

Sermon Transcript from January 31st, 2016
Act 1: Good Creation
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I'm going to read from Genesis 1. I'm going to read verses Genesis 1:1-5 and then Genesis 1:26-31 and then I'm going to pray. Genesis 1:1-5 then 26-31. I'm going to read this to you guys and let's pray.

Genesis 1:1-5, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 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. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day,' and the darkness he called 'night.' And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day."

Genesis 1:26-31, "Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish of 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.' So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 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.'

"Then God said, 'I will 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. 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.

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

Let's pray.

God, I ask collectively, together, that we would bring our whole selves before You right now as we open the Scriptures up, our minds to You and our hearts to You. Whatever situation that we find ourselves in the morning, I know that I can't even guess how many places people are in today. I pray that You would meet with us, sovereign God. Be with us, teach us and, more than that, I ask, God, that You would shape us into a people that You are using to bring about Your good plan on Your good earth. I submit all of my capacities to You. Would you help me as I communicate these things? In Christ's name, amen. Amen.

So, we've been in something we are calling The Year of Biblical Literacy. It's my strong conviction that we are becoming illiterate when it comes to the Bible. That's kind of the premise of this year. We listen to podcasts and we go to church and we read devotional, but time spent with our hearts and our mind open in this whole Bible? This whole thing is becoming like a lost art. There are over 3,400 copies of the Bible sold every hour, yet it remains the best selling book that's never really read.

This year, what we are endeavoring to do is to know the Bible together as we actually read through the Bible. To know it by reading it. I know that's novel. Not by podcasting it, but by reading it ourselves. Most of you, yesterday, started the book of Leviticus. How bloody is Leviticus? Just right out of the gate, guts and blood and they're throwing it everywhere. Okay. You can do it. Because this is where everyone quits. Don't be that guy or gal. Don't do it. Just read through it.

This week you will be reading Leviticus 5-25. Pretty much the whole thing. So, watch the cartoon from The Bible Project. They did a great job, masterful job, laying the book out in its structure. And then read it. If anything else just to say you did, because most of you can't say that. You're like, "Yeah, I read the Bible. Except for that one or two books right there."

Like, it starts good. Genesis, Exodus and then you get to Leviticus and you're like, "Why this here? Why this?"

But, you can do it. Keep reading. Keep reading.

Today, we begin a series that we are calling "The Story of God." It's a meta narrative series through the whole Bible. So, we're doing these mini-series inside The Year of

Biblical Literacy throughout the whole year. And today, I want to start this series called "The Story of God." And this series, really, is one of the things that saved this idea, this concept and I think saved my faith. I was having a huge crisis of faith when I was following Jesus after a few years. Actually, even after a few years of ministry. And what I was told was a lot of systematic theology. You look up the topic and then here's all the verses that relate to the topic and you go and form a systematic theology.

That's fine. Whatever. I just don't think it honors the story. And then someone taught me what's called Biblical theology which is this. It's like, "Honor the story as the story unfolds and what's going on in the story and how does it unfold?"

This concept that the Bible is one unified story I think saved my walk with God. Like, saved the fact that I still study the Bible today and cannot wait to keep diving deeper and deeper and deeper into this story. And this is our working definition of the Bible. This is important to know as we start this series. This has been the working definition of our series so far. This is what our last series unpacked:

The Bible is a library of writings that are both divine and human that, together, tell a unified story which leads us to Jesus. The Bible is a library of writings that are both divine and human that, together, tell a unified story which leads us to Jesus.

That "unified story" part is what I want to try to get to through this series and how this unified story leads us to Jesus. It's brilliant that the Bible is one story. It tells one whole story through all these different types of writings, all these different plots and subplots, but it's telling one big story. So, let me give you the big picture of where we're going the next few weeks. But, here's the meta narrative of the Bible on one slide. Here it is. Here's the story of God in five acts:

Act 1: Creation.

Act 2: The Fall.

Not the season "the fall," but like the fall of humanity. Big difference.

Act 3: Israel or The Covenant That God Makes With Abraham to Renew His World, to Restore His World Through This Family.

And that's a very long act, by the way. Most of your Old Testament is that; Act 3.

And then you get Act 4: Jesus: The New Covenant.

That's the Gospels. And then, in that act, is the Church. Us today. We're a part of that ongoing Act 4.

And then, finally, Act 5: The Restoration of All Things or The Very End of the Book of Revelation.

