

THE223 Christian Narrative 1 Creation and Fall

Unit 4c Creation Mandates 2

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Hello and welcome to Session C of Unit 4. In this session, we'll continue our discussion and actually complete our discussion about the creation mandates given to us in Genesis 1. To review, our main teaching is the same teaching point that we had in our last session. It states that God ordained that humanity was to carry out specific tasks within creation. These tasks are dominion, stewardship, labor, rest, and marriage. Now, in our last session, we went to some lengths to talk about the idea that within the creation narrative are housed what we called perpetual or binding or permanent commands from God, that these commands, in fact, reveal something very specific about the nature of God in that they don't cease. Unlike temporary commands that we find in Scripture, these five particular commands are to be kept into eternity.

Dominion, we covered in our last session. We said that was procreation, the idea that God is the author of life in that humanity is to continually display the image of God and to increase the image of God throughout all his creation. Stewardship in that man is called to be a vice-regent of God. This idea of stewardship reveals to us that God is, in fact, completely sovereign. Everything we see does, in fact, belong to him. And so we've got to keep that in mind as we move forward. And that humanity is to increase, if you will, to push forward the things of God. And so today we will come back and finish by looking at the last three of the specific mandates given to us through the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2. The third creation mandate is the mandate of work. This comes to us in Genesis 1:28. This in fact is the same place that the first two came to us: dominion and stewardship. This is the third and final mandate that comes out of this very important verse of Genesis 1. "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

Those three little words give for us the work mandate. Humanity is to subdue creation. In fact, these three that we've talked about thus far (dominion, stewardship, and work) really all fold into one broader concept of dominion. We can perhaps rename the first one procreation and say procreation, stewardship, and work really are the triumvirate of creation. But let's take a look at this particular one of work; of subduing creation. The work mandate has everything to do with, well, work. It's one that doesn't need a whole lot of explanation. But I want us to consider a few things about work that are pretty critically important. First, we have to say that work preceded sin in God's story. Now, as we move into a later unit to talk about sin and its effects in humanity, we'll talk at great length about what sin has done to the idea of work. But for now, let's simply say that work has been so impacted by sin that we often forget that work is an inherently good thing. You see, this command of subduing the creation that God had put in place for humanity came before the presence of sin. Therefore, work is something that God gave to man, and that was good and blessed by God because it preceded sin.

So we have to understand that God gave the garden as a special place to be man's home. Mankind was to live in that garden and actually serve the garden. This is important for us to understand. Man was actually to grow the garden, not literally go in and, let's say, grow vegetables. That's perhaps part of the process. But to actually increase the size of the garden. What we discover in the creation narrative is that the Garden of Eden did not cover the entire earth. It covered just a mere portion of the earth. And the work mandate was that humanity was to go in and subdue culture, so he was supposed to come in and actually expand the garden. So the question is what does that mandate reveal about God? Well, this mandate reveals to us something pretty interesting about God. That is that his creation is latent with potential, that God creates things good but that he creates them in such a way that they could be made

even better. Think about that for a minute. God created all that we see around us in such a way that it could be increased.

So how does this relate to us as humankind? Well, the task of man then is to develop a God-submitted culture. The garden can be thought of in two different ways. Yes, it was a garden and that man was to tend it and to take care of it and to subdue it. But in so doing, and when we look at this idea of work in relationship to the first mandate of dominion or procreation, we see that in order to truly develop a God-submitted culture, humanity had to develop within its garden a living community of both creation and humanity. The task of man was to develop a God-submitted culture by bringing out the full potential of God's creation, extending the garden beyond its natural boundaries by helping it grow and thereby subduing the creation of God. He gives them to mankind to care for. So we have the work mandate.

Now we come to the rest mandate. The rest mandate comes to us from Genesis 2:1-4. There we read, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens."

Now, we've already talked at some length about how we get to the idea of mandate coming through this. We aren't technically commanded to stop working here. We've discovered that through the history tradition of Israel. We talked about that in our last session. But let's take a look at this idea that God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. And because God rested from all the work that he had done in his creation, so are we to do as well. The rest mandate really has to do with grace. You see, the completion of the week of creation by God necessitated his rest. He had accomplished all that he wanted to do. And he had set a model, he had set a precedent for mankind, especially as we look at those first three mandates that they were to procreate, that they were to steward, and that they were to work. But while work was good, and in fact, work is commanded and essential for mankind, it cannot be the center of his life. This is where we come back to that first mandate: to procreate. God is the author of life. God is the source of life. And part of the reason that God commands rest is that mankind will not, in fact, forget what it is that God has done for them.

