

New Creation
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Before we wrap up this Thanksgiving holiday and rush into the Christmas season, I want to challenge you with one last thought. Instead of being thankful for what God has given, think about and then be thankful for what God will give you in Christ. That's another example of our radical, other-worldly, faith. Our faith invites us to give thanks for that which we don't have quite yet, but will have some day. Now, there's an act of faith! Give thanks for things you don't have, but believe you will. What might that sound like? "Thank you, God, for the new body I will have when I'm resurrected from the dead (share that one at your next Thanksgiving meal)." "Thank you, Father, for throwing the Evil One into the depths of hell." "Thank you for destroying all that's evil in the world." There's a way you can know you'll get these gifts. That's what I want to share with you this morning and it's the summary of our *The Lord, Our Maker* series we've been in about God as Creator and we as his creation.

To do this, we have to go back to the origins of our world one last time; turn with me to Genesis 3. Let me set the scene for you. God has made the world and everything in it. And it's a good creation teeming with life. And God made himself some representatives on earth; creatures who would represent him in his created world. These creatures were human beings, made in the image and likeness of God.

But something happened; part of God's creation, a snake, tempted humanity. He tempted the mother and father of us all, Eve and Adam. And rather than believing God, rather than having confidence in God's goodness, they believed the lies the serpent told them and doubted God's goodness. When that happened they disobeyed God and ate the fruit that God had forbidden. That act of rebellion, that defiance, altered and changed, not just them, but all of God's creation. And that change, that negative impact, still affects you and me. Let's read about that in Genesis 3:8-19 (READ).

I find it absolutely amazing that this ancient book reads us with pinpoint accuracy. We do exactly what Adam and Eve did when we sin. Did you see? We hide from God when we sin just like Adam and Eve. Are you more likely or less likely to pick up your Bible and read it when you're trapped in sin? Are you more likely or less likely to keep regular Sunday worship when you're struggling with sin habits? Less likely, right? When we sin we run and hide just like Adam and Eve.

When God asked Adam, "Did you eat from the tree I said was forbidden?" What does Adam say? *It's not my fault, it's her fault.* He blames his wife... some things never change, right? And it's not just that he blames his wife; he blames God, too. Look at vs. 12, "The man said, 'The woman *whom you gave to be with me*, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.'" *You put this woman here, God.* We do the same thing; we blame God, too. This book truly is the Word of God.

But that's not what I want to focus on; I want us to focus on the effects of man's sin on creation. We learn that the serpent is cursed; this serpent, we learn in later parts of the scriptures, is the supernatural being of Satan. And he is cursed and will be cursed forever. Next, women are cursed. Women will only bear children with pain. God hints at marital frustration and disharmony as part of the curse, too. Adam is cursed; he will live a frustrated life in a frustrated world. And finally, and what I want to zero in on, the earth is cursed. Look at vs. 17-19 (READ).

God cursed the ground; he cursed the earth and, I would argue (from what we'll see in a minute), all of creation. All that God has made now experiences the curse of God. It doesn't work like it's supposed to work. It's broken. It should produce fruit; instead, it produces thorns and thistles. There should be this harmonious eco system, but instead we have these terrible earthquakes, destructive mudslides and hurricanes. Volcanoes erupt almost in anger and the oceans swallow freighters. Of course, this curse impacts you and me. Cancer eats up our insides; as we mentioned last week in our sermon on gender, sometimes babies are born with a female genetic codes and male reproductive organs. Do you see the curse of God on his creation, FBC? It's there; nothing works like it's supposed to.

This is what Paul is getting at in Romans 8; let's turn there (READ 18-25). In vs. 17 Paul introduces this topic of suffering in our faith. And, of course, at the end of Romans 8 he famously says that all of this suffering can't separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord. So, don't be afraid of the suffering, FBC. It's necessary for our growth in Christ and it won't rob you of your greatest treasure, which is being found in God's great love. But in our passage, the passage we just read, Paul talks about this suffering in depth. And did you notice how he broadened the category up?

In vs. 19 Paul introduces the idea that creation itself is waiting for something; it's waiting for redemption itself. Now, why would that be the case? Vs. 20 tells us the answer. "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it." I hope you still have Genesis 3 on your brain because that's what we just read. Because of sin, creation was cursed. It was subjected to futility. It's going through it's own suffering, it's own struggle. Like I said before, the world doesn't work the way it's supposed to.

Paul summarizes it this way in vs. 22, "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in pains of childbirth until now." I'm struck by that image of *groaning together*. That's what all of creation is doing - groaning together. I'm a Nebraska Cornhusker fan as some of you know. It was so easy to be a Huskers fan in the 90s. About the same time I was finishing HS and heading off to college, the Husker football team was mowing down opponents like Chuck Anderson and Byron mow the grass around the church facility. But now 20 years later, there's a collective groan out of the Heartland. What the Huskers use to do to opponents, opponents now do to them. And the entire Husker nation suffers in frustration together.

But thankfully, God gives a glimmer of hope (I don't know for the Huskers, but certainly for his creation). Look at the last two words in vs. 20... *in hope*. Do you see it? Even though creation was subjected to futility, while a curse hangs over creation, it was done so *in hope*. Now, there are two questions you should be asking yourself right now? 1) Who did that? And 2) in hope of what?

