

## Genesis 2 Sermon.

4 In the day that the Lord[a] God made the earth and the heavens, 5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; 6 but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— 7 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground,[b] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; 12 and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’

18 Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’ 19 So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man[c] there was not found a helper as his partner. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman,[d] for out of Man[e] this one was taken.’

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

### Introduction.

For the entire history of humanity creation has been vastly bigger than us - we felt at the mercy of nature. But for the first time in history nature is at the mercy of humanity. There are calls to name this geological period the Anthropocene era - the Earth is now defined by the actions of Humanity. And so despite what is going on in some parts of the Church it is now beyond doubt that our care for creation is of critical importance. And the tragedy is if we had just paid attention to our Bibles, that responsibility is foundation to who we are, here in Genesis.

**Passage.** Genesis 1 might be familiar. Genesis 2 is surprising. And what we have here is a much more simple scene. v4&5 depict creation without someone to nurture it, a farm without a farmer. God plants a Garden Eden - Eden means luxury or delight and places Man there.

Why the focus on trees & rivers? The original readers lived in a desert. Trees and rivers mean abundance of life.

### And there is this powerful theme of Man’s connectedness to creation.

Most fundamentally in v7 Humanity is made from the earth to serve the earth. From dust you came. In fact the name Adam is from the Hebrew for earth or ground. So the starting place is don’t get above yourself - you may be made in the image of God, but you are made of the dust of the earth.

Christianity has been sadly guilty of the kind of dualism that devalues matter, that sees the ordinary and physical as unimportant or even bad. But Genesis 2 couldn’t be more different. You are literally made of dirt. And yet God called it good.

### And as a result you are defined by three relationships.

#### 1) Your relationship with God

Genesis 2 is very different from Genesis 1, and one of the most striking is the use of the personal name of God (v4) Yahweh. If Genesis 1 has a cosmic scope, Genesis 2 is much more personal and even intimate.

And no more so than in v7 when God looks Adam in the face, breathes into him, and gives him life. That face to face encounter with God is the begging of what it means to be human. Adam is known deeply, fully.

And perhaps our restlessness is the absence of face to face relationship with God. We are restless until we find our rest in God. We pursue others things, even good things but not can replace this loss. Even in Christ we still lack, for now.

*“For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”*

#### 2) Your relationship with creation

Humanity has this deep and practical connection with the earth

v5 Man exists to work the ground - to help it flourish.

v15 put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

v19 He looks each of the animals in the face and names them. Such careful, observational activity, is the most fundamental basis of scientific inquiry.

We dream of a good relationship with creation , for balance and fruitfulness instead of exploitation and destruction. And that is set deep within us - it is what we were created for.

Perhaps you know those moments when all seems right with the world, the sun shining through the trees and the warm breeze in your face. Is that a memory of Eden?

And so we should be intentional about that connection with Nature - you know the idea of Green Therapy - of sending children with ADHD to spend time in Nature is proven to calm and balance them.

Are you taking time to be in nature? Are you getting your hands dirty? Perhaps simply caring for a plant on your desk, or a window box, some way of nurturing the natural world.

And of course in our lives, and our consuming and our political activity we need to choose to care for creation.

#### 3)Your relationship with humanity.

v18 *Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone’*

Some of us do this really well, and nurture friendships over time, others of us need to learn this more. Friends are precious, and you need to work hard to bridge the gaps in geography and lifestyle because the older you get, the more you need the people you knew when you were young.

Relationships are about partnership v20 and are about serving. Not what can you do for me.

**And we need to gently hold on to Marriage as foundational for family and society.** Often churches place too much priority on getting married, and we don't want to make that mistake. The Bible is far less concerned with it than we think. Nevertheless there is something special about marriage that reflects God's covenantal relationship with us, that promises to love in sickness and in health, good times and bad, for richer for poorer. And Marriage exists to serve others and creation - it is not self indulgent.

### **Conclusion**

Genesis 2 paints a picture of the fundamental connectedness of earth and humanity, but is aware that something essential in that has been lost. This is a poignant picture that taps into what we know is wrong with the world.

And the seeds are here of what is to come. The first is freedom

*v16 And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;*

No other creature needs this commandment, because no other creature is made in the image of God. No other creature is granted freedom.

And the second is shame. *v25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.* Shame is the thing that divorces us from one another and from God.

Shame turns us in on ourselves. But those are for next week. For now see this image of the connectedness we were made for, and think carefully about which of those connections you need to work harder at and invest in. We are defined by these three relationships - with God, with creation and with others. And in Christ all of those are being reconciled and restored.