

Genesis

The Restructuring of Creation

7.9.2023



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 9:1-17

SERMON NOTES:

I just returned from a short-term trip in the Philippines. Before any of you ask, for those that remember my last Sunday morning sermon, I can proudly say that I got on this plane with zero passport issues... While we were in the Philippines, we had the great pleasure of serving alongside some of our Nehemiah Teams partners who are on the field in Socorro. We were able to encourage them and go door to door with them to evangelize and point people to their church.

Even if you've never been to the Philippines, I don't think it's a shock for me to tell you that there are cultural differences between there and America. But one thing that constantly stood out to me, because I had this passage in the back of my mind the whole time, is that the Philippines is structurally chaotic. What do I mean by structural chaos? The Manila airport is extremely unorganized; it took us over two hours to get from one terminal to the other, and we made it to our ferry ride with 5 minutes to spare. The roads are not policed. There are no speed limits and no lanes marked on the roads. You drive as fast as you want, and there are motorcycles, trucks, trikes, bikes, people, chickens, stray dogs, and water buffalo all over the roads. Now, the societal structure in the Philippines may be disorganized, but you know what they can do? Children walk through the streets playing wherever they want. Women in their houses alone would invite us into their living rooms without even knowing our names. People would leave their businesses completely unattended to talk to us without fear of being stolen from. Kids would follow us up and down the street and never once thought about being kidnapped. None of this can happen in America.

What's the difference? One of these is a functional chaos and the other is a moral chaos, but the common denominator is that Christian virtues are essentially nonexistent in the layout of both of these countries. America and the Philippines are populated by sinners and governed by sinners who reject God's order, and chaos is present because it is antithetical to God's nature. What does that have to do with Noah? Well, He proves this in our passage.

THESIS: The Lord is a God of order, and He commands His creation to reflect that.

EXEGESIS

That is why I've titled this sermon today, "The Restructuring of Creation." After the flood subsides, Noah steps off the boat and immediately builds an altar and gives an offering to the Lord. God responds to Noah with a charge that sounds pretty familiar –

V1 -- And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

The first Adam was created from the dust and given a mandate to take dominion over the earth and to fill it. But the sin of the first man tainted the fulfillment of this call. So, God has wiped the earth clean and hit the reset button on creation, and now He has a new man to start over with. God has instituted a new head over creation, and He gives him the same mandate given to the first man, but this time it's a little bit different. The second time God gives the cultural mandate He adds something to it. In Genesis 1:28 God says, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and take dominion." In Genesis 9, He says that and more –

V2 -- "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered."

The mandate goes from just "take dominion over the animals" to now the animals fear man and they dread man. The command changes from a positive, a "do this" command, to a negative command. What does it mean that now the animals will fear man? If you think back to the first time this command was given, it was before the Fall. Man was created with three relationships: relation to God, relation to fellow man, and relation to nature. Before sin enters, all three of those relationships exist in harmony and unity, but now sin has affected all of mankind, including relationships. Man is separated from God; sin places a barrier between God and man. The relationship between man and his fellow man is broken. The man will desire to dominate the woman and the woman will desire to overturn the authority of the man; men begin to murder each other, take advantage of each other, and rebel against God's marital design. And now, He talks about the ruptured relationship between man and nature.

Adam was given the call to work before the Fall. He was told to work the ground, to care for nature, to nurture it. But after the Fall, Adam's curse is the ruptured relationship between him and his vocation. His relationship to nature is no longer harmonious. He will work with back-breaking labor until the end of his days. The effects of this spread into nature itself, because, as God says here, the animals now fear and dread man. What does that look like practically? He says it next –

V3 -- *“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.”*

Eating the animals is not an outgrowth of taking dominion over nature. There's two ways this is usually interpreted: Some say that this means that humans didn't eat animals in the garden. The text seems to imply that God gave vegetation as food in the garden, but now He opens up all of creation for man's consumption. Others read this and say that this actually shows that eating meat is not a result of the Fall, but that God gives meat as a gift to man. You could hold either of those views and make a case for it, or I think you could actually harmonize them and say that both of them are true at the time. Regardless, what really stands out here is what comes next. God gives one limitation to eating the animals –

V4 -- *“But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”*

What does that mean? Where does that come from? Some of us might look at that and think, “well I think they'd figure it out after they ate raw meat a couple of times.” Why does God feel the need to add that? Well, I think there are actually several reasons why, but let me begin with what R.C. Sproul says:

“This requirement points to the symbolic connection between blood and life, a concept also basic to the sacrificial system and the atoning work of Christ. All life belongs to God, and people must acknowledge this by not eating blood.”

