

Where are we? Who are we? What should we be doing?

Thesis: We worship God by serving as His representatives, His priests and kings in His good kingdom, operating according to His definition of what is good.

Big Question: Where are we? Who are we? What should we be doing?

Scripture: Genesis 1:-2

Series Introduction

Today we are going to pause our series in John and begin a 6 week mini-series designed to take us through the Bible.

Why not wait until we finish John?

- This series is my ministry project for the Doctorate of Ministry I'm working on at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- I have to complete the project in order to complete the program.

Now, in saying that, I don't want you to think this is just something that I have to do, that it is just something that my school assigned for me.

- No, this is the project that I came up with, this is a project I want to do, this is a project I believe the church needs.

SLIDE: If we are going to understand the Bible, one of the major things we need to know is that the Bible is tied together as one story.

- There are 66 books in the Bible with all kinds of different stories, but there is one main story that ties it all together.

SLIDE: Which means there is a meta-narrative or an overarching story

- One main story, one main thread that runs from beginning to end.

SLIDE: The story can be broken down into a particular framework of:

- Creation
- Fall
- Promise
- Redemption
- Redemption Lived Out
- Re-creation or you might also refer to it as Restoration

We are going to look at each of these frameworks over the next 6 weeks.

My hope is that through this series you will see that Scripture is tied together as one story.

- That there is a thread that runs through it.
- **SLIDE: More specifically, my hope is that you will see that the Bible is tied together as one story that is centered on Jesus.**
- From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is centered on Jesus and the hope He offers.

Jesus confirms this in Luke 24.

- He is walking with two men on the road to Emmaus.
- They are lamenting the events of the last few days, particularly Jesus' death.
 - The one they thought was the Messiah has been killed and now his body is missing. They don't know what to make of all that has happened.
- Jesus says to them beginning in verse 25,

... "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Lk 24:25-27)

How can that be?

- Jesus doesn't show up until the gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

How can all of Scripture be about Jesus?

- That is the main question I am going to answer in our new series: *A view of the Bible from 30,000 ft*

Introduction

As part of my DMin program, I have had to go to the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the SBC's flagship school, a couple of times a year over the last several years.

The seminary is located in Kentucky, which means it's not really in driving distance, you can drive it, but it will take you an entire day.

- So over the last few years, I have boarded several planes for Louisville, Kentucky.
- While the flight is short — only two hours — at times I have found myself wondering: Where are we?
 - I knew the flight was headed to Louisville, but I didn't have any idea where I was as I flew there?
 - Most domestic flights don't have a flight tracker visible inside the plane, like many International flights do.
 - Looking out the window is usually no help — you either see a bank of clouds or farmland that all seems to run together.

- Unless you are willing to pay an exorbitant amount of money to get on the internet to track your flight or the pilot comes on the intercom and tells you, there is no way to know where you are at in any given point in time.

While that might be true when it comes to a flight, it is not true when it comes to our place in the universe.

- That's because God tells us where we are at. He tells us in His Word.
 - He doesn't leave us to wonder.

Speaking through Moses, in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, God tells us:

- **Where we are.**
- **Who we are.**
- **What we should be doing.**

While Scripture is clear about these things, I believe we easily forget what it has to say regarding these matters.

- We live in America — the home of the brave and the free.
 - We are used to living under a constitutional republic where things are decided by vote instead of by a sovereign king.
 - Because that is our day to day experience, we often times import our idea of a democratically controlled republic onto God kingdom.
 - We think things should operate exactly the same as they do in America in God's kingdom.
 - But is that the case?
 - If it isn't, why?

Genesis was written by Moses.

- Moses is writing to a people — we will learn about these people in a later message, they are the Israelites, at the time of Moses' writing, they are about to enter into a land that God had promised them — the Promised Land.
- But there is just one major problem.
 - The land is not desolate and uninhabited.
 - Rather, it is just the opposite.
 - The land is filled with people.
 - People who are prepared and ready for war.
 - But God has told the Israelites, He has promised them that they will conquer the people and take the land.
 - In order to provide them with comfort and assurance, Moses begins his account at the beginning.

Transition: In doing so, he first tells the Israelites and us, where we are. Where is that?

I. We are in God's kingdom (vs. 1-3)

Look at verse 1,

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." (Gen. 1:1)

If you think about it, that is a strong opening.

- Moses tells us that the universe and everything in it was created by God and belongs to Him.

