

Creation.

Text: Gen 1:1-5

Suggested Hymns:

598, 377, 152, 367, 177 R&S T333

- 1) God created the world
- 2) God cares for His creation
- 3) God Still Provides For His Creation
- 4) God also created the angels

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Genesis 1:1-5, *¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are continuing our series on the Nicene Creed. Today we will focus on the words, ... *the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God Created The World

Twenty-first century man has trouble appreciating the doctrine of creation. He does not look at the world from the viewpoint of Scripture and the Creed.

Behind the marvels of the universe he does not recognise the hand of the Creator, who made and still sustains all things. Rather he tends to look at the universe as a self-made and self-contained system of matter and energy that exists and operates by its own powers with no room for God and His activity. Hence many people prefer to speak of the world as "nature" rather than as God's "creation."

If we are to strengthen our faith in the doctrine of creation, we must go to the Scriptures and learn from them. The Nicene Creed calls upon us to do what

Christians have always done, namely, to confess our belief in “*the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth and of all things visible and invisible.*”

The doctrine of creation is not a logical conclusion of human thinking about the universe. To argue that the natural world simply must have a supernatural cause such as God is hard for many people to believe. They then grasp at the theory of evolution which cannot lead anybody to an understanding of the Creator and of His creation.

Rather, the Bible says that God created the world and all that exists out of nothing. God created the world simply by speaking the Word. *Let there be ... and it was ... and it was good.*

The only exception to this are God’s special creatures Adam and Eve. We read in Genesis 1:26, ²⁶ *Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”* That image is holiness and righteousness.

We read in Genesis 2:6 that *the LORD God* simply did not speak the word, but actually *formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.* This means that we have an immortal soul. We have a beginning but no end.

With regard to Eve, we read in Genesis 2:21-25 that *the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.* ²² *Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.* ²³ *And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”* ²⁴ *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* ²⁵ *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.* So that is how God created Adam and Eve. Absolutely perfect!

The doctrine of creation is the believer’s confession of his present relationship to God, who has revealed Himself as the Father Almighty, the Maker of all that exists. Similarly *no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.*¹

Luther's Small Catechism explanation of the First Article of the Creed teaches each of us how to confess this doctrine in a most relevant and realistic manner:

I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers. He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day.

God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from every evil. All this He does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it. Therefore I surely ought to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

Luther did not despise scientific investigating and thinking about the universe; on the contrary, he encouraged it at his university in Wittenberg. But he realised that such investigation could not reach the ultimate truth about the world. Only God could graciously reveal that truth to man, the truth that all that exists is God's creation, called forth from nothing to be what it is, by God's own creative word.

Now, it is true that we live in a world that is becoming increasingly more complex and is daily getting further and further away from a living relationship to the Creator.

But we can get closer to the Scriptural view, not by figuring out how to harmonise scientific views with the Bible, but accepting everything the Bible teaches. Remember ***Scripture cannot be broken.***² Therefore we have an unconditional, thankful joy in being God's creatures, who live in a truly marvellous world that has God, as its Maker and Sustainer.

Thus we can learn to praise God for all the marvels of our universe and for all the gifts He gives us, as our catechism puts it: *clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, all we possess and all we need for our life.*

Our children can easily see the joys of creation and rejoice in the discoveries they make in God's wonderful world. Likewise some of the world's greatest scientists, working on the frontiers of new discoveries in the universe, have a similar joy and reverence for God and admire the wonders of His creation.

And we Christians are called upon by the Nicene Creed to join them in such child-like marvelling at God's creative activity, an activity that continues even in our fallen and sinful world, not because of any merit or worthiness in us, but purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.

Our Lord Jesus Himself teaches us to view creation in this way. He tells worried and faint-hearted people in Matthew 6:28-29, *Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;*²⁹ *“and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

2. God Cares For His Creation

Our Saviour wants us to trust the Creator's fatherly compassion and care for His creatures. Jesus Christ, as true man, born of a human mother, He, the Creator, shared fully in our creatureliness, and by His work of redemption He revealed to us the true nature of the Creator of heaven and earth: that He is not only Christ's Father, but our Father.

The Old Testament Scriptures, are especially rich in expressions of God, as the almighty creator who cares for His creation. In Psalm 8, for instance, the psalmist stands in awestruck wonder at the Father's mercy and compassion for His creatures, especially for man, as he confesses,³ *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,*⁴ *What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?*

By looking at the works of creation we not only learn to know our own creatureliness and the Creator's surpassing greatness, but we also learn to marvel at the Creator's loving care, a care that went the full length of condescension, humiliation, and even self-sacrifice to redeem ruined mankind. Thus this creation psalm is fulfilled in the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, who truly took man's place and won the victory over His foes.

It is this awestruck marvelling at the wonders of God's creation that can help us realise that the doctrine of creation is by no means a theoretical speculation. Rather it accounts for everything in the universe. It is also a confession of faith by which the grateful creature praises God for His gracious work.

3. God Still Provides For His Creation

Other creation psalms teach us that God is the Creator not only in the sense that in the beginning He made heaven and earth, but also in the sense that He is today continuously sustaining His creation. God is active in everything that people call “the laws of nature,” and therefore we should confess our thankfulness to God as receive His gifts at mealtime.

