on the airwaves by saying, “Hello Americas this is Paul Harvey...” and ending his broadcast with, “Paul Harvey... Good Day!” Harvey fascinated us with his broadcasts by telling us “The Rest of the Story.” Doesn’t that phrase, “The Rest of the Story” capture your imagination? What is it about the thought, there must be more to the story, that makes our minds salivate for more? We don’t want just to know the facts; we want to know the juicy details of the facts, the story behind the story, the background story that brings the events to life.

What if I told you that this book in my hand, the Bible, is more than just a collection of stories? What if I said that the Bible is the story that unlocks the meaning of all other stories?

We are just at the beginning of our Advent series called Christmas and the Temple, and the intent is to show how all 66 books of the Bible fit together as the true story of the whole world. In this series, we are looking at the Gospel of Luke and trying to understand why the Temple plays an essential part in the story of Jesus. Luke’s Gospel starts in the Temple with a Priest named Zechariah, the daddy of John the Baptist. Then we see Jesus in the Temple after he is born where he meets Anna and Simeon (we will talk more about them later), and then Luke gives us the only glimpse of Jesus as an adolescent, and guess where he is – in the Temple. Finally, Jesus spends the last moments of his time on the earth in and around the Temple. Jesus chose to live his life in the shadow of the Temple, our task in this series is to determine why. To do so, we are laboring together to show that the Temple is a picture of the whole world.

To show this, we began in Genesis last week to explain that God chose to reveal himself when he created the universe. I want us to go back to Genesis today and look at chapters 1 and 2 again to show you that this God who has made himself known desires for the knowledge of him to spread throughout all of creation. Look at Genesis 1:27.

### READ TEXT

Just three points today to teach that the God who has made himself known desires for this knowledge, the knowledge of himself, to spread to all of creation.

#### **1. God Has Created Mankind with the Capacity to Know God**

Look at the details of the text (space provided to emphasize the point of something special etc...). I want to make much of this because this is the most foundational thing that we can say about

humanity – We were made to know God and enjoy him forever. You may be used to this line of thinking, but we need to emphasize it because this point increasingly is challenged. Some worldviews say that man has no purpose, others say that purpose can't be known, while still others say that man's purpose is however the wind blows. In reality, as the Bible teaches, *[God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.* (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Why do we believe there is more to the story? As Augustine said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” For every restless heart, Jesus stands with outstretched nail pierced hands saying come, find your rest in me.

When we get to Genesis 1:26 things feel different. The usual pattern breaks as God says, Let Us make. The idea is here to heighten our awareness that something special is coming. Everything so far about day five is different. God has been creating (*bara'*), but on day five we see a different word introduced; God makes (*'asah'*). What is the difference? God making carries the idea of his special attention. Look into chapter 2 to see the distinction. The two terms are placed atop one another. God creates the heavens and the earth and made the earth and the heavens.

Why pay attention to such great detail? Because we believe that every word matters because God superintended the process Revelation as whoever wrote Genesis, probably Moses, was carried along by the Holy Spirit as he wrote. This difference gives us the direction that God is taking us and lets us know what it is he is communicating to us. He is communicating that, unlike the birds and bees, the flowers and trees, or even dogs and fleas, humanity is different. What makes us different? We bear the *Imago Dei* – the Image of God. Thought we could get deep into what that means let me suggest that being made in the image of God means that humanity has the capacity, the opportunity, the availability, to relate with the God of creation!

This privilege comes with astounding implications. We don't just get to be a bystander in the purpose of God; it is much more precious than that, God has chosen to fulfill his purpose through us. We are his means, his instruments, his vessels. What is his purpose? It is the same as it is in the beginning – to be known, for the knowledge of Him to cover the earth.

## 2. God Desires the Earth to Be Filled with the Knowledge of Him

In, what to me is unfathomable, he has chosen you and me to fulfill this purpose of making him known. He could have written it in the clouds or had some special flash each time the sun comes up to remind us, or during the middle of the night he could shake us out of bed and declare himself, but instead, he uses the meagerest means - us. As weak as we are, as impotent as we are, he uses us to declare his majesty, to exclaim, from our humble position, that his name is exalted.

