

## The sermon

### Intro

Sometimes the question comes up, what's the purpose of life?

On day six, Adam and Eve were commanded, *“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”* (1:28). Be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, have dominion. These five commands speak to our God-given purpose.

Life isn't meant to be the aimless pursuit of what am I here for? God wants us to know our purpose. So he gave us Genesis 1-2. We serve ourselves well when we heed our original purpose. We don't need to go on a quest to find that purpose. We don't need to make it up. We don't need to guess. We can know our purpose with certainty. God wants us to know!

Another question that arises is, how do I relate to God? Again, we don't need to travel the world to find it. We don't need to make it up ourselves. We don't need to guess. We don't need trial and error. We can know how to relate to God with certainty. God wants us to know!

### READ PASSAGE

#### Body

##### Point 1: Created to work (2:4-15)

*These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.* – 2:4

We have a second look at creation, this time narrowing in on the creation of man and woman on day six.

*When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, <sup>6</sup> and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground-* – 2:5-6

We're on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. 2:5-6 describe the state of the earth at the time Adam was created.

Some raise objections. How could there be vegetation (day three) if there was no rain on day six? How could there be no bushes and no plants on day six if there was already vegetation on day three?

It doesn't mean there was no vegetation. Fruit trees were present (1:11) *“and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground”* (2:6). Rather, certain types of vegetation (i.e., bushes and small plants) were not yet present.

There were two problems preventing the bush and the small plant from growing:

1. No rain.
2. No man to work the ground.

However, there was water which made other plants and fruit trees possible: there were subterranean waters (under the surface) *“going up from the land.”* ESV note says *“mist”* could be translated *“spring.”*

*then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.* – 2:7

To solve the *“no man to work the ground”* problem, God forms man from the dust in the ground.

God worked with pre-existing materials: dirt. God gave life and reason and feeling to dirt. If God can do that, what can he do in your heart?

We came from the ground, not from primates. We went straight from dirt to functioning mankind. We were created in the image of God from the outset of our existence, not after a long, gradual evolutionary process. Meaning the Bible is in direct conflict with the consensus scientific interpretation of the data: universal common descent (i.e., all life forms share a common ancestor).

***And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. – 2:8***

Adam's created before the garden. After forming Adam from dust, "***God planted a garden in Eden***" = the garden was located in a location called Eden. God then placed Adam in the garden.

***"in the east"*** = east from Israel's vantage point.

***And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. – 2:9***

God makes the ground in the garden produce trees that produce food = fruit trees. There's two particular trees of interest in the garden.

***"tree of life"*** = tree that produces/gives life. We'll dig deeper into this tree at the end of chapter three.

***"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"***

There's much debate about this tree. Suggestions include:

1. Ability to make moral determinations. Knowing right from wrong. No longer morally ignorant.
2. An elevated knowledge of things that falls short of God's omniscience. Access to divine wisdom.

Both elements appear correct. Adam would know things he didn't previously know. He would know what evil was. Knowing evil, there would be a bitter taste that wasn't present at the origin of the garden. But he wouldn't know everything God knows. Like an innocent child who learns what goes on in places of the world outside their home, his mind would be exposed to the horrors of sin. Like a child who feels the sting of lying to a parent for the time, he would be exposed to a violated conscience.

***A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. – 2:10***

Fruit trees were watered by a major river flowing from Eden, which divided in four. We're given hints to Eden's location.

***The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. – 2:11-14***

The geography suggests somewhere in the neighborhood of modern day Iraq and Turkey. The picture is a well-watered land rich in valuable resources.

***The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. – 2:15***

Adam's put in the garden to work the ground. And to "***keep it***" = exercise a watchful care over the garden. Both working the garden and guarding it.

## What about work?

Note this is before the fall.

Man was created for work, for purpose, not leisure. To be productive. To rule, to subdue the world he's been placed in. To work the ground and reap the rewards of its provision. To find satisfaction in a job well done. To take good care of God's earth.

We're made to be productive. Made to do something with God's earth. Made to harvest vegetables like carrots and corn so we can eat. Made to cut down trees and form that wood into homes. Made to extract metals from the earth and turn them into shovels and cars. Made to locate crude oil and refine it into gasoline.

The fall has created other lines of work. Tailors and seamstresses who work with clothing. Doctors and dentists and nurses who care for our decaying bodies. Police and judges who enforce the law. Bath Iron Works.

In Proverbs 31, we find the "*excellent wife...works with willing hands*" (31:10, 13), acquiring wool and flax, planting a vineyard, and making clothing and bed coverings by turning the distaff and spindle.

Life isn't about getting out of as much work as possible and having as much leisure as possible. Life's about being productive and finding satisfaction in our productivity. I'm not saying leisure is outlawed. I love leisure I assure you. I'm saying to be a human is to subdue the earth (make the earth serve you; use its resources for your benefit), be productive, care for the land we work.

The purpose of life isn't scrolling YouTube, going to the movies, going to concerts, watching the Patriots, etc. The purpose of life is being productive humans. Being productive must come first. Leisure comes after productivity. There must be a passion to lead a productive life. Adam was created to be productive with the land.

As life changes (aging), the nature of our productivity morphs. The child's productive to some extent. The senior citizen's productive as the body's able. Age has limitations. Not looking for a guilt trip. Looking for a passion for productivity. Productivity is spiritual!

We can expect to work in the new heavens and new earth.