We read in Psalm 145:15-16, ¹⁵ *The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You give them their food in due season.* ¹⁶ *You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

Also elsewhere in the Old Testament this faith in God as the Creator is often expressed, especially in the Book of Job. When disaster-smitten, disease-ridden Job sat in utter misery on the ash heap, rejecting the inadequate explanations of his friends about why he was suffering, and demanding an answer from the Lord Himself, the Lord responded from the whirlwind, telling Job to look at His marvellous creation and the various plants and animals in it.

God asked Job in Job 39:19, ¹⁹ *“Have you given the horse strength? Have you clothed his neck with thunder?”* Again God asked him, ²⁶ *“Does the hawk fly by your wisdom, And spread its wings toward the south?”* ²⁷ *Does the eagle mount up at your command, And make its nest on high?”*³

The Bible speaks of two large animals, the Behemoth and the Leviathan.

Of the mighty Behemoth we read in Job 40:15-18, ¹⁵ *Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you; He eats grass like an ox.* ¹⁶ *See now, his strength is in his hips, And his power is in his stomach muscles.* ¹⁷ *He moves his tail like a cedar; The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.* ¹⁸ *His bones are like beams of bronze, His ribs like bars of iron.*

Of the fearful Leviathan, the Lord asks Job in Chapter 41, *Will you play with him as with a bird, Or will you leash him for your maidens?* ⁶ *Will your companions make a banquet of him? Will they apportion him among the merchants?* ⁷ *Can you fill his skin with harpoons, Or his head with fishing spears?* ⁸ *Lay your hand on him; Remember the battle -- Never do it again!* ⁹ *Indeed, any hope of overcoming him is false; Shall one not be overwhelmed at the sight of him?* ¹⁰ *No one is so fierce that he would dare stir him up. Who then is able to stand against Me?*”

These animals are indeed powerful creatures, but they are only creatures. God, on the other hand, is the Creator who made everything, including the Behemoth and Leviathan. God made them by His almighty power. They can never strike fear into the heart of their Maker. They are completely under God's control.

The point to note is this: If Job cannot stand up to them, how can he stand up to God?

What the Lord told Job, must also be told in this 21st century, when so many people tend to ignore God's power and care. We must get away from the narrow confines of our worries and look at some of God's amazing creatures as we find them in a zoo, or such fearsome and mighty works of His as we see them in forests, mountains, or seas and then praise God as Job finally did.

As is well known, the Bible begins with a strong assertion of Israel's faith in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. In the grand first chapter of Genesis the marvellous works of the Lord are reviewed according to the pattern of the great creation week which ends with the Sabbath, when a perfect creation is ready to worship and praise its Creator.

In the first verse of the Bible we are told, ***“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*** This is a statement not of philosophy but of the facts. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Thus Israel confessed its faith. Likewise we Christians also confess today, for as the Book of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 11:3, ***“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”***

The two extremes of history, the beginning and the end, are beyond our ordinary investigation and experience. But as Christians who have experienced God's creative activity in our own immediate and personal history, we view both extremes, the beginning and the end of the world, from the perspective which God Himself has given us.

God has revealed Himself to us as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore our Father, and has created within us a new heart through the working of the Holy Spirit.

We now see the world from the Bible's perspective, not man's views. This is what we Christians proclaim, when we confess in the words of the Nicene Creed, that we believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. The phrase "*all things visible and invisible*" shows that we are limited in our understanding of God's creation. We can go only so far in perceiving things by the use of telescopes, microscopes, or measuring devices of one sort or another.

4. God Also Created The Angels

God, we know, has possibilities that are unlimited. We therefore confess that not only all visible creatures are His handiwork but also all invisible ones.

In this connection we certainly confess our trust in those angelic creatures of God which the Scriptures describe in Hebrews 1:14 as *ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

For from Scripture we know not only that God has such angels round about His throne, but also that they intervene in our world as His messengers, although we are usually unaware of them.

The Scriptures speak also of evil angels, of demons and the devil. We know that they are God's creatures originally created good, but fell in disobedience to God. However, despite their fall they still exist because of His creative word.

Just as a Christian does not allow himself to be shaken in his conviction that, despite his sin, he is God's creation, created in God's image, similarly a Christian believes that this world, despite its present ruined state due to man's sin, is nevertheless still God's world, existing by His creative Word and that one day there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

We read in Isaiah 65:17-18, ¹⁷ "***For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.*** ¹⁸ ***But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create.***"

In understanding the world we live in, people have two choices. Either he will choose the materialistic view that everything in the universe can be understood in terms of matter and energy operating entirely on its own with no outside direction or control; or he will have to take another look at the Biblical doctrine of creation.

Then he will see that the earth and all the heavenly bodies, man and all creatures stand in relation to God. They are God's creatures, existing by virtue of His creative Word and saved from destruction and chaos by His gracious activity.

We are therefore called upon to praise God, *the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible*. May God enable us to confess this faith with joy and thankfulness. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:3

² John 10:35

³ Job 39:26-27