

Trinity in Creation (part 2)

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Preacher: Mark Aikins

- [0 : 00] Now last week, we had visitors with us. We're not going to have any interesting visitors with us, I'm sad to say.
- But also last week, I asked for some feedback, and I didn't get very much. But I'm going to ask for it again later. So I want you to be thinking specifically of things you can praise God for that we see in creation around us.
- Things that have impressed you and caused you to wonder and appreciate all that God has done.
- Just, it can be a person, it can be something in nature. It can be just anything that you can thank God for that has given you some joy, given you some appreciation of his beauty and his creation.
- So this is our Father's world. And Michael Reeves writes, God is super abundant, generous, radiant, self-giving.
- [1 : 16] And thus, the triune God can and does create. Grace, then, is not merely his kindness to those who have sinned.
- The very creation is a work of grace, flowing from God's love. Love is not a mere reaction with this God.
- In fact, his love is not a reaction at all. God's love is creative. Love comes first. He gives life and being as a free gift.
- For his very life, being and goodness is yeasty. What's he mean by that? It's yeasty. It spreads through the whole creation.
- Spreading out so that there might be more that is truly good. So God is a giver. Jesus taught it is more blessed to give than to receive.
- [2 : 26] Both in the character of God and in the overall act of creating, we find this to be a truth. The Trinity lives out all the time.
- The doctrines we cherish, especially in this church, we sometimes call the doctrines of grace. Jonathan Edwards talked about these doctrines, and he talked about God being a giving God.
- His total being is found in giving, not taking. Jonathan Edwards was an American pastor, theologian, and philosopher who wrote that God's aim in creating was himself.
- And yet God's self is so good and so generous and so giving that when he created for himself, it could not be what we think of as selfish.
- Simply because to serve himself means to do so seeking to have his life, being and goodness shared.
- [3 : 42] God is a trinity of loving persons, Father giving love to the Son, who receives and returns that love in the Holy Spirit.
- And the goodness of God that he shares includes personal pleasure. He wants his creatures to be happy. He wants us to find pleasure in him and pleasure in his creation.

As Reeves put it, the very creation is a work of grace. And last Sunday, we saw that the Father has always taken pleasure in the Son.

We saw that the Father's motive for creating was the desire to extend that internal pleasure to the external world. In 2 Peter 1, 3 and 4, Peter speaks of sharing in the divine nature, sharing the divine pleasure, the divine life.

And we do that by accepting and believing the great and precious promises that God gives us. It's God's great desire to share himself with us.

[5 : 02] Edwards wrote that God's own joy and pleasure is a pleasure in diffusing and communicating to the creature rather than in receiving from the creature.

The term he chooses, communicating, means more than just giving information. When we talk about communicating to our kids or to our spouse or to our co-workers, we're talking about giving them information.

But this communicating, Edwards is talking about, is to share oneself. Giving of oneself, sharing all that is shareable and of benefit and value to the receiver.

All the benefits of all the delights that God himself experiences in his Trinitarian fellowship, he wants us to enjoy.

He wants us to simulate, to reproduce. So we're wise to be asking at this point, am I taking advantage of every opportunity to joyfully receive those benefits, both the physical and spiritual life and the goodness which God is delighted to share with me?

[6 : 22] That's his delight. Am I taking advantage of that? How aware am I of what those benefits are? For that is why our Triune God created us.

And how should his desire to share himself affect us, affect our frame of mind? It is God's glory to be and to express who he is.

In the Trinity, he's always been the Father beginning the Son and loving the Son by means of the Holy Ghost. And in creating the universe, that being and that expression have been unleashed in marvelous ways, we're going to see.

So that in the words of the seraphim who surround the throne of God, the whole earth is what? Full of his glory. Full of who he is.

And how he expresses himself. As an example of what that should do to us, Reeves presents his all-time favorite Puritan.

[7 : 42] We don't think of Puritans as being all sunshiny and happy, do we? When you hear the term Puritan, a lot of people think of dour people who are down on sin all the time.

And, you know, somebody defined Puritanism as people who were unhappy that somewhere in the world somebody might be enjoying himself.

