

Session 4 Colossians 1:15-20 Proverbs 8:22-31

Welcome and Call to Worship.

Call to Worship (Genesis 1)

Let us remember what our God has done!

God created the world out of a formless void.

Let us remember what our God has done!

God made every animal and plant, bird and fish.

Let us remember what our God has done!

God created people in the image of God.

Let us remember what our God has done!

God has made us caretakers of the earth.

Let us complete our task in faithfulness.

Eternal God,

your Spirit moved on the waters—

and there was light,

your first creation.

your Spirit moved on the water of our baptism—

and again, there was light in our souls and hearts.

Let your holy light shine on us today,

as we remember your creation

and our special part in it. Amen.

Warm up question.

How creative are you? How do you mostly express your creativity?

Today we are thinking about Jesus' role in creation. We'll be looking at the Genesis account of creation next week, in this poetic account of creation, the writer speaks of at least two members of the Trinity being involved. But what was Jesus doing? What part, if any did he play in creation? Hopefully our readings and study this week will help us!

Let's begin by looking at Colossians 1:15-20 taken from the Message Bible

¹⁵⁻¹⁸ We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—*everything* got started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

¹⁸⁻²⁰ He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed

and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross. (The Message)

Here's a more familiar version: NIV ⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Let's read it three times. Which words and phrases seem important to you? Are any surprising? Is there anything here I didn't know? How can I find out more? Does it challenge or build my preconceived ideas?

When Paul wrote this letter, he clearly wanted to open peoples' eyes to the wider significance of Jesus. It's easy sometimes for us to forget that Jesus existed before he was born that first Christmas in Bethlehem. The Bible teaches us that he is one member of the eternal Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that together they were at work from the very start of creation. Without Jesus, nothing would have been created – in fact everything that has been created was created for him and by him! Not only that, as we read in this passage, Jesus is essential to keeping the whole of creation going. Not an insignificant role description!

But it doesn't stop there. As well as creating everything from nothing, and sustaining it from the moment of creation, Paul tells us that, by his death and resurrection, Jesus has made it possible to repair the broken relationship we have with creation, each other and with God. There is an indivisible connection between the God of creation and the covenant of relationship and forgiveness. The God who created everything is also the one who will redeem his creation. And the key to both acts, according to Paul, is Jesus.

If creation has this purpose and meaning, how might that affect our relationship to it? And our behaviour towards it?

How does thinking about Jesus' role in the origins of and on-going sustaining of creation challenge your view of him?

Paul didn't dream up this idea out of nowhere! Although the Old Testament isn't explicit in teaching about the Trinity, there are many hints that God isn't just singular! (Although we must be careful not to suggest there is more than 1 God – that got the Israelites into trouble fairly frequently!)

Let's read from the Book of Proverbs, chapter 8:22-31

The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works,^{[a][b]}
before his deeds of old;

²³ I was formed long ages ago,
 at the very beginning, when the world came to be.
²⁴ When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
 when there were no springs overflowing with water;
²⁵ before the mountains were settled in place,
 before the hills, I was given birth,
²⁶ before he made the world or its fields
 or any of the dust of the earth.
²⁷ I was there when he set the heavens in place,
 when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep,
²⁸ when he established the clouds above
 and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,
²⁹ when he gave the sea its boundary
 so that the waters would not overstep his command,
 and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.
³⁰ Then I was constantly^[c] at his side.
 I was filled with delight day after day,
 rejoicing always in his presence,
³¹ rejoicing in his whole world
 and delighting in the human race.

Although this poetic writing is about wisdom, and refers to a beginning point for wisdom

*The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works,^{[a][b]}
 before his deeds of old;
²³ I was formed long ages ago,
 at the very beginning, when the world came to be.*

Many scholars believe that Paul may have had these words from the ancient book of Proverbs in mind when he wrote his hymn of praise, in his letter to the Colossians. Perhaps Paul saw prophetic clues in these words, which he then develops in his letter to the Colossians. Later in the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks of himself as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; the source of life and its meaning. There are echoes here too, of the reading we had in the second session of this course, when God challenges Job to look at creation and recognise God's power and wisdom in everything there is. For ancient Jewish writers, the belief that there is only one God is very powerful, and the NT authors never dispute that principle, but they add new detail. There is only one God, but in both the Genesis account of creation and here in Proverbs, we see hints that understanding him may not be as simple as some thought!

How do these readings challenge your understanding of creation – if at all?

How might our relationship and stewardship of creation be affected when we recognise Jesus as the source of life itself, the one who sustains the world and everything in it?

It is sometimes tempting to think simply that 'Jesus died for me', that salvation is just for lost souls, but Paul suggests that his death and resurrection have far greater ramifications. The New Testament looks forward to a restored creation, not just to a heavenly home for God's people. Christians are called to make the Kingdom – God's rule and reign, real in the here and now, as a foretaste for what is to come. What might that mean for us?

What might the implications be for our use of the world and its resources, if we recognise Jesus as Lord over creation?

Hymn: Of the Father's Love begotten

Of the Father's love begotten
ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega,
he the Source, the Ending he,
of the things that are, that have been,
and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore!

2 O that birth forever blessed,
when the Virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving,
bore the Saviour of our race;
and the babe, the world's Redeemer,
first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore!

3 This is he whom heav'n-taught singers
sang of old with one accord,
whom the Scriptures of the prophets
promised in their faithful word;
now he shines, the long expected;
let creation praise its Lord,
evermore and evermore!

4 O ye heights of heav'n, adore him;
angel hosts, his praises sing:
all dominions, bow before him
and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on earth be silent,
ev'ry voice in concert ring,
evermore and evermore!

5 Christ, to thee, with God the Father,
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
and unwearied praises be,
honour, glory, and dominion
and eternal victory,
evermore and evermore!

Closing prayers

David Adam: Veni Creator

Come Lord
Come down
Come in
Come among us
Come as the wind
To move us
Come as the light
To prove us
Come as the night
To rest us
Come as the storm
To test us
Come as the sun
To warm us
Come as the stillness
To calm us
Come Lord
Come down
Come in
Come among us

To God the Father, who created the world;
To God the Son, who redeemed the world;
To God the Holy Spirit, who sustains the world.
be all praise and glory, now and forever. Amen

Benediction (Genesis 1, Psalm 8)
May God's creative Spirit be with us in our hearts
and minds as we leave this place to return home.
May God's creative Spirit help us to see with new wonder
the splendour of your creation all around us
and inspire us to preserve and protect it.