

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 23 July 2023
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: All about Jesus
Title: In the beginning - Genesis
Passage: Genesis 1:26-2:3

Sermon outline

1. **From delight to grief**
2. **From judgement to mercy**
3. **From chaos to order**
4. **From Cana to Egypt**

- My mum didn't like the Old Testament.
- Too much fighting and killing, she would say.
- Perhaps **you've** felt that way too.
- Or perhaps you've known many of the Old Testament stories from Sunday School or school scripture, but never really understood how they all fit **together** – or even had a notion that they DO to **together!**
- And let's face it, when it comes to the Old Testament reading in church – many of us don't have a **clue** as to the historical context of the passage... the time frame... the nature of the literature... and often – they are just words being read which we don't connect with at all.
- **True? //**
- But listen to these words in Luke 24.
- This is after Jesus' resurrection and he's talking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus... and Luke says, *"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures **concerning himself.**"*
- The **scriptures** Jesus' refers to are of course our **Old Testament** ...
- He explained to them what was said in the Scriptures, **concerning himself!**
- Then later in the same chapter, from Jesus' own lips this time – v44, *"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is **written about me** in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."* – our Old Testament!
- So I want to say to **mum** – mum – it's way **more** than fighting and killing... Jesus said 'it's all about **me'**...
- I want us **ALL** to see **that!**
- And I hope this series – which I've called "All about Jesus", will help us all understand the wonderful, profound significance of the Old Testament.
- For these Scriptures are **OUR** Scriptures!
- Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – **ALL** Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- At the time – Paul only **had** what we call the Old Testament as his Scriptures.
- **They were** the **Scriptures!**

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- And they are **ALL God-breathed** – they come **FROM** God; **FOR** us – and they will **equip** us for **living for God!**
- So here is what we going to see in this 9-week series:

Series intro

1. From **Genesis** - Creation – fall – flood – one nation – Egypt
 2. From **Exodus** - Out of Egypt – Israel rescued and commissioned
 3. From **Leviticus to Deuteronomy** - The giving of the law – outlining our response to grace - so that God’s people devoted and distinctive
 4. **Joshua to Judges** - Heading into the Promised land – which turned out to be a tragic disaster
 5. From **1 Samuel through to 2 Kings** - ‘Give us a King’ – the people asked – thereby sacking God. Kingship didn’t work out so well and God’s people ended up banished from the promised land
 6. **Some of the smaller books of the prophets** - God promised a return to the land but it didn’t live up to ideals and we are left waiting – waiting for Jesus...
 7. **Psalms** – the songs of God’s people
 8. **Wisdom literature** – wisdom for God’s people
 9. **Weird and wonderful** – assurance for God’s people in the books we call apocalyptic literature
- So – my prayer is that by the **end** of the series – you’ll have a better sense of the **significance** of the Old Testament; understand how it **points** us to **Jesus** – AND have your **appetite** whetted to know **more** and delve **deeper**. //
 - And so we begin with **Genesis.... In the beginning**.
 - The book of Genesis **sets everything up** for us...
 - ...the whole story of God’s **relationship** to humankind; starts **here**...
 - So I want to explore with you today, **four** significant **movements** we see in **Genesis**...

Four movements:

1. **From delight to grief**
 2. **From judgement to mercy**
 3. **From chaos to order**
 4. **From Canaan to Egypt**
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- First

1. FROM DELIGHT TO GRIEF

- What am I talking about?
- Have a look with me at the end of Genesis 1... God had finished creating everything... and let me say in passing – precisely **HOW** that happened is not the focus – the **WHO** and the **WHY** are the focus – that God created **everything**... for **US** and for his **GLORY**... //
- ...and v31 proclaims - *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good*
- The creation – with humankind at the centre – was **VERY GOOD!!**