That is the entire story of the Bible, and knowing the story of the Bible is so important on all kinds of different levels. First, this is what we tend to think. I think if you've not been to church that long and you're just new, you probably think this. We tend to think the Bible starts in Genesis 3 and ends in Revelation 20.

Now, you might not know what that means. Let me explain that. What I mean by that is many of us grew up thinking that the Bible was about how humanity sinned and how God is bringing judgment on sin and Jesus saves us from that judgment. This is what we think the Bible is about. The Bible is about humanity are sinners and God is judging the world and that Jesus saves us from that coming judgment. So, basically, Genesis 3 is the fall and Revelation 20 is talking about that ultimate judgment on the fallen world.

But, that idea of the Bible is so truncated that I would argue it distorts the entire thing. It flattens it, it ruins the entire story. This last fall, I read a book, a novel, sci-fi – my very first sci-fi novel I've ever read. Don't judge me, but it's just the very first one I've read – called "The Book of Strange New Things." I think I told you about it last year when I was just starting it. It's about a British missionary that is sent to another planet to minister to aliens. It's already setting up to be an awesome book, right? It was such a good read; I mean the story is still working on me today. Like, right now it's still working on me. It's so good.

Anyway, the aliens are called Oasians, because the planet is called Oasis, and they call

the Bible "The Book of Strange New Things." And the missionary is trying to transliterate the Bible to make sense to them. He's taking these concepts from the Bible and then making it make sense to them. But, to do that, he has to take out all these beautiful metaphors of the Bible. He has to take out "sheep" and "shepherd" and the "ocean" metaphors and all these other things because they don't know what those are.

But, they don't want him to. They tell him not to do it, because he has to transliterate it, he has to flatten the Bible, and they don't want the Bible flattened. They want it unedited. They want the Bible, in all of its "Strange New Thingness." And we are so guilty of trying to flatten the story of God. We flatten it because we just can't digest it. We can't flatten the story because this story is the true story. And, therefore, we have to start where it starts and end where it ends. It does not start with sin and it does not end with judgment. It starts with creation and it ends with new creation. This is so so important.

If you have some truncated, distorted view of the Bible, please get it right right now. It starts with creation and ends with new creation. We sometimes make creation just a backdrop to redemption. That's what we do. We're like, "Oh, yeah. God created some stuff. But, He's trying to judge sin and He's trying to fix everything."

No. It starts with creation. Creation and new creation are what God is up to in the story. So, redemption is a part of a bigger story about God bringing about new creation. Now, what this means is that the Bible cannot be flattened to be about how you are a sinner and going to the bad place unless you try to do some of what this book says so you can go to the good place. That is not what this book is about. That won't do.

This library of books is about God and His good creation and how we were created in His image as partners with God in His good creation and how we went bad and how God is on an intentional mission to restore us and redeem us and how He's after restoring the whole created world and how He accomplished that through Jesus and how we are now new partners with God through Jesus to bring about His redemption and how, one day soon, Jesus will come back Himself to bring about the renewal of all things.

That's the whole Bible, and we cannot flatten it. So, that's one reason why we have to get the whole story. The other reason is this: the larger story of the Bible – that whole narrative that I just said – also sets the context for what the Bible says. And it also sets the context for what the Bible means when it says what the Bible says. Let me try to give you an example. Have you ever walked in on a conversation that's already going and you walked in at the wrong time? And the first thing that you said when you walked in was like, "Whoa. I'm going to need some context here."

That's the first thing you said. Like, you walk in on someone and the first thing that you hear them say is, "So I said, 'You need to put your shirt back on.'"

And you're like, "Whoa. Context. What is happening right now?"

Or you walk in on someone and they're like, "Yeah, so, Kanye West is a god."

You're like, "Whoa. Context."

Or like, "Donald Trump is a Christian."

You're like, "Whoa. Context. I need a lot of context for that one."

That might have to be struck from our podcast. Anyway. When you say certain things you're like, "Okay, I need context."

When you walk in the middle of a conversation on someone and they say something, you need context. This is exactly what happens with the Bible. When we pick out verses out of the Bible and just quote them, it can be like walking in on a conversation where you might have a guess on what's going on, but chances are you don't know what's going on.

