



Growth Group Questions
January 7, 2024
“A Place to Call Home”

Context

This week we are beginning a new six-week sermon series where we will be talking about what it looks like to live out a generous and gracious hospitality that is grounded in God’s goodness toward us. In our text for this week we read the familiar story of the creation of humankind. We see how God created a place for us to call home. The Hebrew word for “create” occurs about fifty times in the Old Testament and God is always either the subject or the implied subject of the verb. Genesis makes it clear that God is behind all this activity.

The role of people in the Ancient Near Eastern religions was to serve the gods by supplying their needs. They were to bring all of creation to deity—the focus moving from inside the world of creation out to the gods. In Genesis we see that people represent God to others because they bear the image of God. They still serve God, but they also have a calling to serve and care for one another.

This was the priestly role that was given to Adam in Genesis 2:15. The word for “work” in Genesis 2:15 is also used in Numbers 3:7-8, 4:23-24, 4:26 to describe the priests “serving” God. The word “to care for” used in Numbers 1:53, 3:7-8 describes the Levites responsibility of “guarding” the tabernacle from intruders. This calling continues to followers of Jesus today. We are to serve God and one another and also keep an eye out for where evil is pressing in on others.

God rests from his work of creation, but he does not simply sit down and no longer engage his world. He has finished the creation piece of the narrative and now he can rest from that. However, he will now dwell in the garden. He will walk and talk with humanity. And because God promises to do that we can rest as well. We can take a sabbath rest.

Our sabbath practices are for recognizing that God is the one who provides for us and who is in control. We relinquish control and remind ourselves that God is in control. It is God who has set things in order and who continues to rule over this world. When it comes our “rest” on the Sabbath we move our eyes off ourselves and look to the one who created this world and who continues to be a part of this world and our lives.



Scripture and Quotes:

Romans 15:13

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 1:1-2

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Genesis 1:26-2:3

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. 2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Genesis 2:15

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Exodus 20:8-11

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Mark 1:14-15

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

"The Work of Christmas," by Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,

To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart."



Questions:

1. The title of this week's sermon is "A Place to Call Home." What is the meaning of "home" to you?
2. As you read through the Howard Thurman poem "The Work of Christmas," what thoughts come to your mind? How does this poem speak to the concept of "home"?
3. We are told in Genesis 1:26 that God created humankind in His own image. Pastor Paul told us that we are to be God's image bearers into the world. What does that mean to you? How do you think we are meant to bear God's image into the world?
4. In Genesis 2:1-3, we read that when He had completed His work, on the seventh day He rested and made the seventh day holy. What do you think is the significance of rest for God and why did he make the seventh day holy?
5. What does the Bible tell us about the kind of rest God wants us to take?
6. How can rest play a crucial role in our spiritual growth?
7. Why is so hard for some people to rest as God as commanded us?
8. What does rest have to do with bearing God's image into the world and carrying out the "work of Christmas"?