Blood is the symbolizer for life. God breathed the breath of life into Adam's lungs, and now blood courses through the veins of all of us. Blood has always been an important symbol. In this historical context, before the flood, pagan cultures would drink blood and they saw that as draining the life from the victim. To the contrary, God does not allow the eating or drinking of blood because He is the only bestower of life. Life flows from Him. Which really brings a few things into perspective:

- Paul condemns the eating of animals used as pagan sacrifices in 1 Corinthians 10. In fact, he says that this is the work of demons, and you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.
- Our God values life to the point that He condemns the consuming of blood, yet He humbled Himself to be born in the likeness of men, born in a real human body with actual blood flowing through His veins, then allows His body to be beaten and the blood that He holds in such high esteem to be spilled upon the ground for the sake of the saints.
- Thirdly, this is a protection for man. Raw meat holds bacteria that the human body cannot handle. Animals eat raw meat, but humans don't. Now, this is not an excuse for all of your weirdos who like to eat well-done steaks. Just because He says not to eat blood doesn't mean you have to eat a steak that tastes like tree bark. That's not blood in your steak, it's flavor, and you're burning it all out...

Whether you eat your steak good or burnt, the same point is still made: Man doesn't eat like an animal. There is a relationship between man and nature, but there is a massive distinction. Man is the head representative of creation. Man is the only creature given the responsibility of bearing God's image. Look, Brandon gets a lot of hate for his anti-dog sermon, but he's exactly right. A deer is not a man, and your pet is not your baby. God has distinctly chosen man to bear His image and that comes with a civilized separation between man and beast, and man is the more valuable of the two. Man's worth is far and beyond any of the creatures, even the angels, but even though we know that we don't usually live like it. How often do we get sick at the thought of a suffering animal but pass over a fellow man suffering? How often are we devastated over the death of an animal but don't bat an eye when we hear about the daily murder of people in our country? In fact, that is the very next thing that God addresses –

V5 -- *“And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.*

Here's a hint for when you're reading your Bible: If God says something three times in a row, pay attention. He says three times in one verse that He will require a reckoning, a reckoning for the lifeblood of man. What is lifeblood? In the Hebrew, it's actually the exact same word translated as “blood” in verse 4. But in verse 5 the ESV committee is making a translation decision to write out “lifeblood” instead of “blood” to point out to you that verse 5 is going in a different direction than verse 4. So, what is the reckoning that God will require for the lifeblood of man? –

V6 -- *'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image.'*

The reckoning that God will require for the lifeblood of man is a life. God now demands equal payment from a murderer. If you remember back in chapter 4 where Cain murdered Abel, how did the Lord respond? He cursed Cain. What was Cain worried about? "Whoever finds me will kill me" Morally, man understood the ramifications of murder. Yet, Cain wasn't punished because God spared him. What happened after this? Back up to chapter 6:

Genesis 6:13 – *And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth."*

The sinful violence of man is what prompted God to flood the earth. The sin of man shown through their unchecked violent acts is what drew God to wipe the earth clean. Now, after the flood, God places parameters around violence. He makes murder a capital offense. He institutes capital punishment. In the eyes of God, to take a life is to forfeit your life. Not only does He require this from man, but He also requires it from every beast too. God requires the death of all who harm His image bearers, even the animals. Why does God require the blood of the murderer to be shed? For God made man in His own image. To murder a man is to murder an image bearer of God, and to murder the one who bears the image of God is to do violence to God Himself.

Up until this point, God has been the punisher of evil. He is the one who cursed Adam and Eve, He is the one who cursed Cain, He is the one who flooded the earth, but now He allows man to bear the sword of punishment. If man is allowed to punish the evildoer, then what confidence do we have that this will actually be carried out as God intended? Because not only has He put the law in place, but He has also appointed the institution that is to enforce it. This is seen first by Moses in Numbers 35:

Numbers 35:31 – *Moreover, you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death.*

Moses, God's appointed leader, instituted this law in Israel. Now, God has a different sword bearer which He has put in place that Paul highlights in Romans 13:

Romans 13:4 – for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.