For instance, Jesus allows for divorce. You need context. Homosexuality is a sin. I'm going to need more context. If you crave sex, it's better to marry than to burn with the desire to have sex. I'm going to need a lot more context on that one. But, we quote these things. We say these things and we don't fit them and place them into God's story. And this is the problem with most of our flinging the Bible back and forth. For the most part, we don't

work to gain the needed context to answer these questions rightly. Because you can't start with these questions. You have to start with the story. You have to start with the story.

And, by the way, if I'm tripping you up by saying "story," I mean the true narrative of what God is doing. Is that better? You're like, "Story? It's not a story. It's true."

I know it's true. I wouldn't be up here if it wasn't true, okay? I would be fired a long time ago.

All of this, all of those things that I just said, the Bible actually says those things at some point. But, they are housed in a story. They are housed in a narrative. They are housed in a context. And I'm not just talking about an immediate context, they are housed in a larger context of the story of God and who God is and what His plan is for humanity as we partner with Him to bring about redemption in His good world. The context of the story of God is everything when you study the Bible. You have to know the context. We have to get the story.

So, let's begin with Genesis 1 and 2. What is the story? So, I want to move through three quick quick – I promise it's quick – movements this morning. Three quick movements to tell you how does the story start in Genesis 1 and 2. Three short movements, and they are this:

Genesis 1 and 2 will teach us this is a different kind of story that is answering a different set of questions and is inviting us into a different way to live. So, Genesis 1 and 2. They way that the Bible starts the story, the true story, is a different kind of story answering a different set of questions inviting us into a different way to live.

First, this is a different kind of story. Genesis 1 and 2 is telling a different kind of story. The first thing that we have to confront – and I want you all to confront this. I want you all to think about this for a second. The first thing that we have to confront when we open the Bible is the radical claim that this world is good. That's the first thing that you have to confront. It might not be that radical to us in the modern West, but don't be a snob about this. The world didn't always think like you think today.

The idea that the world is good and that there is goodness in the world was terribly revolutionary when the Bible was being written and collected. You first have to house the story of God in its original context, and the idea that the world was good was revolutionary. Actually, the Biblical idea of goodness of the world and the goodness and the equality of humanity has infused a thinking in most Western people and cultures, regardless of your faith perspective. You can have any kind of faith, but you probably think, if you're a Western person, that the world is good in some way and that humanity is created equal in some way. You can thank the Bible for that.

But, when the Old Testament was first written, this idea was just getting started. They were just trying out this idea in the Bible and it was novel then. We have a few other creation stories around the time Genesis was written. For example: we have an ancient Babylonian creation narrative called the "Enuma Elish" and it's on these clay tablets. Some date the Enuma Elish written before Genesis. Some have it way before Genesis, some people have it right around the same time. Either way, it was the same story world as written in Genesis.

The similarities between these two stories are striking. They both start with watery chaos, Genesis and the Enuma Elish. There are six scenes in the creation story where humanity is created on the sixth day or the sixth scene. But, in the Enuma Elish, the world starts out because the gods are at war. And, as these gods are torn apart limb for limb, parts of the world are created out of the body parts of the wounded gods. When humanity is created, it was an after thought. When all the beaten gods started crying out to Marduk, the king god, "You can't make us your slaves forever, Marduk."

So, Marduk creates, out of the blood and the guts of these fallen gods, these slain gods, humanity, that are charged to the service of the gods forever so the gods could be at ease forever. Humanity was created as slaves to the gods. Now, if you are a ruler in Babylon, and you are seen as a demigod, and you hand your people this story, the Enuma Elish – by the way, they had to read it out loud every New Year. What this is saying about you is that life is short, it's hard and violent and meaningless and you are a slave to the gods, which helps if you're a demigod to hand that out to your servants.

Genesis 1, God takes watery chaos and He orders it, not through war, but through His words. He speaks and it is, and that's the basis – actually, that's the basis of all science. The world can be observed because it was the result of an orderly mind. God says it

and it is.

And the creation is good. Even when the creation story is written about, it's written about in poetry or prose or even people call it an Ode. Like, it's beautiful, it's poetic. Creation is good. The sky is good. The land is good. The Sun is good. The plants are good. The animals are good. And the crowning beauty of God's creation are His image-bearers. Humanity was made equal with each other and made in God's image. We are not slaves of the gods, we are partners with God to carry on God's creative beauty and plan for the world. This is a different kind of story.

And don't think, because you're modern, you're like, "Yeah, we all know that. We all know that the world is good and we're all created equal."