He who is Lord and Creator desires his reign to be extended through those who bear his image, his vice-regents, you and me. Look again at the text at 1:28. The first word we see is blessed. That is a significant word; this word signals divine favor. Then look what happens, from the blessing flow the privileges of being God's special creation – be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it. All of this raises questions in our mind? What are they to fill the earth with and

how are they to subdue it? What needs subduing? These are important because it relates to the purpose God has for humanity. Let's look at them each so that we can see God's plan.

Glance over at Genesis 2 for a moment. Genesis 2 has always puzzled me. It almost reads like another creation account. Genesis 2 is part of chapter 1 and returns to where chapter 1 begins. But chapter 2 has a different focus, instead of God creating, we are focused on his making. Chapter 2 brings clarity to God's purpose in creation and tells us what it means for humanity to be made in his image. Look at verse 9 – God put man in the Garden is an act of grace. Man was formed outside the Garden and then put in the Garden. Outside the Garden, there is wilderness, a land that is uninhabitable and in need of subduing. Then look at verses 15-17. Here is where narrow our focus even further. Man's purpose is to work and keep, to worship and obey, to enjoy the provision of God and thereby enjoy fellowship with his Creator.

Now go back to Genesis 1:26 and 28. I want to point out again that these commands flow from God's blessing, remember that. I point that out to emphasize that this is not duty, this is delight, and even more than that, this is life. Put 1:26,28 and 2:15-17 together. What are we to fill the earth with? Worshipers and obeyers, fellow image bearers. How are we to subdue the earth? Through gardening – extending the boundaries of the Garden to the ends of the earth! Now what's the big deal about the Garden, and why does it need to be extended to the ends of the earth? Remember the Temple? There was one place in the Temple where God met with man – the Holy of Holies. The Holy of Holies was a small room in the center of the Temple. The Garden is a picture of this small corner of the earth where God meets with man. God's desire is for every man to know him! God desires to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And, don't miss this, to do it he has chosen to use you and me. Bearing his image is the greatest privilege that he could afford us and our greatest responsibility.

That leaves us with one more thing to consider before we leave this idea.

### **3. The Knowledge of God is the Greatest Good**

You and I are in a privileged position. As we travel through life, we do so all the while knowing "the rest of the story." Why? Because God told us? How did he tell us? He wrote it in a book – Holy Scripture, and he has sent his Son, the Word, to secure our hope. We know the rest of the story and our whole lives have changed. This story is so magnificent that we can't do anything anymore without the thought of this story burning us from the inside out. We can't eat without thinking of this story; can't look at a sunrise without thinking of this story; this knowledge greets us when we wake up, there when we go to bed, there with us all day. We are so amazed that God would lovingly create us and graciously redeem us and call us into fellowship with himself through his Son and then to entrust us to tell others this story.

It's hard to imagine anyone walking through life without this knowledge. If they do they truly are hopeless. And the unfortunate truth is that so many that we know live hopeless lives. They are grasping at meaning, trying to find purpose, and so they fill their lives with things they think bring happiness but in reality, only lead to death and destruction. They, just like us, were made

for more. Don't you think they need to know? They need to know that God has a wonderful plan to give life. That's what we mean when we talk about the knowledge of God; we aren't talking about heady knowledge, we are talking about knowing him, experiencing him, loving him deep within our hearts - loving him head heart and all.

The greatest gift that God has given us is the gift of his presence. That is what we mean when we talk about the knowledge of God. Listen to Psalm 16:11:

*You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

If you believe that, *Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion - Make disciples of all nations*. Keep telling the story, be faithful and true, let others see Jesus in you.

Let's pray.

I wonder today if you know the rest of the story. Not just about the story but that this is your story, you have embraced, by faith, the God who, by grace, is embracing you. It is really easy – call upon his name, and he will save you, he will make you his very own.