Look at vs. 20; it says that creation was subjected to futility, but not willingly. So, creation didn't do this to itself and it didn't want to fall under a curse. It was done by "him who subjected it." Well, who was that? Now, you may remember the earth was cursed due to Adam's sin, but that doesn't actually answer the question. All you have to do is look at who did the cursing. God did. Genesis 3 states, "And the Lord said." The Lord is the one who pronounced the curses. He is the one who brought about this frustration. God did this. Now, if you're still scratching your head wondering, "Really? God did this?" Ask yourself this: Who has the power and desire to subject anything *in hope*? Who would have that aim? Not humans. We don't have the sense or the power to subject creation to futility in hope. And not Satan. Satan may have the power to frustrate, but he wouldn't frustrate anything in hope. He wants to rob hope. God did this.

Secondly, in hope of what? That answer is easier to find; vs. 21, "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." That's the hope. God set up a plan of salvation through frustration and death whereby all of creation would be set free from all that's wrong and cursed in this age. Creation would be given a new beginning. God makes people new in Christ, but he also will make all of creation new as well where everything wrong, everything frustrating, everything broken about this world will be fixed. That's going to be a good day.

Can I answer two more questions before we talk about the so what? The first question is: when is this going to happen? And the second question, and I said I would mention this, how can we know it's going to happen (so that we can be thankful for it like we already got it)? To answer the first question, turn with me to Rev. 21 (READ vs. 1-8). Did you notice the reference to God's new creation? There's going to be a new heaven and a new earth. Don't think *brand new*. It's not like God is going to replace the earth with a brand new one like we replace an old 92 minivan with a 2018 SUV. Remember, creation is waiting for its redemption and freedom. I've used this analogy before: when we say there's going to be a new moon tonight, we don't mean a brand new moon, right? We mean, a renewed moon. A moon that get's a new beginning. That's what God is saying here. He's making all things renewed. And it's going to happen at the end... the end end. When Jesus comes back. When he judges the living and the dead. The day we are all waiting for. That's when creation will be made new.

And how do we know it's going to happen? We know it's going to happen because Jesus was resurrected from the dead. Let me put it to you this way: Jesus' new, resurrected body that he received 3 days after he was crucified for our sins is the very first glimpse of God's new creation. The Bible calls the resurrected Jesus the firstfruits of God's new creation. That's how

you can know this new creation is going to happen. It happened to Jesus as the firstfruits, meaning, as the example and the guarantee of the coming harvest.

Now, what kind of difference is this supposed to make? I want to highlight just one thing. This should give you great hope for not only your future, but for all of creation. I mentioned this when we returned from India and Nepal in the month of March, but I was shocked at the pollution there. I mean, we live in Eden compared to the places we saw. My dear cousin, Rett, used to live in Kenya, Uganda, and Somalia for years. When he came home to visit, he brought a friend from Kenya. And he asked his friend, "What differences do you notice from your home?" First thing out of her mouth was, "It's so clean here."

Now, I don't share that with you to criticize others around the world or to suggest we're doing as well as we need to in caring for the earth. I bring it up to highlight our hope that while it may be discouraging to see the effects of pollution and maybe even the permanent damage done in some parts of the world, God will restore his creation. He will remove all the scars of corruption. If you're discouraged by harm done to the earth, it will be healed.

In addition, you will be healed, too. Romans 8:21 says "creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Creation waits to experience our freedom promised to us. It get the benefits that God has promised you and me. That means all the corruption our bodies experience will also receive the freedom it longs for.

In the past few weeks, a number of our own FBCers have received the hard news of being diagnosed with cancer. That's probably one of the most obvious examples that we, too, have been subjected to a frustrated and broken world. Cancer is a disease of corruption. It eats us up from the inside out. It's scary.

The promise of new creation gives us hope. Someday, whether we die of cancer, in a car crash, or of old age, our weak, lifeless bodies will be made new. In Christ, we will not be left in bondage to our decaying, weak, sinful bodies. We will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

But you've got to wait for it. I know you want it now. That's not how God designed his way. I know for some of you, your bodies are failing. They're not as strong as you'd like them to be. They're not fighting disease like you hoped. And because this world, this age, feels most real, it's scary to see yourself losing it. That's why I'm here today, to remind you to start looking with the eyes of faith. The eyes of faith see a day coming where every frustration, every curse, every struggle will be swallowed up in victory. The eyes of faith see a future where 10,000 years is but a day, and a day is 10,000 years. Paul says we need to wait for this gift patiently. It's not something we can take (like we are so used to do); it's something that is given.

I hope that your eyes have been opened to how important it is to know and celebrate

God as our Creator with this series. I remember saying in the first sermon that the doctrine of our Creator God is foundational to our faith; I believe that more now after 6 sermons than when I said it. I also hope that you've experienced worshipful joy as you've listened these last 6 weeks. And for that joy to call you into a greater pursuit of knowing God as your Creator.

Key vs. Romans 8:20-21

Questions for the week

- In what way do you feel the brokenness, the curse on the world? How does that impact you?
- In what ways did God's word encourage you?
- What would you like to do differently tomorrow because of what you heard today?