That was not the story world this was written in at all. This was like written as a polemic against that. This is not just a different kind of ancient story; I believe it's a different kind of modern story as well. For the most part, our modern story is adopted from a humanist or an evolutionary story. Now, let me have clarity here. When I say "evolutionist," some of you guys are like, "Oh my gosh. Here it comes."

Listen. Please listen to me. I am not disputing the science that says that complex organisms evolve from simple ones through the process of selection of traits suited for survival. I'm not saying – if you know what that means, by the way, then you're like, "Okay. I'm with you."

That's not what I'm saying. What I'm disputing, because the Bible does, is the worldview that says the whole thing was a blind accident that was done haphazardly. Just this blind, accidental, haphazard thing that happened that is the beauty of everything that you see in another person's eyes, that is the beauty of everything you see in creation, and it was just a giant accident. And I don't even believe that you can make such a claim that would come directly from the science. It's more of a metaphysical interpretation of the data. I don't even think it's what the data is saying.

Francis Collins, a former atheist turned a follower of Jesus, head of the Human Genome Project that mapped human DNA, was appointed by the President as the Director of the National Institutes of Health, had said this:

"I can't imagine how nature, in the case of the universe, could have created itself. The very fact that the universe had a begin implies that someone was able to begin it, and it seems to me that had to be outside of nature."

See, when you adopt an evolutionary worldview, and I'm defining that very narrowly by saying if you think there is not god and we are here by some glorious accident of evolution, the only possible end game for you, if you logically think it through, is Nihilism. Dr. John Dixon writes this:

"An evolutionary worldview may not lead to superstition," – as Enuma Elish did – "but it will lead to relativism because there are no absolute values, only the values you decide to assign to things. It will also lead, if you follow its logic through, to Nihilism, a loss of absolute meaning, because there is no inherent significance to the accidental organisms of the world, only the significance you choose to attach to them."

If you logically carry this through, this is where it leads. So, look at this. In an ancient worldview, where Genesis was written into, you are an after thought to serve the gods. In a modern worldview, you are an accident to do what you wish or to serve your self. The Bible tells a different kind of story. Which leads us to our next point: the Bible tells a different kind of story that is answering a different set of questions.

This one is important. This might frustrate some of you, I know, a bit. But, Genesis 1 and 2 is not answering the "how" question. I know that that saying is not as controversial in this city, but gosh, I am so sick of this. It is just so maddening. Genesis 1 and 2 are not trying to answer the "how" question. Genesis 1 and 2 is not a science book. Genesis is not trying to answer the question "how did God do it?"

The book of Genesis is telling us that He did it, not how. That God created the world. That He created us in His image. That He left us with vocation, calling and purpose. The reason why this is important to know is because, if you come with a different set of questions than the Bible tries to answer, then you are in grave danger of distorting what it's actually trying to do or is actually trying to say.

John Walton, who will be speaking in a couple nights, says this in his book "The Lost World of Genesis One:"

"If we try to turn Genesis 1 into an explanation of modern cosmology, we are making the text say something it never said. It is not just a case of adding meaning, it is a case of changing meaning. Since we view the text as authoritative, it is a dangerous thing to change the meaning of the text into something it never intended to say."

Now, this is important. I get really passionate about this because of a couple things. One: so many people walk away from their faith in God because of a "literal reading of Genesis 1." Let me tell you what Genesis 1 literally means. It means God created the world as good and humanity in His image to be good partners in ordering and ruling the world faithfully. That is what it literally means, and it says that literally.

Listen to last week if you don't know what that means. When you try to make a text answer all these modern questions, at some point you have to stop listening to the communication. You have to. I know why it frustrates me, because I do it and I hate it when I do it. But, I do it to my wife a lot. My wife will tell me a story. My wife likes to tell long stories and I'm more like, "Wait, tell me the thing. Get to the thing really quick. The fact. I need the fact."

She's like, "I'm getting to the fact. So, then the thing..." and then she rabbit trails. I'm like, "I'm lost. I can't do this. This is so hard."

But, she'll do this. She'll walk up to me and she'll start talking about, I don't know, "So, my seatbelt light was on," or something like that.

"I was driving today and my seatbelt light was on."

And then I just start asking all these questions. I'm like, "Wait. Why didn't you have your seatbelt on? I mean, don't you know you buckle your seatbelt before you put it into drive? Why didn't you have it on? You don't drive like that all the time. Were you just rushing somewhere? Did you run a red light?"

I do all these things and she just has this look on her face. She says, "Stop talking and listen to what I'm saying."