And so we ask the question: What does this mandate reveal about God? This mandate for us reveals that God is to be the epicenter of his creation. There's a truth here. If we can't accomplish something in six days, one extra day won't allow us to really get what we need. If we don't take one day off in the week, we begin to fail to realize that we move and have our being in God, not in what we accomplish in our own. And so this mandate to rest is about experiencing the grace and providence of God in our life, that the task of man... I know that that kind of seems odd, the way that we would word that, that the task of man is to enjoy God's grace and providence. Think in your own life for just a moment that sometimes rest is a task. It's a difficult task. It's a task that maybe we don't always love, that maybe we don't always appreciate. Maybe sometimes it's hard because in it, we have to believe that God will care for us, that in foregoing doing work one extra day, God can meet the need, make up the difference. What will happen in our life if we do not work? Because he in fact is the center of our life. We do not derive our life and our being from what we do. We receive it from who God is. That's what the rest mandate is all about.

Then we come to the final mandate, the marriage mandate. It comes to us in Genesis 2:23-24. There we read, “Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” That portion of verse 24, “Man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife,” and they in fact will become one flesh. Marriage mandate has everything to do with relationship. God called humanity to live in relationship with each other. What we discover here is that monogamous marriage is part of the visible will of God for humanity.

What we discover is that man and woman are called to live together in a relationship of complete loyalty constituted by oneness and celebrated by sexual unity. This is a beautiful thing. This is how God created man and woman to exist together. We looked at that earlier as we looked at the idea of male and female as both equal and yet different. And yet here, before sin ever enters the picture, before anything else, the first institution, if you will, that God mandates is the family, is marriage. And this is huge for us. So what does this mandate reveal about God? Well, it’s something that we’ve already learned. We’ve discussed it as we talked about the Trinitarian nature of God. It’s that God exists in unity and difference. And in fact, it informs us that the task of man is to live together in oneness. Living together in oneness. That marriage uniquely represents in a physical way the spiritual and Trinitarian nature of God. And this is absolutely essential. We cannot let go of this because to let go of this is to lose something about the inherent nature of who God is.

So our last three: work, rest, and marriage. I want to do two things to review. I first want to look at each of these mandates and what they tell us about who God is. And then I want to look at each one of these mandates as helping us understand what we are to do. So first, let’s take a look at what these mandates help us understand about who God is. We looked first at dominion from Genesis 1:28, really dealing with the concept of procreation. And what that reminds us of is the fact that God is the source of all life. And in fact, that really relates well to the fourth, this idea of rest. And we’ll talk about that in a minute. That God is the source of life. Then we move to stewardship, this idea of vice-regency. And we see that God is absolutely sovereign. He is the one sole sovereign over all of creation. Then we move to work. And we said, well, work is about, in fact, work, about subduing culture, if you will. And when we realize that God’s creation has potential, what is this revealing about God’s nature then? That God is a creative God, and that God is so creative and so life-giving and so sovereign that he can create something that can be bettered by itself. It really is a fascinating idea. Then we went on to rest, which really is all about grace. It’s about reminding ourselves that God is to be the epicenter of his creation. If we remove God from the equation, we’re removing the heart of creation. Finally, we looked at marriage, which is all about relationship. And marriage exists to teach us that God exists in both unity and difference.

So now, if we change it up a little bit and ask, “What is it that our role is to be? Why or how do these creation mandates help us understand how we are to live?” we take a quick look at these five again. Dominion, which is about procreation. Man is obligated to spread God’s image throughout creation. This is one of our primary roles is display the image of God. Stewardship. It’s about vice-regency. Man is to extend God’s glory throughout creation. Work. Again, well, it’s about work. It’s about subduing. Man is to develop a God-submitted culture. Think about that one for a minute. Our job is to develop God-submitted culture, creation in society that worships God. We are to use our will to will God’s will on creation. Fourth, rest, which is grace. We as men are to enjoy God’s grace and his providence in our life. These remind us that life is not about work, that life is about God, and that God is the source of life.

Finally, marriage, relationship. Man is created to exist in relationship. Isolation is not healthy. And so we have both what we're taught about God and what we learn about ourselves. God ordained that humanity was to carry out specific tasks within creation. These tasks being dominion (procreation), stewardship, labor or work, rest, and marriage.