

Creating Faith
Oct. 29, 2017
Brian R. Wipf

One of the things we could do a better job of is connecting what we *believe* to how it *helps* us. Do you know what I mean by that? We have a lot of things that we believe; believe passionately, even. We are pretty good at knowing why we believe something; we know where in our Bible it says this or that. But I don't think we always know how believing God's truth makes an impact in our lives. We don't always get the *so what?* Jesus was born of a virgin. Ok, *but so what?* Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Yeah, *but so what?*

Last week, we began a 6 week series called *The Lord, our Maker*, highlighting the truth that God created the world and everything in it. We established this reality last week from the scriptures; God's word is clear: the world was created by the power and wisdom of God. He made it; it's here because of his grace. Ok, *but so what?*

Would you know how to answer that, friends? I'm guessing the vast majority of you believe God created our world. But do you know why it matters? Do you know the difference it should make in your daily decisions? Do you know how knowing and believing that God created the world can help you through your hard times? Well, that's what we are going to talk about today.

Part of that is my fault. People like me, teachers and pastors of the local church, have a responsibility of showing the people of God why this stuff matters. Not just that it's true, but that it makes a difference. But you have a part to play, too. It takes some energy, some commitment, even diligence on your part to think hard about what you see in the scriptures yourself and what you hear taught in spaces like this and connect it to your daily life as you tease out the depth of God's truth. I want to encourage you as we begin to put in that hard work today, friends; it's worth it. And then, when you go home, make a point to revisit these things regularly so that you don't forget and act like you didn't hear a sermon this morning about our Creator God.

Talking about how the truth of our Creator God makes an impact in our lives means we have to get a tad personal; we're going to talk about the nitty gritty of life. I have 3 implications that I want to show you. Now, each one of these is worthy a sermon; so I'm giving you 3 sermons in 1 today so it might feel like drinking from a fire hydrant. So, what I'd suggest is make some notes in your mind or Bible and revisit this message after today to really take in what we will find in God's word. Listen a second time to make sure you see and understand everything we are about to talk about.

Turn with me in your Bible to Revelation 4. If you've been coming to Pastor Tim's study on Revelation during SS, the setting will be familiar. Chapter 4 gives us a vision of the throne room of God. It's very glorious and humbling; it inspires worship. And towards the end, 24 elders break out in praise to God; look what they say in vs. 11 (READ).

The first thing I want you to notice is how the elders' worship of God is connected to the reality, to the truth, that God is the Creator of all things. This is a perfect example of why we need to pay attention to the grammar of the text. "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, (WHY!) *for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.*" God's creative power and wisdom is the reason the elders are celebrating and worshipping God.

Notice what God is worthy of in the first half of vs. 11 because he's the Creator, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, *to receive glory and honor and power.*" Get this: God deserves this. I get that from the phrase *to receive*. Glory and honor and power are due him. From whom? From us - it would be easy for me to say all of creation. We all owe glory and honor and power to him. And why again? (Just look at the text) *for you created all things*, that's why! Because God is the Creator, we owe him everything.

Obviously, God being Creator should inspire worship, but I want to draw your attention to something else. Consider this: seeing God as Creator *shows us we are accountable to Him*. God's creative work, him being our Creator, makes us accountable to him. We owe him our worship. He deserves our praise. We are his creation. If he's deserving of it, if we owe it to him, than we are accountable to God to give him all that he's due. He's not just worthy of our life, we ought to give it. And if we ought to give it we are accountable to him for it.

You may remember earlier this year the very sad and tragic story of Charlie Gard, the infant boy from the UK with a rare and incurable genetic condition. The healthcare system in the UK refused not only to provide life-preserving treatment to baby Charlie, but even refused to allow Charlie's parents to take him somewhere to get treatment. There was tons of debate about this terrible situation for several weeks. In an op-ed piece, an ethics professor from the UK, trying to justify the government's decision, wrote, "The first [step] (in coming to a good decision) is to recognise that children do not belong to their parents."

Can you imagine that someone thinks that way? That children do not belong to their parents? Yes, there are very rare and hard situations when parents fail their obligations to take care of the children that God gave them, where parental rights need to be regulated for the good of a child, but generally speaking, it's quite obvious that children belong to their parents. Who else do they belong to? And why would we say they belong to their parents? Because that's who bore them and created them.

It's the same with God. He made us, therefore, we are accountable to him. Think of it, everything you do every single day, you are accountable to God for. You are accountable to him for how you spend the money he gave you. You are accountable to him for the words that come out of your mouth. You're accountable for how you have used the particular gifts he has given you, whether you've invested them into kingdom work or have selfishly used them for yourself. Students, you are accountable to God for how you treat people in school. Retirees, you are

accountable to God for how you use your time. And, one day, we will give a reckoning to our Creator. He made us; he's due all power, glory, and honor; he's due our very lives. That will change how we live our life, won't it?

We discover the second way seeing and embracing God as Creator helps our faith from our good pal, Job. If you're not familiar with Job, he's the gentleman in the Bible that experienced significant loss. He lost all his possessions; worse than that, he lost all his children and became deathly and painfully sick. Only his wife survived and, sadly, she wasn't the most encouraging wife during his suffering. And Job had what all of us have when we go through unexplainable tragedy. Job had doubts. He had doubts about himself and how he fit into the world. He also doubted God. He doubted God's care; he doubted his wisdom. His questions kept him up at night and flooded his eyes with tears.