But that wasn't Richard Sibbes. Sibbes came to be known during the time of Shakespeare as the honey-mouthed preacher.

Not because he was trying to tickle the ears of his hearers, but because his very concept of God was so sweet and so delightful.

He would often speak of the Lord as being like the sun, who just by his nature was radiating heat and warmth and heavenly light to all the creatures sending out his beams of kindness and goodness.

[8 : 51] This made him, as a preacher, someone who radiated that kind of warmth and joy of his God. He wrote the following regarding creation.

If God had not a communicative, there's that word again, spreading goodness, he would never have created the world. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were happy in themselves and enjoyed one another before the world was.

Apart from the fact that God delights to communicate and spread his goodness, there had never been a creation or redemption. Again, the verb communicate means to share the depth of one's being.

Creation didn't fulfill any lack that God felt or experienced. Rather, it was the overflow of his nature. So having a clearer picture, hopefully, of why God chose to create, let's now spend some time contemplating how.

How did he create? How did the Trinity play a part in the creation drama? And what did the drama entail? How is God's glory expressed in and through what he's made?

[10 : 11] And how is it filling the earth? His glory? One of the church's ancient creeds begins, I believe in God, the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

So that creed assigns the authorship of creation specifically to God, the Father. But was the Father the only person in the Trinity who was involved in the creation act.

Genesis 1, along with the other scriptures, makes it clear that God the Son and God the Spirit were also involved in creation. Let there be light was the first recorded spoken phrase of the Father.

a divine order, a fiat that he gave that caused the light to shine out of the darkness on the formless and empty world.

Now, when God spoke, just think of the act of speaking. When you're speaking, what happens? You are causing your vocal cords to vibrate by expiring breath, expiring your breath to create audible ideas in the form of words.

[11 : 37] Well, to figure out how the Trinity is involved, I took a short lesson in Hebrew. You ready? In the Hebrew language, the three words spirit, breath, and wind are all translated by the word ruach.

and the term for the spoken word is the Hebrew davar, or dabar, which comes from the root word for order.

In a real sense, the Father spoke the universe into existence by sending forth his davar, his word, empowered by his ruach, his breath.

It was interesting to me to discover something about that word davar. It's also used to translate the word thing. So the word was considered a thing.

We usually think of a word as just an expression of an idea or a concept or an image in our mind, but to the Hebrew mind, when someone spoke, that word was tangible, that word was real, that word was like a physical object that's given and received, such as when Isaac mistakenly gave his blessing to Jacob instead of his firstborn, Esau.

[13 : 05] Why couldn't he just take that back when Esau complained? It's because once he spoke that blessing, that word was out there. It was real.

It was like a cup of water he had given to Jacob and once Jacob drank it, it was done. He couldn't take it back. Well, John wrote in the preamble to his gospel, in the beginning was the word and the word was something real.

All things were made through him. Without him, nothing was made that was made and the word God refers to is the Son who became flesh and dwelt among us, namely Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote in Colossians 1 that Christ is the firstborn over all creation. What is the firstborn? It's the inheritor.

The firstborn received the lion's share of the inheritance. So when Paul calls Christ the firstborn, he's not saying that he was created, he's saying that that's his status.

[14 : 19] His status is over the creation in order to inherit that creation. For by him, by Christ, all things were created, whether in heaven or on earth, visible and invisible, all things were created by him and for him.

And to do that, Jesus Jesus was given a creaturely body and soul. He became the God man. The essence of God, think about it, the essence of God took on the form and substance of a human being.

And to me, that's awesome. That's fantastic. He not only is the inheritor of the universe, universe, but he became a man so he could share that inheritance with his people.

At the factory where I work, we have group leaders who supervise our area of assembly and they always choose the most experienced person under them to become what they call their right hand man so that they can blame them for whatever goes wrong.

Thankfully, I never achieved that status. Also, in the Navy, if you've ever been in the Navy, you'll hear the PA system come on and you'll hear, all hands on deck.

[15 : 54] They don't say all people, they say all hands. Well, in the second century A.D., Irenaeus, the theologian, called the Son and the Spirit of God, the Father's two hands.

