

Christ and Creation

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[0 : 00] We are in the middle this summer of a sermon series entitled Christ and Culture.! Another way to say that is a biblical worldview.

! Gaining a biblical worldview so that in specific areas we can bring glory to God! by living out the gospel in those areas.

For example, we had money and finances. We've had work, our vocation. We've had arts, creativity. We've had words, words we speak.

We've had patriotism during the fourth couple weeks ago. How we live in that by not offending but proclaiming the gospel and having a proper biblical worldview in that.

This morning, our topic is the environment or creation. What we live in and around and what is around us. What I want to do is begin by asking you a couple questions.

[1 : 09] The first question is, what do you think or feel when you're standing at the highest peak you've ever been on, the highest mountain you've ever been on, and you're looking out at the most magnificent view?

What do you feel? What do you think? What do you think? Or when you look upon a beautiful flower blooming in springtime? What are your thoughts?

How do you feel about that? Are your affections drawn to the creator of that vast valley, that beautiful flower?

Well, how about, what do you think or feel when you drive by a normal field of pine trees? Or when you see a moth fluttering around the light on your house?

Are your affections drawn to the creator as the same? Now, every leaf on the tree, every breeze that blows, every flower that blooms participates in a symphony proclaiming the glory and majesty of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 23] Every bit of creation, no matter how mundane, moths, pine trees here in Georgia, was crafted and made by God.

And this is to point us to the creator. Turn to Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1.

Colossians 1 verse 15. He, being Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Join me in a word of prayer. Father, we are here gathered together to hear a word from You.

God, I pray that that would occur this morning. God, that You would use me this morning to speak Your word to all of us. That they would not be my opinions or my thoughts.

[4 : 04] God, they would be Your words to us this morning. Help us to not grow numb to Your word. Help us to not take advantage of Your word.

Help us to be moved. Have our eyes opened to Your truth that affects the way we live and not just gains some knowledge.

We look to You for all things. None of this can be possible outside of You. Be merciful to us. That Your will be done this morning.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Before we dig into Colossians, I want to kind of establish a starting point. And a lot of you, when I say this first point, you'll go, yeah, of course.

Yeah, got it. Check. Which I've actually already mentioned it once already in the introduction. My first point is that God created everything. And everything was created for His glory.

[5 : 10] Now that's an elementary truth, but I think we need to establish this so that we can then move forward with our discussion this morning. God created everything.

And everything for His glory. Genesis 1 says, In the beginning, God. In the beginning, God created. It was only God. We have God. And then we have everything else.

We have God creating everything else. Everything we see. Everything we enjoy. Everything we breathe. The good and the bad. God is created by God.

It's very important. And in the end of chapter 1 in Genesis, God says, Moses writes that it is very good what He created. Earlier in chapter 1, He said it was good.

He finishes and says it is very good. Now, the Olympics are coming up at the end of the month. And I love the Olympics. A lot of people, I have a lot of friends who just hate the Olympics.

[6 : 12] I love the Olympics. I just love competition. And it's very important to be judged by someone who is qualified to judge. For example, the gymnastics.

They're not going to walk out on the street and say, Hey, you, come on. We need to judge. No, they're going to have somebody who knows what they're looking for and have the specific scores. And if you've paid attention to gymnastics at all, it's a little complicated.

So they just can't pull anybody off the street to do that. They're going to pull somebody who's qualified to judge. Well, in Genesis chapter 1, verse 31, God is the most qualified to claim His creation is very good.

Because God is perfect. He is good. He is qualified to judge. He is perfect. He has no flaws. And His creation was without flaw.

It was exact as He had designed. So we can say it was very good. And because it was perfect, it was perfect for what it was created.

[7 : 18] What it was created to do. For it was created to bring glory to Him. See, what makes an artist special, I think, in my opinion, a sculptor, an architect, is that they make something out of nothing.

They dream up. And, of course, an architect and an artist do it within the rules of this world. So if an artist would have a blank canvas, well, they'd have to have a canvas and paint and color within the creative order.

An architect would have an old dilapidated building. A sculptor would have a piece of marble. So they'd have these rules that they would have to abide in. What makes God so amazing is that He had nothing.

And He created out of nothing. What we see did not exist. And God created it. And God says it was very good. An artist has a picture in their head, an idea of what they want to create, what they want to draw or paint or carve out.

They have this picture, but nobody can see it. Only the artist. Only the sculptor. It's only when that piece of work is finished that the audience, the people around, knows what it is and knows that the work is completed.

[8 : 38] It is that moment of completion when the artist or sculptor is proud of his work and quite possibly may say, it is very good. And that is what God has done.

He has created, and He says it is very good. God created everything out of nothing. When you see a Frank Lloyd Wright house, and if you don't know who he is, he's a famous architect, you know it's a Frank Lloyd Wright house.

