Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

There are many places in Scripture where God is praised and adored for creation. For example, **Revelation 4:11** says, “*Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created*.” And we call this **doxology.** Doxologyliterally means glory-word, but it is to burst out in praise. And so, a key aim of these sermons is doxological. I hope they lead you to praise your Creator! But while it would be lovely if we could be satisfied with doxology, there is also a need for these sermons to be **polemical**. And polemical means to defend or attack a particular belief. You see, because there are wrong views about Genesis, and especially creation, even among professing Christians, there is a need to attack or refute those views, and to defend and promote the truth. So, I hope and pray that these sermons will also serve that polemical purpose; that we would be established in the truth, and better able to recognize and refute error.

And this began, last Sunday, as we saw how God gave Moses the history of creation as the foundation for faith and life, not only for Israel, but for all humanity. And we saw that God created all things, from out of nothing, by speaking it into existence. We saw that the creation of the Angels belongs in verse 1. And we also saw how the opening verse of Genesis reveals Trinity – one God in three persons. And because **Colossians 1:16** tells us that all things were created by the Lord Jesus, we saw that verse 1 begins the story of creation and salvation and re-creation in Jesus Christ.

Well, this grand story continues, also, in verse 2. And we are going to see this under three headings, today, as we consider **the connection between verses 1 and 2**, **the formless, void, dark and watery earth**, and then, finally, **the hovering Spirit**.

1. So, let’s begin with **the connection between verses 1 and 2**.
   1. We saw last week that verse 1 is the majestic introduction to the account of creation. It proclaims God and tells us that He created “*the* *heavens* *and* *the* *earth.*” And we saw that “*the heavens*” refers to the farthest reaches of the universe and the invisible realm of the angels. Well, **verse 2 zooms in down to the earth**.
      1. When we were at the Creation museum a few weeks ago, we went to a planetarium and watched a documentary about the vastness of the universe. And the distances are incomprehensible! But the camera eventually zoomed in all the way to the tiny earth, because that is where humanity, what Psalm 8 calls the crown of creation, lives.

So, even though God has just created this vast universe with galaxies and supernovas, etc, He focuses our attention on the earth, because the earth is where the grand story of creation and salvation and re-creation will unfold!

* 1. And the **original language of the Old Testament, which is Hebrew**, helps us to see this. And English and other translations of the Bible capture this by how they lay out the chapter. If you look at your Bibles you will see that verse 3 is either indented, or it stands back from the alignment of the rest of the paragraph. Do you see that? And it is the same with verses 6, 9 and 11, etc. And that is because those verses describe the *next things that happened* in terms of time, and usually what happened the next day. So, verse 1 describes the initial act of creation – God brings the heavens and the earth into existence. And verse 3 tells us the next thing that He did, which is to create light. And how the Hebrew is written at the beginning of verses 3 and 6 and 9 makes that as plain as the nose on your face. **But verse 2 begins differently**. And that is because verse 2 is not the next thing that happened; it is giving us more information about what God made in verse 1. And that is why it is *not* indented or stood back.
     1. We see the same Hebrew grammar, for example, in **Genesis 13:1**. There we are told that Abram went up from Egypt with his wife and Lot. And the next verse says, “*Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold*.” And this is more information about Abram. **Job 1:1** is the same: “*There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright*.” Again, it is more information about Job. So, it is not that Abram *became* rich or that Job became *blameless*, after a series of unspecified events; we are just being told more about Abram and Job *as they were*.
  2. And the reason I point this out is because **there are many today who teach that verse 2 is a ‘next thing that happened’ situation**. So, they want us to believe that the earth *became* without form and void; that something happened between verses 1 and 2 to make the earth without form and void. And this is known as **the gap theory**. And there are a variety of views among gap theorists, ranging from the gap just being just a short or long period of time, to it including events like the Fall of Satan, possibly some early-human or animal life, and some massive cataclysm that left the earth formless and void. And so, according to them, verse 3 is a restart, if you like; God starting over with how the earth had become after this gap.
     1. But we have already seen that according to the very ordinary way that Hebrew grammar works, verse 2 is not a next thing that happened. It is not about “became,” it is about “was.” It is just giving us more information about the earth that God had just created.
     2. And I suggest to you that if we were to go outside and **find a young child or an unbeliever** and ask them to read these verses and to tell us what is being described in these verses, none of them would mention a gap.
  3. So, why this gap theory, then? Well, **the gap theory** **started to gain popularity around the 1800s**. And does anyone here know what other infamous theory also began around the 1800s? That’s right – Charles Darwin’s theory of naturalistic evolution. And Darwin’s theory required millions of years. And whaddaya know, a Scottish minister was one of the first to startle his congregation by suggesting that right here, between verses 1 and 2, there was space or a gap for millions of years!
     1. So, do you see what is happening with this view? And it is typical of other interpretations of Genesis 1 that we shall hear about in the next few weeks. If you start with the Bible as the ultimate authority, Genesis 1 is perfectly plain. But if you start with believing in millions and billions of years, because, according to you, that is what science requires, then you will find a way to fit it into the Bible, even if you have to twist what it says or add to it to make it happen. And that, people of God, is what the gap theory is. And it is quite wrong!
     2. Now, as usual, **the gap theory is dressed up in pretty clothes**. For example, one commentator said, the writer of Genesis “is not concerned with the question: How did God do it? He would not, I think, have been terribly interested in our debates about the time-scale of evolution … those are not the questions he is asking.” Instead, the writer of Genesis is just “safeguarding and proclaiming the unsearchable mystery of God.” Do you see what he is saying? You are silly for even thinking about did God create all things in six days! What you should be doing is just celebrating the wonderful mystery of creation! But brothers and sisters, this is what is called a false dichotomy. We don’t have to choose between six days of creation and God’s majesty. When God tells us what happened “*in the beginning*,” and how after an evening and morning the first day was finished, and then of the second day through to the sixth, and when He says in **Exodus 20:11** that “*in six days the LORD made heaven and earth*,” then it is beyond clear that He want us to know the time-scale of creation!
     3. But because the gap theory is so popular, we need to know about it, and to know why it is wrong. And what is right is that verse 1 is the *first* work of the *first* day. Verse 2 is just giving us more information about what the newly created earth was like.