His agents of creation bringing about the Father's will. It was the Father's will to create, but he did it through the Son and the Spirit.

And what does Paul mean when he writes that all creation was not only by Christ but for him? Hebrews 1 2, tells how Jesus was made the inheritor of all things.

Now, if we are children, Paul said in Romans 8, if we are children, we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Tell me, what does that tell us about creation? creation? Anybody? Anybody? What does it tell us about creation?

[17 : 05] That we are heirs, heirs with Christ? Creation is an expression of God's love. Amen. And someday creation will be ours through Christ.

Christ will inherit it, it will be his and we are in him. And he is not a stingy God. I mean, he is generous like his father.

We will have creation at our disposal for all eternity through Christ. As an exact representation of the father's being, the son of God gives perfect expression of the father's will in creating all things.

The only begotten son of the father is the living word, the real word, the living word, spoken by the father to bring all things into existence.

Now, how is the Holy Spirit involved? Well, in Psalm 33 we read, by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

[18 : 16] The word for breath is ruach, which also can be translated spirit. We find in the New Testament, especially in John 14, that God's breath is every bit as much a person as God's word.

He is called another comforter, one who comes alongside to help and fortify believers. He is a supportive person who enhances and beautifies us by testifying to the father's love and the son's obedient example.

The spirit is a revealer of truth through the divinely inspired human authors of scripture. The spirit is an enlightener of Bible students who hear and dig into and memorize the written word.

He is also one who empowers the word to do its work in the hearts of the unconverted and believers as well. Genesis 1 tells of the spirit hovering over the primordial waters.

That was often compared to a hen brooding over the eggs in her nest that are yet to hatch. We sang in that hymn, he shines in all that's fair.

[19 : 48] The verse in Job 26 says, By his breath, his spirit, the skies became fair. While the Nicene Creed calls the father the maker of heaven and earth, it calls the Holy Spirit the Lord and giver of life.

Ever since the early Greek philosophers started talking about form and substance and being and becoming of the various things around us, they pondered the problem of motion.

They looked at things and they said they're not just standing still. They're moving, they change, they have a kind of energy, a kind of life. Things are born, they grow, they die, life is given, then it's taken away.

Where does it come from? Where does it go? And this puts me in mind of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus. The wind blows where it wishes. You don't see where it's coming from, you don't see where it's going, you just feel its effects.

And that's how it is with the spirit. When it gives us birth from above, the spirit beautifies the earth, it completes the creation in some mystical way, it gives its life.

[21 : 06] life. Jesus said in John 6, 63, it is the spirit who gives life. He was speaking specifically of spiritual life or eternal life, and yet it is truly the Holy Spirit who vivifies or brings to life all animate things.

While the Father and the Son give creation its form and substance, it's the spirit who gives it life. Isaiah writes in chapter 32 of his prophecy, the spirit is poured out on us from on high and the desert becomes a fertile field and the fertile field seems like a forest.

Elihu told Job in chapter 33, the spirit of God has made me. The breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Psalms 104 praises the Lord by singing, when you send your spirit, they, the creatures, are created and you renew the face of the earth.

So not only does the Father conceive of an unfathomable creation, he sends out his Son, the Word, to give it substance, reality, and permanence, and he sends out his breath.

[22 : 32] The person of the Holy Spirit who brings life and awesome beauty to that creation. We're getting close to you sharing these testimonies of beautiful things, so get ready.

No wonder that beauty is one of the three ultimate virtues that the church has always praised God for, goodness, truth, and beauty.

It's no wonder that the ability to craft and adorn and make things beautiful is described in Exodus 31 as a special gift of the Spirit.

Then the Lord said to Moses, See, I've chosen Bezalel, son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I've filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge, with all kinds of skills, to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts.

Plus, he gave him his helper, a holy ab. Just as Christ carries out the Father's will by creating and sustaining all things, the Holy Spirit fulfills the Father's will by adding life and adding beauty.

[23 : 56] Those, too, are our Father's will in creation. So I want to take some moments to talk about beauty. The appreciation of beauty is a mental, spiritual, even a physical response to an object's unique qualities that we find especially attractive.