When you see a Van Gogh painting, you know it's a Van Gogh painting. He just has his own style. And the painting, the picture, the art, points to the artist.

The work brings glory to the artist or the author. And so God's creation then is to bring glory to Himself. So He can say, it is very good for His doing what it was created to do.

Creation brings glory to God. It points to the Creator. Now Jonathan Edwards, in speaking about relationships, he's talking about relationships here, but the principle applies.

[9 : 55] Listen to this. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows, but God is the substance.

These are but scattered beams, but God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the ocean. Gifts should point to the giver.

Creation points to the Creator. God created everything, and everything is to point to Him. Now, what about the fall?

Some of you may be thinking, what about the fall? What about sin? Now everything can't be perfect. All of creation was affected by the fall. By sin. This was not just a man issue.

It was not just hearts that had been affected. The choice of Adam and Eve affected nature and creation. They brought devastation upon creation in the form of things such as ugliness and corruption.

[11:01] In Romans 8, we know that nature is groaning, awaiting redemption, awaiting for that time of perfection. See, creation though is still beautiful.

We can still look out and see shades of green that we haven't seen before. We can still see shades of color that we have not seen. We can still get our breath taken away by beauty.

But this beauty is limited. And truthfully, it pales in comparison to the beauty of Christ. The beauty of the Creator. So, now that we have that established, we're all on the same page that God created everything, and everything for His glory.

Everything was created for Jesus, by Jesus, and through Jesus. This is where we dig into Colossians chapter 1. Now, verse 15 says, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

He being Jesus. The heading at the top of this section, my Bible says, the preeminence of Christ. Speaking of Jesus Christ, He is the image of the invisible God.

[12:10] Now, this statement here, the image of the invisible God, was considered blasphemous to Orthodox Jews. The Old Testament forbid images of God because every image and every picture that we tried to create would fall short of the beauty and the awe and the greatness of God and who He is.

So they would ban, they would allow you, no, we do not do images of God. We do not try to create a picture of who God is. So for Paul to say that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, he's making a statement here.

He is saying that Jesus is God. Not just that He's a representation, not that He's a reflection of, but He's saying that Jesus is God.

So Jesus is actually not just God, but He is Creator God. Same Creator who created everything. The firstborn of all creation.

Now, some people want to make an argument and say that, well, see, Jesus was created, He comes in second here. Well, this statement is not about Him being born or created. It's actually about His status. That Jesus is above all creation.

[13:31] So Paul has established in one verse that Jesus is God and because He's God, He's above all creation. So, He's making a big, bold statement here for all of us readers to grasp.

Jesus is God. Now, earlier I said that God created everything just a few minutes ago. And now I'm saying that everything was created for Jesus, by Jesus, and through Jesus.

So what gives? Well, the easy, fast answer is that Jesus is God. That's simple. But let's dig in a little bit into verse 16. Verse 16, it says, For by Him all things were created.

By Him all things were created. In John 1, verse 3, it says that all things were made through Him. And without Him was not anything made that was made.

Hebrews 1, verse 2, says, Through Him also He created the world, Him being Jesus, John 1 being Jesus the Word. The picture here in Colossians and in John and in Hebrews is that the God the Father is the architect.

[14:49] He's the designer. He's the guy with the dream. He's the guy. Don't judge me on that statement. God is the architect. He's the dreamer.

He's the guy who has the plan. And Jesus brings the plans into existence. So everything was created by Him. The Father is the developer of a property.

Jesus is the builder of that property. Both working together to accomplish creation. And the Spirit then does the actual work of applying the plans in a hands-on relationship to creation.

So the Spirit is even at work. In Genesis 1, the Spirit was hovering over the earth. The Spirit does the actual work. So creation then is trinitarian.

And this is as deep as I'm getting for you, I promise. Creation is trinitarian like the Gospel. Okay? God the Father sends, calls, God the Son makes it possible by His life, death, and resurrection.

[16:04] And God the Spirit draws and opens the eyes of the heart. So creation is like the Gospel there, trinitarian. Creation by Him.

Everything was created by Him. What we see came about through the working of Jesus' power and ability. Jesus is the power. He is the agent of creation.

He brought the plans into existence. Look at the end of verse 16 of Colossians. It says, all things were created through Him and for Him.

creation. This means that Jesus is the goal of all creation. Of all creation. He is the goal. Everything exists to display His glory.

That's the third point this morning if you're following along. Everything exists to display His glory. Creation declares the glory of Jesus. Now remember the artist, the sculptor, creating?

[17 : 06] Once the piece is complete, those who admire the finished work think of the artist and admire the artist who imagined and planned and accomplished this work of beauty.

As long as that sculpture stands, as long as that artwork is on the wall displayed for people to see, people remember and admire the artist. Jesus is the artist to be admired.