1. So, that is **the connection between verses 1 and 2**. And if you saw the sermon title in the bulletin, the first part is Gap? No! But now we move to the second part of the title which is Gospel? Yes! And we begin to see this in our second point, which is the **formless, void, Dark and Watery Earth** that is described in verse 2.
   1. We have already established that verse 2 is more information about what the earth that God had just created was like in its original form. And we are told this, before anything else, to magnify or exalt God as **the divine and almighty artist**. When we get to verse 31 and the end of the sixth day, we will see an ordered, populated, light-filled, solid earth that God will describe as “*very good*.” But it began as this formless, void, dark, and watery blob.
      1. In 1506, the artist, **Michelangelo**, began a marble sculpture of the Apostle Matthew. It was going to be part of a series of twelve apostles that would fill the choir niches in the cathedral in Florence. But Michelangelo was summoned to Rome to work for Pope Julius II. So, it was never finished. And you can see this unfinished sculpture today in a gallery in Florence. Maybe you can Google it later. It is a big hunk of white marble with a face and torso and one bent leg protruding from the front. But the rest of Matthew is inside the dirty white marble waiting to be chiselled out and shaped.
      2. And that is verse 2 – it is the stuff from which God will sculpt the earth. Now, the illustration breaks down because Michelangelo could only use the marble that was there, while God spoke things like light, the Sun and Moon, and animals and birds and fish into existence, and created human beings. But if we marvel at what Michelangelo ‘created,’ then the right response to what God did with what started out as a formless, empty, dark and watery blob is praise and adoration!

* 1. But let’s look now at these descriptive terms to see how together they communicate something of the gospel. The first two terms are that the earth as originally created was “***without form and void***.”
     1. John Calvin summarized what is in view here as ‘confused emptiness.’
     2. The words are used elsewhere in Scripture in connection with **the desert**. For example, Job talks about travellers in the desert getting lost because there is just barrenness or emptiness. And if you have been in a desert or seen pictures in a book or a movie, you will know that there is nothing to see in any direction, and even the sand has no definite shape as it keeps moving.
     3. And this is a very secondary point, but the fact that God does not look down on this formlessness and voidness and call it very good, but does call the shaped and ordered and filled creation very good is why **tidiness and order are good and godly and beautiful**. We are not meant to be satisfied with things that resemble verse 2.
        1. And so, with music or art, for example, random, chaotic sounds, and random, unidentifiable splotches on a canvas are not beautiful. But chords and harmonic note progression and recognizable landscapes or portraits and complimentary colours are beautiful. And they are beautiful because they reflect God, the divine artist.
        2. And boys and girls, and young people, and husbands, when your bedroom, or your side of the bedroom, is a mess, it reflects verse 2 and not the ordered and very good earth of verse 31. So, children, obey the command of your parents, and husbands, listen to the request of your wife, to tidy up, because God is a God of order and not of chaos.
        3. And we can add to this that this is why **litter and pollution** are not OK, and why efforts to tidy up the streets or beaches or rivers are good and worthy of our participation.
  2. But the next descriptive term is that of “***darkness***.” And if you have ever wondered why children fear the dark, or why we associate depression with darkness, it is because of what we read here and the biblical association of darkness with chaos and sin and judgment.
     1. **1 John 1:5** says that “*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*.”
     2. And the very first act of ordering this newly formed earth will be God saying, “*Let there be light*.” And God will describe the light as good.
     3. And do you remember what happened when Jesus was enduring the wrath of the Father as He hung on the cross? We are told that there was a supernatural darkness over all the land from midday to 3pm.
     4. And in **Colossians** **1:13**, salvation is described in this way: “*[God]**has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son*.”
     5. And many times in Scripture hell is described as a place of gloomy or utter darkness. But heaven will be a place where, according to **Revelation 21 and 22**, “*night will be no more*” “*for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb*.”
     6. So, this reference to darkness has gospel overtones. It is introducing a thing that will only be fully resolved with Christ who takes away the guilt of sin, and who brings in the new heavens and new earth where there is only light.