ILLUSTRATION: Like most boys, Camden and Bryson enjoy building.

- To encourage this, we have bought them several block and building sets over the years.
 - It has been a great investment.
 - They build all kinds of stuff, and they spend hours building.

If you ask them what they are building, you might get a standard answer like a castle, a house, or a fort.

- Or they might tell you it is a wiggly wom wam or something completely made up.
 - As parents' when we hear something like that, our first tendency might be to correct them and tell them that a wiggly wom wam doesn't exist.
 - While that might be our tendency, in some sense it is not really our place to do that because they are one's who created it, **which means what they name their creation and how things operate within in their kingdom is up to them.**
- The same is true with this world.
 - God Created it, which means it belongs to Him.
 - It is His kingdom.

David echoes this thought later in the Psalms when he writes,

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers." (Ps 24:1-2)

The world, the universe, every created space and thing are God's.

- He owns it all.
 - Whether we live in the United States, Africa, Asia, or anywhere in between, we live in God's kingdom.

Transition: But it is not just any kingdom,

It is God's good kingdom.

As you read through the creation account, you learn God took that which existed in chaos and created something beautiful out of it.

In verse 2, Moses tells us that:

“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (Gen. 1:2)

The mention of the “*deep*” and “*the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters*” is meant to tell us that the world was in a state of chaos.

- Water or sea in biblical times was thought to be a place of darkness, chaos, and evil.
- They didn’t have meteorologists to predict storms, nor did they have scuba gear and submarines to peer below the surface.
- All they knew was that the sea could grow violent in a moments notice and mysterious sea creatures lurked beneath.

But God takes that which exists in chaos and makes something beautiful, something good out of it.

- In verses 3-27 God forces back the chaos.

First, He creates **light**.

- Then He **separates** the **waters**, creating an **expanse** between the two before He brings about **dry land** and **vegetation**.
- Then on the **fourth day**, He creates the **Sun, Moon, and Stars**.
- And then on the **fifth** and **sixth days**, He creates the **sea creatures**, the **birds** of the air, **livestock**, **creeping things**, and then **us**.

God takes that which existed in chaos and creates something good, something ordered, something beautiful.

A beautiful kingdom in which we live.

- That is where we are.

Transition: But who are we? When we look at the Biblical story, we learn that:

II. We were created to be God’s representatives and His kingly priests (vs. 26-27)¹

In verse 26 the text says,

“Then 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

¹ See article *What does it mean to be human* on the Bible Project website for a basis for the thoughts and idea in points II and III <https://thebibleproject.com/blog/what-does-it-mean-to-be-human/>

and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.' (Gen 1:26-27)

The Hebrew word for image is *selem*,

- **It is used throughout Scripture to refer to idols or icons.**

Where do people typically erect icons?

- People typically erect icons in temples or places of worship such as the high hills.
 - It was thought that these were places where a god and humans connected.
 - To be sure, the icon wasn't the actual deity but the image of the god.
 - Its purpose was to represent the god's power and presence.

Transition: So *selem* refers to an idol or an icon and it is meant to be representative, but:

***Selem* is also used throughout Scripture to refer kings.**

- The close association of idols/icons with kings occurs because in biblical times, and even today, kings were thought to be representatives of the gods.
 - They served as their representatives, reigning and ruling on the god's behalf.

Transition: The biblical usage of the word *selem* combined with the teaching in verse 26 tells us that:

God made man in his image, and as those made in His image, we are supposed to be His representatives who reign and rule on His behalf.

- If you think about it, the Bible is making a radical statement.
 - Bearing God's image is not a role that is reserved for a few special things or a few special people, it is something all humans do.
 - We all bear the image of God.

APPLICATION: This also means we are all valuable.

- No matter who you are or what you have done, you have intrinsic value because you bear God's image.
 - This is why racism is so despicable.
 - This is why we need to treat everyone the same.
 - This is why we must fight for the rights of the unborn and those who can't fight themselves.
 - We all have value because we all bear the image of God.

Along with being God's representatives and his kings,

We are also God's priests.

Look at Genesis 2:15.

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." (Ge 2:15)

Many commentators liken the garden to the Temple because it was the place where God resided.

- It was a sacred space.
- Into this sacred space God placed His people like priests in the Temple to work it and keep it.²

Transition: That leads us into what we should be doing.