The “he” in this context is civil authorities (the government). The Government is an institution created by God who is designed to maintain the order of society through legislation and bearing the sword of punishment against immorality. Now, you may hear that definition of the government and ask yourself, “Is that what our government looks like in America?” – the answer is absolutely not. When you look at our current civil authorities you see people who have rejected the design, order, and law of God in favor of idols made in the image of man. Claiming to be wise beyond the God who knit them together, they have become fools. There is no shortage of examples I could use to illustrate this point, but I want to hone in on the focus of this passage: Capital Punishment.

Currently, in America, there are 26 states who have banned the death penalty. No criminal can be put to death for any crime in these states, regardless of how severe it is. One irony of this, is that there are only 24 states who have taken at least some sort of legislative action against abortion. (Stay away from the rabbit trail) If you do some quick math, you will discover that there are 26 states who have banned the death penalty and 26 states who legally allow abortion with zero consequences, and it’s almost the exact same states. I don’t think I have to explain the vile irony of that to you. A country that allows its babies to be murdered and its murders to live is a country experiencing the judgment of God through wicked rulers.

Before I move on from this particular topic, I want to address a group that may be in the room. A lot of Christians will oppose capital punishment with the purest intentions. You may think to yourself – “God is the giver of life, man shouldn’t be the taker of it” or “We’re pro-life, we should be pro all of life” – We certainly are pro-life, and we are simultaneously pro-justice. We oppose the murder of babies because it is unjust. They have not merited the death penalty for themselves, yet they’re sentenced to it. In the case of murder, God is the plaintiff, and the government is the executioner, because that is the way He has designed society so that order may be maintained. He doesn’t command this particular law flippantly, He does it with intention. He does this for many reasons, and one of them is in verse 7 –

V7 -- And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.

God immediately follows the command to capital punishment with the command to multiply the human race. He bookends this section with the same charge: be fruitful and multiply. This is not by accident. There are two ways to ensure that humanity multiplies: First, take part in God's design for covenant marriage, to the fullest, by being open to the gift of children. Second, protect the life that God has blessed the earth with. That is how you ensure that the image of God multiplies among the earth. God has given a second cultural mandate that replicates the first. Then, He does something new –

VS8-10 -- Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth.

Notice here the first words He says, “Behold I establish.” This is what's called a unilateral covenant. A covenant can be one of two things: a contract between two people or a promise from one person to another. (Marriage = bilateral) This covenant, the Noachic covenant, is purely the work of God. It is unilateral, from God to creation, and He establishes it. To establish means to cause to arise, fulfill, or confirm. God fulfills and confirms His covenant. Who is this covenant with? “You and your offspring and every living creature that is with you” This is the common grace and providence of God working together to preserve creation for His glory. The same God who destroyed all now preserves it. God's grace extends to His Church in a special way, but it also extends to all in a general way. And what is it that this covenant of common grace is doing? –

V1 -- 1 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

The God who used His providential power over creation to wipe the world clean now uses that power to preserve it. He has the power to bring rain for 40 days and 40 nights and He has the power to withhold the rains from flooding His creation. He holds the keys to the universe. Nature bends to His will. He moves the wind and waves as He pleases, and it pleases Him to spare man from a great flood.

Now, is it a contradiction for God to say that He will spare man from flooding, yet there are still rains and floods? No. Because He doesn't promise that rain will never come, He promises that He will never use the rains to wipe out the earth again and to remind us of that promise He gives us a sign –

VS12-13 -- And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

All of God’s covenants come with a tangible sign. The Abrahamic covenant is marked by circumcision. The Mosaic covenant is marked by the Sabbath. The New covenant is marked by baptism. There is an identifying mark of the covenants, and the identifier of the Noahic covenant is God’s bow.

The word for bow here is the same word that’s used over 70 times in the Old Testament in the context of war. When He says “bow” (qeset) He is talking about a weapon of war. The bow is an invention meant to cause terror and death. The bow is God’s weapon of war. It’s His weapon of wrath. God has waged war against mankind and now He lays down His weapon in the clouds as the sign of His covenant with creation.