He is exalted through creation. He's the central point of creation and He is why we exist. So when we look out and we see something beautiful, we think of Jesus.

We thank Jesus for it. Psalm 19.1 says, The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.

So when that cool breeze in a 90 degree day hits our cheek, rejoice, for Jesus had a hand in that breeze. When you visit paradise here on earth, wherever that is for you, when you visit paradise, thank God for His creation, for Jesus making it possible.

[18 : 19] Don't complain about the weather that God in His sovereignty planned. He created it. He ordains it for that moment and that time. Every time I think of that, complaining about weather, my mind goes straight to Facebook.

Facebook has become the complaining capital of, I don't know, it's where we can all just drop our complaints and just run away. We can just say whatever and just leave. And it doesn't take very long, so we had a warm winter and those cold days we had, we were waiting for summertime. And as soon as summer hits, we're waiting for wintertime. As soon as winter hits, we're waiting for summertime. It's just a cycle. Well, why complain? Because God has created it. He's ordained it for us in that moment and that time.

Martin Luther said, Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection not in words alone, which is what we hold in our laps and in our hands, but in every leaf in springtime.

So when every leaf comes out and grows and blooms, speaks to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And all of creation speaks to the glory of Christ, not just a leaf on a tree.

[19 : 38] Nature and creation performs a symphony for the glory of Jesus Christ. I want to combine a couple thoughts here for us. Now, if creation, all of creation points to Jesus, if everything points to Jesus, so creation is here and we are to enjoy it for the glory of Jesus.

It was created for Him as the end of verse 16 says. And the Westminster Confession, which is not Scripture, but based on Scripture, says that the chief end of man, our Logos question, what we were made for is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

We were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We too join in all of creation and glorify Jesus. That's the end there.

We join in all of creation and we also enjoy Him forever. And one way we enjoy Him is by enjoying His creation. We enjoy what He's created.

We enjoy the weather. We enjoy a nice flat field to play football on. We enjoy these things that God has created for us.

[20 : 52] See, the builder of the boat, the builder of a boat, rejoices when that boat is finally put out in the water and it doesn't sink. He rejoices when people are on that boat and they're able to have fun in that boat.

Same way, God rejoices in us enjoying His creation. That points to Him and is for our joy.

Theologian Joseph Sittler said, delight is the basis of right use.

The light is the basis of right use. Enjoying Him is the basis of right use. It's not just enjoying creation, but using it rightly for His glory and our joy.

We can all think of abuses used here on earth, on the earth. You're growing a field of marijuana. Well, that's a negative. That's not good. If you're cutting down trees for lumber to build houses for people, that's not necessarily bad. You've got to kind of balance and think about using it rightly.

[22 : 03] If creation points to Jesus, then we can point to Jesus with how we use His creation, how we use what He has created for us. Now, that does not mean we all drive Priuses.

It does not mean that we all recycle and wear hemp clothing and live in trees. It doesn't mean any of that. But it does mean that we have concern and care for this world.

Apathy is not allowed where the Gospel is concerned. Apathy does not work. Just not care doesn't fit in the Gospel. So if all creation was created for Him, Jesus, by Him and through Him, let us make much of Him in the way that we care for this world.

In the way that we are concerned for this world. Now, I expect all of you to go and sell your cars after today. Stop buying fuels.

No. Here's five practical ways we can live this out. And I stole this from Owen Strand's book on Jonathan Edwards, so these five points are his, but they're right on.

[23 : 20] Five practical ways that we can live this out. Point number one. We can appreciate the design of creation. We can appreciate the design of creation.

God's wise design from spiders, if they creep you out, eight legs walking on webs, that's pretty amazing. To silkworms spitting silk.

To the human body, the cell, just the cell in the human body that makes up who we are. God's complexity in His mind. Appreciate the design of creation.

And this next statement may hurt some of us, and it hurts me just writing it down. Take a break from our technologically saturated lives to see God's creation in His mind.

To see His design. To see His work. Put praise on God, to God, and not on humanity and our accomplishments.

[24 : 24] Because reality check is our accomplishments are going to pale in comparison to what God has created and what He has accomplished. Next practical way.

Marvel at the beauty of nature. Marvel at the beauty. We must find time to consume God in nature within our busy schedules, our busy worlds that we live in.

We must find time to consume God, to be with God outside of four walls and a roof and a cubicle or a cell phone in our face.

Romans 1.20 says that God's divine nature and eternal power has been clearly displayed in creation. Clearly displayed. We can go out and see God.

Now hear me, I'm not saying God is in nature. I'm not making up a new religion here at Christ Family Church. We can go out though and see His creation and see His mind and see His design and enjoy what He has created.

[25 : 36] God reveals Himself in nature and His creation. We can start by watching far less TV or taking in far less web content.

We can stop by taking in our experiences through a three and a half inch screen. I don't have my iPhone on me but I can hold that up and start reporting you guys for that. Get out for a walk.