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- God **delighted** in his creation...
- It was **perfect** in every way.
- Perfect relationship between **God** and **humankind**
- Perfect relationships **between** humans
- Perfect relationship with **creation**...
- BUT
- By the time we get to **chapter 6** v6 we read - *The Lord **regretted** that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.*
- Why? From delight to grief!!
- Verse 5 - *The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was **only evil all the time.***
- Well that didn't take long for everything to go pear-shaped... did it!? /
- What **happened**?
- **Genesis 3** happened.
- Adam and Eve **mistrusted God**... didn't believe he was **FOR** them... they believed the **lies** of the Evil One – went out on their **own**... and decided to live life their **own** way, rejecting **God** as **God** and putting **themselves in charge**.
- And God's heart is **broken**.
- It **grieved** him to his **heart**.
- The depths of humanity's **sinfulness** brings great **sorrow** to God...
- He is **perfect** and **just**... and deeply **affected** by the evil which now marks the hearts of **humankind**.
- Ephesians 4:30 - *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*
- Your sin today, has grieved God's heart.
- Every moment where you pushed God aside and have done things your own way.
- If you are a parent, think about how your heart is impacted when a child – young or old – goes against your will...
- And when sin came into the world – every relationship was mucked up: ours with God; our relationships with one another and our relationship with creation. //
- And what we discover here – is that there is only one solution... the solution provided by God himself –
- for what we see in Genesis is that from the moment Adam and Eve choose to go it alone... God is planning our **restoration**...
- the **only** way to deal with the mess sin created – is the **death and resurrection** of the **Lord Jesus**....
- For God **so loved** the **world**, that he **gave** his **only Son**...! //
- From **delight** to **grief** – the **first movement**.
- the second I want to trace with you is

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2. FROM JUDGEMENT TO MERCY

- We are not surprised by hearing of the judgement of God when Adam and Eve do their own thing
- Rebellion has consequences.
- God cannot ignore or turn a blind eye or say, 'ah don't worry about it'.
- So - Adam will experience work as **difficult**
- Eve will have pain in **childbirth**...
- The serpent is **condemned** to being on his **belly**... //
- But what might surprise you is the **mercy** of God to Adam and Eve
- And this sets up a pattern throughout all the Scriptures... that whenever God acts in **judgment** – there is always **mercy**...
- What do we say in that beautiful Anglican prayer? – “We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your **table**. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have **mercy**.”
- Whose nature is always to have **mercy**....! //
- So even in the garden after their rebellion; in his **mercy**, God provides **clothes** for **Adam** and **Eve**...
- Even **banishing** them from the garden of Eden is an act of **mercy**... in that God **prevents access** to the tree of **life**, so they may not **forever continue** in their state of **rebellion**.
- In his **mercy**, God promised that the serpent would not have the last word... but in Genesis 3:15 – said that future **offspring** of the **woman** would one day **crush** the serpent's **head**...
- I never used to understand this as a kid – but this is a wonderful picture – which points to the future victory of Jesus (the eventual offspring of Eve), over the evil one (pictured here as the serpent) at the cross and the resurrection! Staggering!
- The serpent has been very vocal in Genesis 3 – but he will not have the last word... Jesus will crush him in the end.
- There is **mercy** seen again at the **flood**... as sobering as that account is... - in **mercy**, God provided **salvation** to Noah and his family in the **ark**...
- Even though in ch 6 God had determined to **undo** his **ENTIRE** creation... he extended his **grace** and **mercy** to **Noah**. ///
- Can you see how this points us forward to God's provision for **US** in **JESUS**?
- As Noah and his family were **safe** through the coming Judgement in the **ARK**...
- So **WE** are **safe** through the coming judgement if we are **in JESUS** – in **relationship** with **Jesus** – **trusting Jesus!** ///
- And **finally** – in the **Joseph** story – do you recall Abraham's son with a multi-coloured coat – sold into slavery by his jealous brothers...?
- Though they deserved **judgement**... God through Joseph – extends God's **mercy** to his brothers when they discovered that the Prime Minister overseeing Egypt in the face of **famine** was none other than their long-lost **brother**...
- Joseph **forgives** them... in **tears** – and is reconciled to them...
- It's a beautiful picture of God's **mercy**, **forgiveness** and **reconciliation**... ///