If you think about it for just a second, you’ll see that the word “rainbow” is a compound word. Rain and bow. This is where the word rainbow comes from. When it rains, we look into the clouds and see God’s bow laid down in the clouds. Think about the shape and function of a bow. It’s a semicircle and the arrow fires in the direction of the arched side, not the flat side. When you look at the rainbow in the sky, the arched side is pointing up, away from mankind. God’s weapon of wrath is actually pointing away from mankind. He doesn’t design anything by accident, He did this intentionally to show us His restraint for the preservation of creation. The rainbow is the sign of God’s diverted wrath. God could’ve just stated His covenant and been done with it, but why did He give us the rainbow?

VS14-17 -- When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” 17 God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

The purpose of the rainbow, just like the purpose of the other covenant signs, is to identify who the covenant is with and to serve as a reminder. The Israelites were circumcised which separated them from the other nations and reminded them of their

God. The Israelites also observed the Sabbath because it identified them and reminded them of their God. The rainbow can be seen in the clouds by all of creation because this covenant includes all of creation and reminds all of the covenant promise of God. It serves as a reminder to man, beasts, and to God.

What do we do in light of this passage? There are a lot of things you can take away from this, but I have three that I want to stick with you.

APPLICATION

1. God designed His creation with a good order

Flippancy is not a category that exists in the works of God. Every single thing He has designed and commanded serves more purposes than you can imagine. God has an order for creation that He has determined gives Him the most glory. We serve a God of law and order, not a God of confusion or chaos. Since He is a God of order, creation glorifies Him by existing within that order because that reflects His perfect character, and the way that He incorporates that order within creation is through His commands. He gives us institutions (marriage, church, government) and supplies the parameters that those institutions are to function within, and they are always intended to operate in an orderly way.

Order is inherently good as opposed to chaos because God, who is perfect, is orderly. This is why the lives of those in rebellion to God look chaotic. Rebellion to God, the purest meaning of moral evil, is by nature disorderly. No one who rejects God's design for work, marriage, family, government, or any other institution is actually happy, regardless of how they present themselves. Joy cannot be found in rebellion; it can only be found in Christ. This is why the glory of God is actually the best thing for man. God's glory is found in the highest functioning form of life for mankind. I'm not preaching a prosperity gospel, but the Christian framework for society is better for mankind than anything else. Where Christianity is prominent, a nation is bent towards human betterment. That does not mean that one will necessarily follow the other. Just because you are one man married to one woman does not mean that your marriage will not have struggles, but it does mean that your marriage, when functioning biblically, tends towards order, which is inherently better than chaos.

2. Man must take dominion

Within God's good order every creature has a role. The purpose of everything is to glorify Him, but there are various roles that accomplish that purpose in their own good way. Man's function in glorifying God is to bear His image through the subduction of nature. God sustains all things through His providential and supernatural power. In the same manner, man works within the means God has supplied to sustain the natural, and in doing that all of creation sees an image and replication of God's work through us. Man is to nurture creation and care for it and in return it supplies our needs (points to intelligent design). All of this is seen in Genesis 2 in God's original structuring of creation and in verses 1-7 of Genesis 9 when God restructures creation because it was rejected in favor of anarchy.

Now, when God tells man how society is to be ordered, who does He speak to? In Genesis 2, God gives the institution of work to Adam, and Eve is created from Adam as his helper to complete the task given to him. This is not in any means a demeaning role for the woman. I cannot manage my household without the help of my wife. But God has distinctly placed the responsibility for my household on me, just like in this passage He is speaking directly to Noah and his sons (V1&8). The charge to maintain the structure of creation rests on the work of strong men, and where strong men are absent, a weak society follows.

Men, this is why our men's ministry is vital to the health of our church. I hear plenty of complaints across the country about how the American church is too effeminate, and there are multiple reasons behind that. But I know one thing for certain: when the strong leadership of men is absent, a vacuum is opened for weak leadership to take over. Men must bear the image of God by being men. This is why pastor Shawn is leading a Midweek class this Fall called "It's Good to be a Man." – Unfortunately, that is a controversial statement, but it's a necessary one. If you want to learn more about this and grow in your ability to glorify God through being a man, you need to be in this class.