"And then there was evening and then there was morning. The first day."

Is that a literal day? Is that a 24-hour day? Does that 'day' mean 'day?' If that 'day' does not mean 'day,' then can anything mean what the Bible says it means?"

Shut up and listen to what He's saying. You're missing the entire point. The entire point. This is why a lot of people just go to university or something and their faith is shredded in five minutes. It doesn't take five minutes to shred all of your data and all the things that you learned in apologetics class in youth ministry. It doesn't take but five minutes to do that. Honor what the author is trying to say. What is He saying? What is He communicating?

Genesis 1 and 2 are worldview claims that every human has asked and every human has the responsibility to answer and to work through. Everyone in this room has the responsibility to work through these answers. You have these questions and you need to work through these answers. Christopher Wright, Cambridge PhD, scholar on the Old Testament, says this:

"The creation narrative provides answers for the two most fundamental questions that all philosophies and religions answer in different ways. Where are we and who are we? That is to say, first, what is this universe in which we find ourselves, where did it come from and why does it exist and is it even real? And then, second, what does it mean to be human? Are we gods or merely animals that have evolved a bit further than the rest? Does human life have any value, meaning and purpose?"

A beautiful exploration of that, by the way, is "The Revenant" if you haven't seen it. Just go watch it. It's a beautiful exploration of this. Anyway, I won't get into that. Sorry. You'll probably watch it and hate it and you'll get mad at me. But, whatever.

So, this is what Genesis 1 and 2 is saying. It's answering these questions. That's what it's

trying to do. Genesis 1 and 2 says, "God created the world from chaos. Out of darkness He created the world and the world that God created is good. It's very good and it's full of meaning and it's full of potential and it's full of beauty. And He brings out of this dark, formless chaos an ordered world, and then He brings a garden out of it.

Now, essential to the story is that there is still some chaos and there is some darkness in God's good world. He created it. Somehow. We're not really told how, but we see it develop further in Genesis 3. But, there is some chaos and there is some darkness still left over. But, the chaos and darkness is ordered. And what we're told is that God wants to keep bringing more order and bringing more beauty into His good world. He wants to keep it going. So, how does He keep it going?

How does God keep the ordering and the beauty going? Answer: what? Humanity.

"Order out of chaos. How do I keep this order going? How do I keep this beauty going? I'll make people in my image and I will task them with creating and ordering the world."

The word the Bible uses is "ruling" the world. Who rules the world? God rules the world. Who rules the world in His stead, in His image? Humanity does. That's what we're supposed to do, and this is where humanity comes in. God places Adam and Eve in a garden in Genesis 2 and tells them to rule as image bearers, to make babies and to bring about the goodness in the good world that God created. To keep spreading His creative goodness. And we are partners. We are not slaves. We are partners, and it is our vocation – that word means "calling" – to rule the world on God's behalf.

But then you get this really strange story in Genesis 2:15-17 where God brings Adam before two trees. One of them is a Tree of Life and one of them is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And then he's told, "Do not eat from the Tree of Good and Evil."

The implications of this will bring us to our last point. This story is inviting us into a different way to live. Why the forbidden tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden? There are so many people that have pontificated and thought deeply about why the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But, here's why the tree is there narratively: how will we rule the earth? How will we create? How will we, humanity, bring about beauty and goodness? There are now two options.

Option one: will we trust and submit ourselves to God's knowledge of good and evil? Will we live under the limitations of being human and not God-like? Created in His image, though He is the one true God. Will we do that? Option one? Or, option two: will we see Satanomy and hijack the definition of good and evil for ourselves? Will we say, "God, I don't trust Your definition of good. I'll leave that up to me now. Thank You."

And this is where the narrative hangs. I can't get there, because that's next week. But, I think you know where it ends, by the way. I think you know the rest of the story. But, the reason why I framed this point in the present tense is because I still believe this creation narrative is inviting us into a different way to live today. It's a way of trust. Do you trust God or will you trust God for how He has ordered the world? Will you trust God's ability to give you what you need? Maybe not always what you want, but what you need?

Will you trust His definition of humanity, of partnership, of ruling? I read this quote, great quote, by Christopher Wright this last week. He said:

"We will stand before God for our humanity as much as for our Christianity."