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- Have you experienced the **riches** of God's **mercy**?
- Been **touched** by his **love** and **forgiveness** and the promise of **restoration**?
- Are you **safe** in **Jesus** from the coming judgment just as **Noah** and his **family** were **safe** in the **ark**? //
- That is what the good news of **Jesus** is all about! ///
- And we are beginning to learn about it right here in the very first book of the **Bible**!
- Well – more briefly now... the movement in Genesis...:

3. FROM CHAOS TO ORDER

- The **chaos** in the world caused by human **rebellion** is addressed by God's **mercy** in the provision of the **ark**.
- As a result – as God provides that salvation - there is an order – a calm – after the flood - as Noah and his family set about to repopulate the world...
- There is a movement from chaos to order as God chooses **Abraham** from all the people of the world – **through** whom he will be at work to **bless** all the **peoples** of the **world**...
- So let me remind you – in Genesis 12 – Abraham is singled out...
- ...God promises to make him into a **great nation**... and make him a **blessing**. ///
- **WHY** will God's purposes now focus on ONE man and ONE nation – the nation of Israel?
- So that – Genesis 12:3 – through that man and the nation which will come from him – **all peoples on earth will be blessed!** //
- From chaos to order! //
- And **finally** – the move from chaos to order is seen in the **Joseph** account – as the chaos of the **famine** in **Egypt** and across the **world** – is brought into **order** by God's appointed **saviour** in the famine – **Joseph**.
- And Joseph and his **saving work** – is a **shadow** – a **sign** – an **anticipation** of that **greater Saviour Jesus**... ///
- And these movements in the book of Genesis from **chaos** to **order** – point us to the **ultimate ORDER** – which Jesus **brings**.
- **Jesus'** salvation will bring the **ultimate order** from the **chaos** of **sin**
- Jesus is the final **fulfilment** of God's promises to **Abraham** – **HE** is the **means** by which all nations will be blessed
- Jesus is the **ultimate Saviour** – not from **death by famine** – but from **death by sin!** //
- This is the case in **your** life and **mine!**
- For **many** of us – life was a **mess** – or **chaos** – before Jesus – but Jesus has brought **order** to our lives... **purpose, direction, hope, joy**... and the ultimate order of forgiveness and reconciliation
- And what we know now in **part** – the order we now have a glimpse of – we will one day know completely – when ultimate order is brought – by Jesus – when he returns – and ushers in the new creation.
- Well finally – the movement in Genesis...

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4. FROM CANAAN TO EGYPT

- This will set us up for next week...
- But the end of the book of Genesis... sees God's people having moved from the **Promised Land to Egypt** - for **survival**.
- Joseph – son of Isaac – descended of Abraham – was running Egypt. He was put in charge of first **preserving provisions** – then **making provisions available** throughout the very serious famine....
- So we reach the end of the book – and we wonder – what is the future for God's people...?
- They've been saved from the famine – but they are a small group of 70 people - what has happened to God's promises to Abraham that from him will come a great nation?
- How come they are no longer in the land of **Canaan** God first gave to **Abraham**? //
- And you'll have to come back next week to find the **answers**... and to see just how significant is the book of **Exodus** for understanding that our God is a God who **saves** and **rescues** his **people**...!
- //
- Let me **close**...
- Has the Old Testament been pretty much a closed book for you until now?
- Confusing... hard to read – hard to connect with - hard to make sense of how it helps us in our Christian lives?
- I hope what we've looked at today has given you just a **glimpse** into its significance – and whetted your appetite to want to know **more**...
- For we see pictured here for us...
- God's **grief** at our **rebellion** AND
- His **mercy** even in the face of **judgement**
- That grief and that mercy – ultimately leads to the gift of Jesus his **Son**, by whose death and resurrection – comes **order** from the **chaos**... the order of reconciliation and restoration from the chaos of our sin and rebellion.
- Praise God!