

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:1 & Hebrews 11:1-10

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. 4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; & through it he being dead still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. 7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. 8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

"Only God Creates"

This morning we sang the words of Psalm 33 as a response to the opening of the Gospel According to John and my text was from the great Faith chapter in Hebrews.

- **As we journey through the Book of Genesis together, we are going to return to them often!**

I will commend to your further study the task of pondering the outline of Genesis you will find in both Psalm 33 and our text from Hebrews eleven! Last week we considered the importance of understanding who has existed from all eternity, existing before “in the beginning.” This is reflected again in our text from Hebrews when the writer says, “he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

We addressed how it is here that the world and the devil will accuse us of defying logic by using circular reasoning. We saw how they simply do the same with matter or energy and of course that gives them NO basis for logic or reason in the first place!

- **But we who believe, know the God who has always existed because He has revealed Himself to us!**

Perhaps we should talk about that for just a moment because I can see the ardent atheist hearing this and saying, “FINE, if God is real then let Him show Himself to me right here and now,” pointing to the ground right in front of him or herself.

There is perhaps no better picture of this in the Bible than when we find the religious leaders who sent Jesus to the cross standing in front of Him as He being crucified for the sin of the world and saying, “If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross that we may see and believe.”

- **The writer of Hebrews tells us that God rewards those who diligently seek Him, not those who make unreasonable demands.**

Understanding this helps us to answer that other tough question that children and others often ask...

- **What about the people that never hear about Jesus?**

Since I often make the point that the final judgment is going to come down to the simple question, ‘What have you done with my Son Jesus?’ it is not unreasonable to ask such a question.

First, we must remember that Paul tells us that EVERYONE knows that God exists because of the testimony of the creation that surrounds them AND because of the conscience He has put within them.

- **The question is whether they will respond in faith and diligently seek Him.**

We must trust that God can, has, and will bring the Gospel to each and every soul that does so in all of history! The account of Cornelius in the Book of Acts illustrates how God finds and rewards those who believe that He is and diligently seek Him: This Roman Centurion lifts up honest prayers asking God to reveal Himself. In answer to his prayer, He is told that a man named Peter would come and tell him what he needed to know: Cornelius listens to Peter and believes: Thus he is saved and the Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles. So, what if Cornelius had objected and said what a modern atheist might say...

- **NO Peter, I want God to come right here and appear to me in person or else I will NOT believe!**
- **Just so you know, if Cornelius had done so, God could well have used another faithful person to reveal the Gospel to the Gentiles!**

We will consider more about the conscience of man when we come to his being made in the image of God and his fall into sin. Today we move on to the second part of the first verse in Genesis and consider God's act of creation!

I was truly tempted to use the sermon title, 'God is God and you are NOT!' but decided to be a bit more polite. However, it is very important that we understand just how hard it is for proud humanity to hear this message. In theology proper we call it the Creator – creature distinction. And it is a very important distinction. This does not mean that we cannot refer to creativity in the creation, or even compliment someone on one of their creations.

- **However, we must always remember that ONLY God can create in the way we see here in the first chapter of Genesis.**

We will see that there are three references to God's creative powers: The first is here in verse one when our Triune God brings forth time, matter and energy out of nothing.

- **The creation is not a part of God, not an extension of God and certainly not god itself as many modern skeptics would claim.**

The second act of creation is when God brings forth living things on the fifth day and again with the creation of man on the sixth day. These three stand in contrast with the other actions of God where He made things from the materials or energy which He had already created.

Thus we read in the conclusion given in Genesis 2: "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

As we study this first chapter we will see God create out of nothing and we will see Him shape and form the materials He already created. This morning our focus is on the first, where we learn that God is able to create by the power of His Word... We see this from our text in Hebrews where we read: "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

Faith is not blind faith but rather a believing faith that trusts the Creator who has revealed these truths to us. We see God as the creator in Peter's second epistle when he confronts the scoffers who sound like our materialists of today saying that all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

God did not just set up the creation and wind it up like a clock and let it run as it pleases. The same God who created everything that exists is also the God of history and controls where it is going.

Dr. Schaeffer put it well when he said, “God not only brought the heavens and the earth into existence by divine fiat, He still works into history in the same way. He has not become a slave of His creation. Nor is He a slave of history because He made history as it is now. History is going somewhere – there is a flow to history. And the same “Word of God” will come forth when God speaks again with judgment and with fire!”