Enjoy creation. This does not mean to go to the Appalachian Trail and start hiking. Get outside. We can get outside and enjoy His creation. We can play football and enjoy His creation. We can play basketball.

We can do all sorts of things and enjoy God's creation and marvel at the beauty of nature. We can praise God. We can sing to God.

We can celebrate God while being in the very realm that was created to testify for Him. Third point.

[26 : 35] We can look for spiritual truth in nature. Joseph Sittler, I quoted him a second ago, says that nature is a theater of grace. Nature is a theater of grace.

We can sit and just be in awe of God's grace. In awe of His creation. Nature is a theater of grace. Psalm 19.1 I quoted a second ago. The heavens declare His handiwork.

Look for natural signs of truth of the Bible. Mercy. Judgment. Mercy. A long-needed rain.

A rain that comes on a drought. Judgment. We'll look at the raging storm of lightning and thunder. Raging storms of tornadoes and hurricanes.

Jonathan Edwards. Now, none of us in here are Jonathan Edwards. None of us have the mind of Jonathan Edwards. I've got to say this before I read this. Okay? Because this is a little out there, but the principle here we can certainly grasp.

[27 : 43] Jonathan Edwards saw a silkworm as a type of Christ. Listen. The silkworm is a remarkable, this is his words, the silkworm is a remarkable type of Christ, which, when it dies, yields us that of which we make such glorious clothing.

Christ became a worm for our sakes, and by his death finished that righteousness with which believers are clothed, and thereby procured that we should be clothed with robes of glory.

Jonathan Edwards saw biblical truth in a silkworm. We can look for spiritual truth in nature. Fourth point, practical ways we can live this out.

We can care for creation. We can care for creation. There are, of course, extremes of this on both sides. We have the guy who cares too much, who doesn't buy a vehicle, rides a bike, uses a bullhorn, and yells at people who doesn't ride bikes.

We have the people who are the other side of that, who don't care at all, who litter and throw their stuff all over the place and don't take care of their property and do all sorts of things because, well, if we know the Bible says that this is not a home, that this is going to be perfected, it's going to all burn up, well, let's just leave.

[29 : 11] Let's just not take care of it. Well, that's silly as well. if we have a God-centered understanding of creation, a gospel-centered understanding of creation, then we will preserve and take care of this creation.

We will manage it. We will be faithful stewards of it because God has given it to us. Now hear me here. we will then possess, we will then possess a great opportunity to witness before people who too, love the earth but have no faith in the Creator.

It would give us an opportunity to share with those who love the earth but don't love the Creator. Our care for the world, properly done, can be both an act of worship, worshiping the Creator for what He has created and a means of evangelism, being able to share with others the truth, the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.

Finally, last practical way we can live this out. We can yearn, we can yearn for a greater realm, a future glory to come.

This world is not our home. We should look forward to what's to come. Not dismissing what we have here, not being the guy who just says it's all going to burn anyway.

[30 : 46] Or thinking selfishly about the future and not being concerned with here. Thinking, that day is going to be great, right now I'm just going to get by. Our future here, here, our future home will be better because the triune God will be there.

There will be no need for the sun. God's glory will be the light. The grass will be greener, but not because it's going to be better for us, although it will be.

Not because we're going to gain something, something selfish out of it. It'll be greener because of Jesus is there. And God's glory is radiating. It will be perfect, happy, and a holy place.

So, when we see the effects of sin in our daily lives, whether it be in a person or in this creation, we can rejoice because this is not our home.

We can rejoice. We will enter a place of beauty and love. where God dwells for all eternity. And I, if we have this proper biblical view, if we have this proper mindset of creation and creation pointing to Jesus, then I know the way we live and how we treat and how we manage and how we deal.

[32 : 11] We would be conservationists. We would love this world and take care of it and manage it. this sermon was incredibly convicting for me because I've been the apathetic one.

I've been the guy, just enjoy it. I've got to cut the grass. Geez. Those things. It's been a burden to me.

But now, after studying this and really seeing the implications that everything was created for Him and by Him and through Him, everything points to Jesus. We should revel in that and celebrate that and rejoice in that.

God created everything through Jesus Christ and everything points to Jesus. We as Christians should love creation more than any, enjoy it more than any, and conserve it more than any.

We should enjoy it more, love it more, and conserve it more. That's a biblical worldview in the arena of creation and environment.

[33 : 21] So, Colossians chapter 1, when we read 15, 16, and 17, which I didn't even get into, He, Jesus, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. All of creation points to Jesus. Our lives are not compartmentalized.

Nature is not this thing that we just have to deal with. We live in God's creation. We live in nature. We can bring great glory, great honor to Him through the way that we live.

Not just with people. Not just in communication, but how we live with creation itself. Pray with me.