You will stand before God, every one of us, and give an account of how we've been human. "Have you done what I've ordered you to do or I've created you to do? Will you partner with me in caring for this earth to bring about creative beauty and goodness or will you destroy it? Will you destroy it with your rage and jealousy and anger and selfishness and pride, your greed, your lust, your violence? Will you keep destroying the world or will you partner with me?"

Will you trust God? CS Lewis – I'll end here – says that the study of God is an experimental science, but with one caveat. He writes this in one of the best books written of all time, Mere Christianity. He says, "If you are a geologist studying rocks, you have to go find the rocks. They will not come to you."

That's genius, by the way.

"And if you go to them, they cannot run away. The initiative lies all on your side. They cannot either help or hinder. But, suppose you are a zoologist and you want to take photos of wild animals in their native habitats, that is a bit different from studying rocks. The wild animals will not come to you, but they can run away from you. Unless you keep very quiet, they will. There is beginning to be a tiny little trace on initiative on their side. Now, a stage higher, suppose you want to get to know a human person. If he is determined not to let you, you will not get to know him. You have to win his confidence. In this case, initiative is equally divided. It takes two to make a friendship. When you come to know God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you do will enable you to find Him."

I don't know if you've been looking for God for a very long time, but God wants to make Himself known. He desires to disclose Himself. The very nature of God we learn from the very opening of the Bible, page one, is that God is a God who communicates. He speaks and it is. He wants to walk with us in the garden in the cool of the day. That is basic, page one or page two stuff. And I told you that Genesis sets out to answer the question "who are we and what kind of world are we living in?"

God has made Himself known and has said that this world is a good world and we are created to live with Him and trust in His good world that this good God created. But, we recognize the brokenness of it. We see it all the time. We see it in our own hearts, we see it as we're reading the Bible throughout the week. We see it in us. There's like a dissonance between where we know we should be and where we are. I think this happens as you're reading the Bible.

You know what you're doing right now? You're doing an experiment of learning a new spiritual habit. All of you that have been reading the Bible, at least trying to do it once a day, you might not realize how little you've opened your mind and heart to God daily over the last few years. You're starting to see that now and you're starting to see, "Oh my gosh. What I'm doing is about the Bible, but it's really about how I'm opening my mind and my heart to God every single day. And, as I do, I'm realizing I'm a lot more sensitive to God now. I see that there's a lot of parts of me that are broken. I see my anger more clearly and I don't know if I like it."

Ignorance is bliss, sometimes, when it comes to spirituality. Like, I didn't know I was doing wrong, but now I know I'm doing wrong. What do I do with that? We've been calling that a big gap. Like, there's this gap between where we know we should be or where we believe that God wants us to be or what we read and where we are. The beauty of the Christian faith is that we get to confess that gap.

We get to, every time we gather, you can do it actually every morning, but there's something profound about us doing it together. We get to confess that gap between where we're at and what God has created us for. It could be as simple as I realized, God, there's this dissonance between the two, there's this gap between the two and I confess that I don't measure up. I want to. I desire that. Would You hear my prayer as I confess my sin and would You cleanse me, would You forgive me of all unrighteousness?

Hebrews 1 says, **"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."**

And there is is right there. "After he had provided purification for sins." We confess to Christ that gap and Christ is the one who is restoring all things. Our own lives, putting us back together, rightly ordering our loves, rightly ordering our hates, rightly ordering our hurts and our past and our future. Just bringing all of that into order, because a lot of our lives are like Genesis 1:1a. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and void."

That's your life right now. Formless void. Chaotic. God has a way of reordering it; speaking it back into right order through Christ. So, together, we confess sins of not trusting God, for questioning God's goodness, for defining goodness for ourselves and end up, in the process, being more lonely and soulless than before. We can confess that today. And that's what we're going to move into now.

Let's pray.

Lord, we want to confess to You – I confess to You, Lord. I'm just a human, God. I'm just

like everyone else in this room that has a lot of flaws and a lot of sin, a lot of ways that I don't measure up and a lot of ways that I've been really damaged and, because of that damage, I damage. I think a lot of us are there, Lord, and I ask, God, that we could recognize that now and confess that to You.

He who confesses and she who confesses their sin to Christ, Christ is faithful and just to forgive us of our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That's the truth. And Lord, I pray that we would be able to today, as we grow in Christ's likeness, grow in holiness, be able to confess. Confess that we're human, confess that we're fallen, confess that we see Your good world and it lifts our heart and it makes us so excited. But then we know our fallenness. So, restore us, God. Restore us to You. In Jesus' name, amen.