III. We should live life in worship to God (Gen 2:15; Rom 12:1)

The word work in Genesis 2:15 refers to service and really to worship.

- Paul picks up on this idea in Romans 12:1 when he writes,

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship [or some translations say "spiritual service of worship" (NASB), "spiritual act of worship" (NIV 84)]." (Ro 12:1)

So we should live life in worship to God.

IV. How do we live life in worship to God? (vs 28-31)

ILLUSTRATION: Did you know that modern day mirrors were created by a German Chemist by the name of Justus von Liebig.

- In 1835, he developed a process for applying a thin layer of metallic silver to one side of a pane of clear glass.
- And that's what allowed mirrors to be massed produced and why we have them in our homes today and can look at our reflection anytime we want.³

² The man's principal commission is to "work" and "take care" of his pristine garden home (v. 15). The word translated "work" (*abad*) is the common one for tilling the soil (e.g., 3:23; 4:2, 12) or for other labor (e.g., Isa 19:9); it also speaks of "service" to another (e.g., 29:15; 31:6) and is often used of worship (e.g., Exod 3:12). The verb and its noun derivative "service" (*abadá*) frequently describe Levitical duties in tabernacle and temple worship. It also speaks of the completed "work" on the tabernacle (Exod 39:32, 42). "Take care" (*šamar*) probably specifies the nature of Adam's labor. It describes the occupation of Abel (4:9), attending property and flocks (e.g., 30:31), protecting persons (28:15, 20), and frequently of "observing" covenant stipulations. For priestly duties it describes the faithful carrying out of God's instructions (e.g., Lev 8:35) and the caretaking of the tabernacle (e.g., Num 1:53; 18:5). Both terms occur together to describe the charge of the Levites for the tabernacle (Num 3:7-8; 18:7), thus again suggesting a relationship between Eden and tabernacle.

K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 209-210.

³ Illustration developed from <https://www.livescience.com/34466-who-invented-mirror.html> accessed 1/3/19

Just like we are able to look at our reflection in the mirror, God should be able to see His reflection in His people. In other words,

A. WE WORSHIP GOD WHEN WE REFLECT HIS ATTRIBUTES IN THE WORLD AS HIS REPRESENTATIVES.

- When we image:
 - His love and kindness.
 - His wisdom and justice.
- When we serve others, putting them before ourselves.
- When we are forgiving and quick to seek reconciliation, not holding things against another.
- When we care and provide for others.

- When we do those things and more, we reflect or mirror God's image to the world.
 - We act as His representatives, His *selem*, manifesting His presence to the world
 - When we do these things, we worship God.

Transition: But remember in Hebrew *selem* doesn't just refer to those things that manifest a god's presence, it also refers to kings, which tells us that,

B. WE WORSHIP GOD WHEN WE RULE AS KINGS

Look at the text starting in verse 28,

"And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so." (Ge 1:28–30)

- God tells us that we are to "*be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it*".
 - We are to "*have dominion*".
 - This is kingly language.
- It tells us what God expects us to do.
 - We are to be little "k" kings who serve under the all-sovereign big "K" King of this universe.
 - We are to **reign and rule** on His behalf, making something beautiful out of the chaos of this world.

- Realizing God wants us to exercise dominion on His behalf as a little “k” king caused the Psalmist to break out in worship in Psalm 8.
- In verses 3-6 of that chapter we read,

"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 that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet," (Ps 8:3–6)

The psalmist hits the nail on the head. The task God has given us is amazing and it is a worshipful task.

- God has called us to reign and rule as His representatives in His creation, when we do we worship God.

Acting as His kings, **we are to take this world somewhere**, making something beautiful out of the chaos in the world for God’s Glory.

- As we increase and multiply, families turn into communities, and those communities turn into towns, and eventually cities and nations.
- **Part of exercising dominion**, part of taking this world somewhere is to multiply and increase, creating kingdoms and determining that those kingdoms are going to operate according to God’s wisdom.
 - Part of operating according to God’s wisdom and as His representatives means that we are to **do all we can to fight for injustices**, we are to **seek to abolish racism** and the **unhindered murder of the unborn**.
- Along with increasing and multiplying we also take this world somewhere when we use the **raw materials** God has created to make amazing things.
- And often times human do make amazing things.
 - Think of all the **technological advances** we have seen in the last decade.
 - **Phones** have gone from hanging on your wall to being carried in your pocket.
 - And those phones are not just phones, they are computers as well.
 - While it might be cool again to shoot **film, cameras** no longer need it.
 - Instead the pictures we take are made up of 1’s and 0’s and processed in a digital darkroom instead of a physical one.
- Those are just a few examples of the way we are **taking the world somewhere**.
 - When we do that, we are continuing the creative process and exercising dominion as little “k” kings on God’s behalf in worship to Him.