3. Don't forget the purpose of God's sign

Considering the current age and the month that we just got out of, I would feel as if I was doing a disservice if I did not address the lingering issue of the rainbow. How do you feel when you see a rainbow now? When you walk into your secular workplace and they've got their months' worth of banners hung up and they're handing out pins for you to wear, do you feel contempt? When you go out to eat and you see the flag on every corner, do you roll your eyes and feel disgust? If so, look at what you've been robbed of.

God designed the rainbow to bring comfort and joy. It is meant for you to see it and rest in the covenant faithfulness of our God despite the threats surrounding you. That is its intention. The very purpose of the pride flag is to flaunt the rejection of what God deems good. He has seen fit to create mankind in two genders and for those two genders to come together in a covenant that glorifies His everlasting covenant with the Church. The pride flag boasts in the rejection of this design. There were a million possible combinations that could have been used to make a pride flag, but the rainbow was chosen. Make no mistake, the pride flag exists to mock the promises of our God.

How are we to respond to this? Well, these people refuse to have kids then advocate for the murder of the ones who are created. They don't have a next generation to raise up after them. In order for their wicked tirade to continue, they must take your kids. Don't let them. The way that you take the rainbow back is by following God's mandate in this passage: **be fruitful and multiply**. Raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord and we will one day look at the rainbow with nothing but joy and comfort rather than disgust and contempt. Finally, the theft of the sign requires us to think about what it was originally intended for, which brings us to Revelation 4.

Revelation 4

This is the culmination of the rainbow. God shows us His covenant sign all the time. You look into the sky and see the sign after it rains all the time. That isn't there by coincidence. Every time you see the sunlight hit the water just right to shine the colors of the rainbow through, it's because God intended for that to be there and for you to see it. The same sign of God's promise to withhold His wrath through flooding is the same sign that we will see in heaven when we look upon His throne. Love the rainbow because it is our reminder of the covenant faithfulness of our God.

REVIEW:

- ❖ Why did God give the mandate to be fruitful and multiply again to Noah in verse 1?
- ❖ What does it mean in verse 2 that the fear and terror of you will be in every living creature?
- ❖ Why doesn't God give the command to not eat food with the lifeblood in it in verse 4?
- ❖ Why does God command that anyone who commits murder should receive capital punishment (verse 6)?
- ❖ Who does God establish his covenant with in verses 9-10?
- ❖ What does the rainbow symbolize (verse 13)?

REFLECT:

- ❖ Why do we see so much chaos in the world?

RESPOND:

- ❖ How can you bring order to your life in a chaotic world?
- ❖ How can you help bring order to the world by fulfilling God's command to be fruitful and multiply and take dominion of the earth?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Genesis 9:12-13 -- *12 And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Genesis 1:27 - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Associate Pastor - **Brandon Sutt**
- ❖ Ministry - **Re:generation**
- ❖ **Pray for our long-term families:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks (departing in October)
- ❖ **Pray for our mid-term sent ones:**
 - Abby & Katherine (gap year - returning in August)
 - Kaesi (gap year - departing in August)
- ❖ Pray for our short-term teams:
 - Central Asia team departs in September
- ❖ **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG): Dowaniya of India**
 - **Population in country:** 3,400
 - **Global population:** 3,400
 - **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
 - **Evangelical:** 0.00%
 - **Primary Religion:** Buddhism
 - **Primary Language:** Assamese
 - **Summary:** The Dowaniya are an indigenous, Buddhist people who live in the northeastern Indian province of Assam near the Myanmar border. The Dowaniya are an agricultural people known to be expert weavers and woodworkers. They speak a dialect of Assamese which has few Christian

resources. There may be no missionaries, agencies or churches involved in taking them the gospel.

- **Prayer Focus:** Ask the Lord to send workers to the Dowaniya. Pray that believers would pray for and go to the Dowaniya with the good news of Jesus Christ. Pray that more resources would become available in the Dowaniya language. Pray that Christians in northeastern India would reach out to the Dowaniya and help them in practical ways.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App
<https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>