We saw this with our reading from John chapter one:

“1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it... 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

- **When Jesus later explains this to Nicodemus during his evening visit we see how life and judgment are closely related to Jesus:**

John 3:18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Finally, the truth that God brought forth all of the creation by fiat, by His Word is not simply a New Testament addition or something that Paul & Peter dreamed up. We see it clearly in the Psalm that gives us an outline of the Book of Beginnings: In Psalm 33 we read at verse six, “6 By the word of Jehovah the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear Jehovah; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”

As you meditate on this Psalm you will see the full force of verse nine if you note that the word ‘done’ is in italics meaning it is not part of the text but included to make it clearer. This is one place where they should have left the text as it reads: “He spoke and it was!”

We see this again in Psalm 145 where the creation itself is called upon to praise God: “5 Let them praise the name of Jehovah, For He commanded and they were created. 6 He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.”

Or as the elders fall down and proclaim before God’s throne in Revelation chapter four: ““You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”

- **Yes, it is God alone who creates by the power of His Word!**
- **Thus we can & must say that in this sense, only God creates!**

But this truth also brings us to an important lesson for us to remember...

We will learn as we progress in our study of Genesis how man is made in the image of God and part of being image bearers is certainly the ability to be creative!

We should be encouraged to be creative in our vocations and our culture: We should marvel at the wonder of the Golden Gate Bridge on the one hand and a Bach sonata on the other.

Both that bridge and the sonata were created at a certain point in time beginning as an inspiration in someone's mind. That concept became a dream which was translated into plans or notes and then built and performed!

- **Both are marvelous demonstrations of how man is made in the image of his Creator and reminds us of how we are distinctive from all the rest of God's creation.**

We all exhibit creativity for good or ill, in large ways or small. The Golden Gate Bridge solved a major transportation problem, but we will often see young mothers with a number of children creating solutions to their own transportation problems!

- **Sadly we often see the misuse of man's creativity in his fallen state as we did with the two men who managed to make very destructive bombs out of simple pressure cookers!**

We must also remember that this creativity begins to be manifested at a very young age and should be regarded as just as marvelous!

- **Anyone who does not marvel at the amazing creativity that young children can exhibit has not spent much time with children.**

Such creativity is to be encouraged but always within the proper context of the Creator – Creature distinction! Allow me to use the Legos that reside in my basement as an example:

I am always amazed at how the children on Sunday night or during the Thursday Bible study descend upon that box of plastic pieces and bring forth houses and castles and planes and even submarines! While I can complement them, and often do on the amazing creations that they bring forth, it would be naïve and even ridiculous to credit them with creating the Legos themselves! Now if I go back one step and visit the Lego factory I could again compliment the creativity that brings forth all the various shapes and sizes and colors and designs! But even here they did not create them from nothing: The plastics and color pigments or the metals for the molds were likely made somewhere else...

- **And if we go back far enough we come to the raw materials that God created from nothing.**

All of those compliments along the way are fine as long as we remember Who it was that created the raw materials and the men and women made in His image who could creatively use them! Just as remembering to say our simple grace before we partake of a meal reminds us of how God provides our daily needs, so remembering Him as the creator of all things reminds us about the Creator – creature distinction. God is God and we are not, BUT remembering that He is the creator and that we are made in His image can inspire us to be more & more creative with the talents God has given us.

I mentioned in my sermon that introduced our Genesis series that we would always attempt to answer some important questions when dealing with the text before us:

- **How does the Bible view them?**
- **Why does the Bible consider them to be important!**
- **How do they relate to Jesus?**

We have seen clearly that the Bible views the creation in verse one to be a real and significant historical event:

- **The event that began history!**

When it comes to seeing the importance of this event and how it relates to Jesus we have no better place to go than back to the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Colossians 1:2

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; ...

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

- **Jesus truly is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings who created and controls all things and that is what Dr. Schaeffer would call true truth!**

Communion Meditation: Heb. 10

“1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. **2** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. **3** But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4** For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. **5** Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. **6** In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. **7** Then I said, 'Behold, I have come-- In the volume of the book it is written of Me-- To do Your will, O God.'" **8** Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), **9** then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. **10** By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”