I think all of us have had experiences where our senses were just drawn to something, or someone with a kind of wonder or disbelief that it could be so beautiful.

people. So try to think of some examples while I give you one of mine. One example I can think of is just looking at my mother's photograph. She passed away about 20 years ago, and yet when I look at her picture, I'm always taken with how lovely she was.

I appreciate the beauty she brought into my life day after day. Visual beauty was only a small part of what she gave me.

I associate the aromas of the food she prepared, the sound of her voice, the generosity of her heart, the keenness of her mind and words, her tenderness and care with that overall beauty of her person.

[25 : 12] And I know that beauty was a gift from the spirit both to her and to her family, as well as all who knew and loved her.

I wish you could have known her. So now, share some of your examples. My wife. Amen. Sunrise and sunset.

Sunrise and sunset. Orch and strad and see a concert home. Oh. fantastic. What's that?

I've been reading through Revelation with my son. Oh. Oh, yeah.

the awesome images from the book of Ezekiel, the chariot throne of God. Those wheels within the wheels. Fantastic.

[26 : 16] What else? Oh, wow.

all great examples of just the artistic genius that God has shared with us.

who else? Who else? I love birds. And there is a very good spot for staff. And so, I love looking out my window and seeing the yellow, the red, and the blue.

people. And it's just, I try to read them, but I know that they're the Lord's reading them. They declare their maker's praise.

they know where to go for the grub.

[28 : 00] well, God creates a good universe, doesn't he? He creates it. He sustains it. He planned it. God is a father who loves everything about his son and his spirit, including their eternal, unfathomable beauty and splendor.

The splendor of beauty of God's holiness, his glorious face, is what we're all longing to see someday. What is promised to those who are pure in heart?

They shall see God. Those who have experienced the eradication of our sin natures and entered into the joy of our Lord.

And yet, we get special glimpses of that glorious beauty through the manifold works of creation. God the beautiful, God the lover, God the communicator, the divine spreader of goodness.

He reflects his holy character in creating a good universe. Now, think of the singular, lonely, self-possessed, non-triune gods out there.

[29 : 17] They would consider the addition of a new creation to be a rival or a nuisance or something to be ignored. The mere fact of a creation would be anything but good to such a God.

God the Father, however, has always eternally appreciated, having another with and beside himself, namely his eternally begotten Son, beloved along with the Spirit.

Adding a good creation to this triune fellowship is but an expansion or an extension of the eternal good the Trinity has eternally shared.

A Muslim theologian wrote this, Allah does indeed love people, but in reality he loves nothing other than himself, in the sense that he is the totality of being, and there is nothing in being apart from him.

So even though the Quran speaks of God's love and the creation, it's quite impossible to account for a divine love reaching beyond itself to encompass others in any natural way.

[30 : 30] Reeves writes, the universe in Islamic thought must have only been, must have only a shadowy, uncertain existence.

This same awkwardness about the physical realm is present in many other non-triune belief systems. I'll give you the prime example is Gnosticism, which is written about extensively in the book *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown.

In his story, Christianity is shown as chauvinistic and intolerant, and the Orthodox Christians have chased all the open-minded, tolerant, proto-feminist Gnostics into hiding and forced their authoritarian beliefs on the church.

But in reality, Gnosticism begins with a pure spiritual world occupied by the one. This one spiritual being was by himself for all eternity until something went unaccountably and terribly wrong.

Something physical, crude, and obnoxious was created and then banished from the realm of the one. This extra entity became the physical universe, always considered to be warped and ugly and troublesome.

[31 : 57] An unfortunate accident that had to be dealt with or denied. The very fact that something besides the one exists is a bad thing in the Gnostic mind.

So much for open minded, tolerant Gnostics. So Genesis and Gnosticism both have a fall into evil. But the big difference is that God's original creation was good, pronounced good at the beginning and then fell into sin.

But the Gnostic creation was bad to begin with. So one could only conclude that the one was equally the source of both good and evil because he was all that existed.

So is there good news in the Gnostic frame of mind? Well, their good news is that someday the one will return to the bad fallen universe it spewed out at the beginning and will suck all of it back into itself like a dog returning to its vomit.