* 1. And it is similar also with the references to “***the deep***” and “***the waters***,” which are the same thing – the watery blob that was the earth in its original form. As **2 Peter 3:5 says**, “*The earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God*.” And water, in the Bible, is very often associated with judgment.
     1. Think of the **Red Sea** that crashed down and drowned the Egyptian army.
     2. Think of the **global flood of Noah’s day** that destroyed all human and animal life, except for Noah and his family and the animals on the ark.
     3. Think of the **stormy sea** in the story of Jonah, and on the Sea of Galilee that Jesus rebuked and calmed, which revealed Him as the Creator!
     4. But listen to what we read in **Revelation 21:1**: “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more*.”
     5. So, the reference to water also has gospel overtones. Even here, at “*the beginning*,” and before sin has come into the world, the very presence of water in creation reveals that this newly created earth is not the final story; the final story is the new heavens and new earth that will come “at the end.”

1. Well, that brings us, thirdly and lastly, to **the Hovering Spirit of God**.
   1. We saw last week that **Trinity** is implied in verse 1, because the verb created is in the singular, as in ‘He created,’ while the Hebrew name of God there, Elohim, is plural. Well, Trinity becomes explicit in verse 2 as we see reference to the “*Spirit of God.*” For we will learn further on in Scripture that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. And while we noted last week that we may rightly attribute the work of creation to the Father, because Scripture does, the second person of the trinity, the Lord Jesus, is described as the Creator in Colossians 1;16. And the work of the Spirit that is chiefly in view here in verse 2 is also that of creation.
      1. Earlier in the service we read **Psalm 104**. And it says of God, “*When you send forth your Spirit, [water and mountains and valleys and birds and animals and human beings] are created*.”
      2. And in **Genesis 2:7**, we read about God breathing the breath of life into the nostrils of Adam. Well, in **Job 33:4**, Job’s friend, Elihu, said, “*The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life*.”
      3. So, it is the life-creating work of the Spirit that is in view as He is described here as “*hovering over the face of the waters*.”
   2. And there are two very beautiful gospel connections that we can make with the activity of the Holy Spirit in verse 2.
      1. **The first has to do with the Lord Jesus**. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would conceive in her womb and give birth to the Lord Jesus, Mary said to Gabriel, “*How will this be, since I am a virgin?*” And then we get some of the most beautiful and mysterious words in the Bible, as Gabriel replied, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy- the Son of God*.” Do you see the connection to verse 2 and this hovering Spirit? Just as He here hovered over creation in order to create and shape and form life, so He would one day ‘hover’ over Mary to form the embryo who would be her son and the Son of God, and who would save His people on the cross, and who will one day bring in the new heavens and new earth!
      2. But the second gospel connection that we can make with the activity of the Holy Spirit in verse 2 has to do with salvation. Before a person is saved, the Scriptures describe him or her as a hostile enemy of God. They are, according to **Ephesians 4:18**, darkened in their understanding, ignorant, and having a hard heart. And they are slaves of sin and the devil, living in what **Colossians 1:13** describes as “*the domain of darkness*.” And this reality is why Jesus said that for a person to enter the kingdom of God, which is what being saved means, they must be born again by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Holy Spirit must hover over the spiritual darkness and deadness of their soul and create life and light.
         1. And when Jesus said those words in John 3, He used wind as an illustration of how the Spirit works. And do you know what the Hebrew word for wind is? *Ruach*. And do you know what the Hebrew word for Spirit is? *Ruach*. And do you know what the Hebrew word for breath is? *Ruach*.
         2. So, if you are here today, as an unbeliever, and you want to know who Jesus is and why you need Him as your Saviour, then ask *Ruach* to ‘hover over you’ and to create life and light within! And just to be clear, you don’t need to call Him by His Hebrew name. God or Spirit of God is fine!

But I want to finish by speaking to those of you here today, whether you are unbelievers or believers, whose lives are marred and messed up by darkness or turmoil or chaos, that is deeply painful. You need to know that this is not how it is meant to be. It is why Jesus came and healed many. And ultimately, He will come again. And if you trust in Jesus for your salvation, then listen to this wonderful description of the new heavens and new earth that He will bring and that you will enjoy. We find it in **Revelation 21**: “*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."*” And I have focused your attention on the heaven to come because not all the darkness and turmoil and chaos of life can be repaired and/or removed in this life. So, you must keep this wonderful eternal promise front of mind. But you can pray for healing now. You can pray for change in your circumstances, in your health, and in your relationships. Because, as our text reveals, God delights to bring order where there is disorder. But know that even if it is the will of God to not remove whatever your ‘thorn in your flesh’ is, now, His promise to you is that His grace is sufficient for you, and it will be removed in the life to come.

And this, people of God, is the gospel of Genesis 1:2. Amen.