Transition: Along with ruling as kings,

C. WE WORSHIP GOD WHEN WORK IT AND KEEP IT AS PRIESTS.

The idea that we are priests who cultivate comes from Genesis 2:15. There we read,

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." (Ge 2:15)

ILLUSTRATION: In the last year or so, Jen has taken up gardening as a hobby.

- She has planted a number of plants and flowers in our backyard.
 - As well as she started a vegetable garden.
 - During the Spring and Summer, she is out there almost every morning and evening watering and tending to the plants, flowers, and vegetables.
 - As a result, the aesthetic of our backyard and the quality of the food that we eat has improved.

But a garden doesn't just happen.

- Jen has to work and keep it each and every day.

Just as Jen tends to the garden in our backyard, we are to do the same in God's garden as God's priests.

- We are to work it and keep it.
 - **In other words, we are to worship God in service to Him.**
 - As priests, we do that by **faithfully serving God in accordance with His word.**
 - **Calling** others to follow us in serving God.
 - **Leading** the people He entrusts to our care — whether that be a community, a church, a small group, or our family. We are to lead those whom God has entrusted to our care to understand who God is and how we can worship Him through service.
 - As well as we are to **protect** those to whom God has given us from falsehood.
 - When we do these things, we are working and keeping it as priests.

So this is what we are to do:

- We are to image God and His attributes to the world, making His presence known.
- We are to reign and rule over God's creation exercising dominion and furthering His kingdom by being fruitful and multiplying.
- We are to worship God as priests by serving according to His wisdom, calling others to follow Him, and by leading and protecting those in our care.

Transition: And

We are to do all these things under God's direction.

This is what He tells us in Genesis 2:16 and 17,

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Ge 2:16–17)

God sets boundaries for us.

- Essentially, He tells us that we are to operate according to His definition of good.

But that is where we get into trouble because we don't always operate according to God's definition of goodness.

- Instead we trade God's definition for our own.
 - We aren't content with being a little "k" king, we want to be a big "K".
- We aren't the first to do that, Adam and Eve were.
 - We will get more into why and how this happened next week.
 - But for now, I want you to see that man's failure to act as God's image bearers, His priests and kings in this world is why Jesus ultimately had to come.
 - Jesus is the true image of God, the true king and the true priest.
 - He perfectly represents God to the world.
 - He perfectly rules, pushing back the chaos of this world.
 - And He perfectly serves according to God's will, by giving His own life as a sacrifice.
 - Jesus came not only to show us what it looks like to image God and act as His king and priest, but He also came to make it possible for us to do that again.

When Jesus comes on the scene, He came preaching the kingdom, calling all those who came into contact with Him to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

- In other words, we are to turn from our way of doing things, from our definition of good, from our failure to image God and act as His kings and priests, we are to turn from those things back to God.
- We are to give up the desire to make a name for ourselves, build our own kingdom, and temple of worship, and begin to do that for God.
 - We are to do that and we are able to do that because Jesus came.
 - It is His sacrifice on our behalf that allows us to enter into His renewed kingdom and function rightly as God's representatives, priests and kings, bearing His image in the way He originally designed.

Conclusion

Just as we will get into the specifics of how we got ourselves into this position next week, we will get into the specifics of exactly how Jesus made a way for us to once again enter into God's kingdom in the coming weeks.

- But for now, as we begin this series, I want you to see that:
 - **We worship God by serving as His representatives, His priests and kings in His good kingdom, operating according to His definition of what is good.**

So:

- That's where we are.
- Who we are
- What we are supposed to be doing.

Do you believe that?

Are you doing that?

- Are you acting as God's representatives, as His priests and kings, operating according to what He says is good?
 - Are you worshipping God with your whole life?
 - Living life in worship to Him?

If you aren't, you need to heed Jesus' words and repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

If you are worshipping God everyday, keep it up because that is why God has created you and it is what God has designed for you to do.

- We were created to worship God.
 - So let's worship Him as His representatives, His kings, and His priests each and everyday.