And everything physical will lose its individuality and be joined together to become one once again. Reeves writes that the physical universe will become just an embarrassing memory in the mind of the one.

[33 : 19] So how different is that from the promise of a new perfected heaven and earth where God and we dwell together? In Genesis 2 God records a striking departure from his benedictions in chapter 1.

He called his creations good and his completed universe very good. But then in chapter 2 we hear about something that was not good.

God's first malediction is that it's not good for man to be. Now to the Gnostics being alone would be good.

Right? But God solved the problem of human loneliness by creating a woman and that was really good. From what we've learned about the Trinity this ought not to surprise us.

Why would a loving father and his perfect son want their crowning work of creation to be lonely? It was only natural sensible loving for this fellowship loving God to give Adam a helper suitable for him.

[34 : 42] Well here's the Gnostic view of women. The creation itself is seen as a regrettable tragedy and so the existence of more than one sex is equally tragic.

One is a good thing more than one is bad. This twisted view of the sexes was born out in the gospel of Thomas, the Gnostic gospel of Thomas, where we find this quote, Simon Peter said to them, let Mary leave us for women are not worthy of life.

Jesus said, I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males.

For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven. What do you think of that ladies? Seems like Christ's kingdom is a men only club.

But in contrast, the closed-minded chauvinist Christians see the creation, the physical world, relationships, diversity, marriage, as intrinsically good.

[35 : 51] they aren't threatened by the diversity the creator builds into his universe. The only threat is the entrance of sin into the heart that turns us away from our loving maker.

While it's true that women have been abused and misused by so-called Christians in the name of headship and submission, it's also true the belief in the Trinity works precisely against that kind of abuse.

God's solution to the challenge of human loneliness was to create a mutual loving relationship between the sexes that reflects his own love for Christ and his people.

When Christianity began, the Roman world had a low view of women also. Abortion and female infanticide were a common practice in the Roman society when Christianity first began.

Families with more than one daughter in them were very rare even when the family was large. Female sex was thought to be burdensome and superfluous.

[36 : 59] Male children were much more valued. The Christian view of the value of both sexes made the new religion especially attractive to women as reflected in the New Testament writings.

Widows were supported by the church. Unfaithfulness in the husbands was not ignored but confronted. And many women were even welcomed as fellow workers in the gospel.

Recall our visit from Zidu the Babylonian? Well he praised the great Marduk. But Marduk's creation was a workhouse where people were just put to work.

It was seen as a place of raw materials so the gods could be rightly served by their human work gang. But we look around us especially during the spring and summer.

We don't find that God's creation is some austere, bland, utilitarian, socialist paradise. Rather we find it is vast, gratuitous, unnecessarily abundant with beauty.

[38 : 09] And this is the way God planned it, the way Christ made it, the way the spirit breathed life into it. It isn't some grim workhouse. Rather it's full of warm wondrous animals that roam and romp through the wide open spaces.

Oh give me a home where the buffalo roam and the deer and the antelope play. It's full of beaches and mountains and canyons and forests and deserts and glaciers. And by the way, interesting people.

There's mind boggling variety to be seen and experienced and reveled in. And I could go on and quote C.S. Lewis who talked about animals being silly and just spending all their time doing pointless things.

He told his friend Barfield, the world is sillier and better fun than the scientists would have us believe. And then Reeves talks about the problem of evil.

That without a triune God there's really no clear explanation of how evil could take place. But because the triune God wanted creatures to return his love freely, just as the father gives it freely to them, he made people with real lives and volition.

[39 : 35] And they were able to choose in freedom to give that love back to God or to turn away from him as we'll hear about next week. And I have more to say but I don't have the time to say it.

And let's pray as we prepare our hearts for worship. Lord we do thank you for your beauty, for all that you've created.

Lord teach us to be like Richard Sibbes and to allow the fact of creation and the way you created, how you have made all things, to reflect your glory and your joy and your happiness, to make us joyful people.

And enable us to express that joy to one another even today as we honor our dads and as we think of all the ways you have gifted us.

Thank you for those gifts, O Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We pray in your name.
Amen.