**Practical question:** in what ways am I going about being productive and subduing the earth?

## Point 2: Created to relate to God (2:16-17)

*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> 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."* – 2:16-17

Adam's given provision and one prohibition. He's given every tree but one for nourishment and enjoyment. Abundantly provided for. But he's prohibited from eating one particular tree, "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" And he's warned, if you eat of this one tree, "*you shall surely die.*"

What we have here is a covenant between God and Adam.

*But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.* – **Hosea 6:7**

Hosea speaks of Adam having transgressed a covenant. When Adam ate of the tree, he broke a covenant. That covenant is found in 2:15-17.

## What's a covenant?

Definition: A structured relationship between God and people, initiated by God alone, whereby God binds himself to act in particular ways.

The biblical covenants are unilateral (one-sided), God always initiates the covenant relationship and God always sets the terms. God doesn't get human input before establishing a covenant. God and Adam didn't enter into negotiations. God says this is how our relationship is going to function and that's it. We don't have a say in the matter. That's what it means to be God.

When God establishes a covenant, he makes promises. God commits himself to do specific things. In some covenants, God binds human partners with obligations and there's curses for not carrying out the obligations.

There are two types of covenants in the Bible.

### 1. Conditional

In conditional covenants, there are conditions the human partner needs to meet to enjoy the blessings.

### 2. Unconditional

In unconditional covenants, there are no conditions. God promises he's going to do something that isn't contingent on human response. In the Noahic covenant, Noah doesn't need to do anything to prevent another flood. God simply makes a promise to Noah (Gen 9:11).

The story of the Bible, from start to finish, unfolds in the form of covenants. The Adamic covenant begins the Bible. The end of the Bible is the New Covenant fulfilled completely (Rev 22).

**Adamic covenant** (also called the covenant of works, covenant of creation, Edenic covenant)

As for God's covenant with Adam, it's a conditional covenant.

God initiates the covenant. Adam, this is how we're going to relate to one another. God commands Adam, not the other way around. It's implied Adam will work and keep the garden. There's benefits to garden duty: Adam can eat of any tree but one. But there's one prohibition: don't eat of one particular tree, "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" If you do, you will die.

There's an implied promise: if you obey me, you will live forever. There's a stipulation for disobedience: death. God binds himself to keep Adam alive forever if Adam obeys. God binds himself to give Adam death if Adam disobeys. Adam is bound to obey God if he wants to live forever. Adam will subject himself to death if he disobeys God's command.

So Adam finds himself in the garden living under a structured relationship imposed by God. There will be blessing so long as he obeys. There will be curse if he breaks the one command. Blessing is conditional on Adam's obedience.

Without sin, there's harmony between God and man. Man living rightly under God's rule. Adam free to enjoy the goodness of the garden.

Without death, there's no fear of aging/bodily decay or sickness or pain or loss of function. No fear of losing a job and food shortages and money running out.

## How do we relate to God today?

Consider the human arrangement today. We still find ourselves as God's creation in a world ruled by God. But things have changed. We find ourselves under the impact of Adam's sin. Death came into God's creation. Sin came into God's

creation. So we fear death. We fear decay. We wrestle with moral corruption. We inevitably break God's commands because of that corruption.

And we find ourselves under more than one command (e.g., lying, theft, coveting, hatred, love your neighbor, etc.). We come into the world under a covenant of works whereby if we don't perfectly keep God's commands we find ourselves worthy of hell and excluded from the paradise to come. And because we're sinners by nature, every one of us falls short of perfect law-keeping.

Disobedience never ends well. Disobedience didn't end well for Adam. Disobedience didn't end well for the people of Noah's day. Disobedience didn't work out for Israel. Disobedience doesn't work out well for us. There's safety in obedience.

So how do we relate to God today? **First**, I personally relate to God under the stipulations he's set for me in the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, Jesus undoes what Adam did (Rom 5:12-21). Jesus ratified the New Covenant by dying on the cross. Those who respond to Jesus in faith and repentance experience new covenant blessings. The blessings include forgiveness of sins, a new heart to fight sin, and eternal dwelling with God in the new heavens and new earth. In the New Covenant, God rescues those who believe from the effects of Adam's failure to keep the Adamic Covenant.

Under the blessings of the New Covenant, I obey from God's acceptance not for God's acceptance. I obey from God's forgiveness not for God's forgiveness. I obey from confidence that I'll be admitted into the kingdom of God, not for admission into the kingdom of God. I also obey from confidence in the new birth. When I fail to obey, because sin remains within me, I remind myself of God's forgiveness and seek God's help to fight sin. I believe God's able to change me! The New Covenant tells me so.

**Second**, I tell myself things will work out well for me when I obey God. When we obey we're going with the flow of the moral fabric God wove into the universe, not against it (e.g., lying breeds trouble, hard work yields a profit). We're going with God rather than against God. In order to go with God, we need to understand God's word. We need to remind ourselves of God's word. We need to obey God's word. And we'll protect ourselves from the destruction sin brings. Much like Adam would have protected himself from death if he obeyed. Obedience protects!

Want a happy life? **Know** God's word. **Trust** God's word. **Obey** God's word.

**Practical question:** how am I relating to God?

## Conclusion

Maybe you're uncertain about Christianity, uncertain of your relationship with God, etc. God wants us to have certainty. If you turn from your sins by trusting in Jesus, in his death and resurrection, you will experience the blessings of the New Covenant: forgiveness of sins, a new heart, future entry into the kingdom of God.

Submit to God's saving arrangement. Trust Jesus. Follow Jesus. Obey God. Things will turn out well for you!