I know some of you have doubts, too. Some of your doubts come, maybe, from your curious mind. You want to know. You like figuring out how everything fits together. And sometimes, it's not so easy for you to figure that out. And maybe you're unsatisfied with what God has explained. Or maybe your doubts come from tragedy, just like Job. Life was working just fine... until. Until I got sick. Until my husband died. Until my children started struggling. And now, you don't know what to think either; you're just like Job.

God helps Job with his doubts by reminding him and showing him his creative power. The last few chapters of the book of Job are pretty much God telling Job about the majesty of his creation. But he's not just telling him; he's asking him, "Job, do you know how this works? Were you there when this happened?" God is showing Job how much he doesn't know. Let me give you a few examples. Flip to Job 38:16 (READ vs. 16-18). Did you know there are places in our oceans that are too deep for us to go and explore. The force of the water is so great it would crush any man or man made object. There are places on the earth where no man has still ever seen... and God made them and knows those places.

(READ vs. 22-24) I'm so glad that technology has advanced in such a way where we can get some idea when bad weather will visit. On the plains of SD in 2010 (PIC), this hailstone fell from the sky along with a lot of others destroying everything in it's path. But we still can't predict that, even today in 2017. But God knows all these things and all we can do is have an educated guess.

(READ vs. 31-33) These verses are referring to constellations in the sky; stars that light up the night. God is asking Job, "Do you keep these constellations together? Do you bring them to their places in season?" No, Job doesn't. And neither do you or me. But Genesis 1:16 says, "And God made the two great lights - the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night - and the stars."

This little tour through God's creative work and power did something in Job. It helped him in his doubts. Listen to what Job says in 42:1-6 (READ). Do you see what happened? Job was humbled. When Job was confronted with how much he did not know, when he was dwarfed by the infinitely superior wisdom and power of God, he was ruled by something other than his doubts. So here's the the point: seeing God as Creator *helps us with our doubts*.

How does that work? Why does seeing creation help our doubts? Job didn't get his questions answered? His heart ache didn't magically disappear? Nothing changed except his perspective. When I was almost done with seminary, I remember thinking: "It feels like I know less now than when I first came." How can that be? I read thousands of pages; spent hundreds of hours in lectures. I gained all kinds of knowledge, but yet I felt I knew less at the end than at the beginning! I encountered the truth and wisdom that Paul says in 1 Cor 8:2, "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know." Like Job, my seminary experience taught me that I really didn't know much. But that helped my doubts and questions in a weird way. I stopped feeling the need to know all the answers and started seeing my need to trust the Living God with my questions (REPEAT). And for Job, that wisdom and trust in the face of doubts came by studying and being confronted with the truth that God is the Creator.

Go get humbled by nature, friends. Seriously, watch nature programs; take a trip to the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone. Study up on God's creation. Find out how much you don't know and how much you don't understand. And I'll pray that as you do your doubts will get swallowed up by the glory of God.

One more: turn to 1 Peter 4:19 (READ). Just to give you some context, Peter is trying to encourage suffering Christians. The church that Peter is writing to is going through some real hardships because of their faith. And just like you and me, those sufferings tempt the church to give up on Jesus or compromise their commitment. Peter is encouraging them to hold on. Vs. 19 is the summary statement. In his last action step he tells these suffering Christians to "entrust their souls" to God. The suffering is part of God's will for their life so keep trusting him.

But Peter says entrust your souls to a faithful *Creator*. He doesn't say God, does he? Why does Peter call God the Creator at this point? I mean, yes, it's true. But why doesn't he just say God? Entrust your souls to a faithful God? Or why not Savior or Lord? Why not Messiah? Of all the ways that Peter could describe God to people who are suffering and scared, why does he refer to God as a Creator at this point?

I think it has something to do with his power. People staring suffering and death in the face need to know that the one who can help has the power to help. Ed Welch tells a great story in his book *Running Scared* of a time he was walking through the woods with a young boy. The day was getting late and the woods got dark. He could see the panic in the boy's face so he started to reassure him. "It will be ok; I won't leave you. I will be right next to you." As Ed was feeling good about his compassionate care, he was surprised to see the boy start crying. And

the more Ed tried to help, the more the boy cried. Ed pondered this; why was the boy more afraid after he started talking? And it hit him. These are not his woods? Whatever the boy was afraid of was more powerful than Ed Welch. What good is Ed Welch when a monster from the woods is going to eat you?

Do you see the point? The church was facing impossible odds; further suffering and pain was inevitable. It was a runaway freight train that was going to run over everyone in its path. But what if the Creator of the freight train showed up? What if the Lord of the woods and the tamer of monsters arrives? What if the most powerful One in all creation comes to your side? You can trust him, right?

Here's the final impact we see from God's word: seeing God as Creator *gives us confidence in our suffering*. When the Creator of Mt. Everest, the Maker of the Grand Canyon, is on your side, you will find help in when the times get tough and when the obstacles look overwhelming.

Let's review. Seeing God as Creator...

- *shows us we are accountable to Him*
- *helps us with our doubts*
- *gives us confidence in our suffering*

About once a week I have to dig through my toolbox. It's always something; a loose screw or I need to rehang a picture. That stuff won't get fixed all by itself. I need to know what tools I have; I need to know how to use them. I gave you tools today. You've learned how knowing and believing in God as Creator can help you. But you have to be willing to go to the toolbox. You have to know how to use these tools. You're going to be tempted to grumble when you should use these tools in faith. You're going to have to remind yourself of what you believe and why it matters; you need to connect the dots. But when you do faith will rise.

Questions for the week

- How were you challenged today?
- How were you encouraged today?
- Prayerfully come up with one daily/weekly change you will make because of what you heard. Tell someone.