



## God Creates (Psalm 33:1-9; Acts 17:22-31) Becky Douglass

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The Bible begins with a declaration about God: “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” (Genesis 1:1) This declaration echoes throughout the Bible and continues on to form the foundation for all the basic confessions of faith such as the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church and the Westminster Confession of the Presbyterians. This declaration echoes in the very throne room of heaven as all creation sings:

*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.*  
(Revelation 4:11 ESV)

The fact that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth is not just a statement of what He has done, but also an explanation of His on-going relationship with His creation. It differentiates Him from any other so-called ‘gods’ which people worship.

To be honest, while I have always believed that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, until recently, I have not spent a lot of time thinking about the implications of this. If God is Creator, then ... what? This is what I’d like to explore with you today, looking at what this tells us about Him, His creation, and His people.

### **If God is Creator, then He is ...**

#### 1. Separate from creation

Our Creator God is not just the pinnacle of creation – the most evolved or most powerful part of it. He is above and beyond creation – He exists outside it. The Roman world of the early church had many ‘gods’ who were essentially superhumans; like us but more powerful. Even the very-human Caesar was considered a ‘god’. These ‘gods’ needed places to live and food to eat. They needed people to serve them.

In the passage we read from Acts, we see Paul talking to the people of Athens, a city which prided itself in their worship of the ‘gods’ and their service to them. Paul starts out by proclaiming to them that the true God, the God of the Bible, is not like the other ‘gods’ they worship.

He says:

*“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs.” (Acts 17:24,25)*

Because God is the Creator, He is separate from creation. He existed before the world was created and He doesn’t need anything from it. Instead, we need Him!

## 2. The source of creation’s life

Paul goes on to say:

*He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need ... As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. (Acts 17:25,28-29)*

Because God is our Creator, He gave us life and He sustains us in that life. Without Him, we would cease to exist. Our life, and the life of everything in the heavens and the earth, comes from God and is sustained by Him. This contrasts with the idols - they don’t make people, instead people make them!

## 3. Committed to His creation

Next, Paul says:

*His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. (Acts 17:27,28)*

When creation chose to turn its back on Him, God didn’t abandon it. He knew its only hope was to return to Him and live in close relationship with Himself. He is committed to its restoration and renewal. And provided a way for us to return to Him, the source of our life.

## 4. King of His creation

If you read the later part of Psalm 33, it reinforces this.

*The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations and thwarts all their schemes.  
But the LORD’s plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.*

*The best-equipped army cannot save a king,  
nor is great strength enough to save a warrior.  
Don’t count on your warhorse to give you victory—  
for all its strength, it cannot save you.  
But the LORD watches over those who fear him, those who rely on his unfailing love.  
He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine.  
We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield.  
(Psalm 33:10-11,16-20)*

The truth of this was brought home to me when I visited the African country of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone and the neighbouring country of Liberia suffered a devastating civil war which raged for 11 years. The atrocities which were committed are unspeakable. I visited there in

2005, just a little over a year after the war finished. I was training a group of pastors and other Christian leaders in children's ministry. The stories they had to tell were horrendous. Some had seen family members killed, tortured or maimed in front of them. All knew children who had been kidnapped and forced to be child soldiers. As horrendous as their experiences had been, all had testimonies of how God had preserved them and rescued them in times of trouble – He had been their help and shield. They had not armed themselves for protection as they knew that would only escalate the violence. Instead they had prayed and reached out to fellow believers and rebels alike with God's love. God, acting through His people, ultimately brought an end to the conflict and continues to work through His people to bring healing and rebuilding to those countries.

Because God is the Creator, He is the source of its life and does not need anything from it. He is also its King and is ultimately in control of it. So what does this tell us about His creation?

### **If God is Creator, then His creation is ...**

#### 1. The result of the Creator's purposeful action

God made our world because He wanted to. As we have seen before, the Trinity, which has always existed in a relationship of love, wanted to spread that love and so purposefully chose to create the world in love and for love. This world is not a produce of mere chance and time, but is the ordered, purposeful creation of God. Psalm 33 says:

*The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created.  
He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.  
He assigned the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs.  
Let the whole world fear the LORD, and let everyone stand in awe of him.  
For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command. (Psalm 33:6-9)*

This is the most basic thing that the Bible says about our world and God's relationship with it. This world was created by the actions of God it did not happen by chance.

Strong, Bible-believing, evangelical Christians can have differing opinions about how the first couple of chapters of the Genesis should be interpreted. But one thing is indisputable if you take the Bible seriously - the origin of life is not the result of random chance and time. The Bible clearly states that the earth came into being through God's purposeful acts of creation which controlled the development of the world as we know it. I don't have all the answers about 'how' God created the world, but I know that He did create the world. This shapes my view of life in a way which is totally different than if I believed that everything happened by chance, with no God. This belief leads me to believe that our world and our lives have purpose and order and value, rooted in a relationship with a loving Creator.

#### 2. Good like its Creator

God didn't just create the any kind of world. Over and over in Genesis 1 we hear that "*God saw all that He had made and it was good*". God made a good world. Psalm 33 emphasises this by looking at who God is and saying that this is reflected in His world. It says:

*For the word of the LORD holds true, and we can trust everything he does.  
He loves whatever is just and good; the unfailing love of the LORD fills the earth.  
(Psalm 33:4,5)*

When God created the world, His love filled the earth and it was guided by His character of justice and goodness. We know that the world we experience has been broken by sin and so it is not all that He made it to be, But even so, this Psalm says that His love still fills the earth. He has not gone off and left it. Nor is He at war with His creation. It is still His world and He still loves it. However, He is at war with the sin which destroys it. All His actions are designed to purge His creation of sin and redeem it and renew it to what He created it to be.

So, the truth that God is our Creator tells us some important things about Him and about His world. It also tells us some important things about us as His people and what we are to do.

### **If God is Creator, then we as His people must ...**

#### 1. Serve this world

Genesis 1 and 2 give us some clear pictures of humanity's original role in creation. It says:

*So God created human beings in his own image.  
In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.*

*Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." (Genesis 1:27-28)*

God made people to be His 'deputies' in ruling this world. As such we are to care for it and help it to flourish as He does. We are to protect it and make wise decisions so that it will develop in ways that are good for all its inhabitants. This role is a part of the 'image of God' in humanity and has never been taken away from us. Again, because of sin, this is far more complicated now. Before sin entered, the world was whole, balanced and thriving. Now, the world is broken and on a downward trajectory. Unfortunately, we as God's people have not always done a good job of caring for our world; we have abdicated our responsibility to others. However, the solutions proposed by many environmentalists, while they have some merit, leave God out of the picture, and so will never cause the earth to thrive as God intended. But their desire to care for our world shows the remnants of the image of God in them. They should spur us on to seek God's solutions to creation's problems. The growing Creation Care movement in the church is one manifestation of this effort.

And we must never forget that a key part of the solution must be a change in humanity itself. We need renewing as much as the earth does. Paul says:

*... anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person (a new creation) ... And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him ... we are Christ's ambassadors ... (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)*

As God makes us a new creation, we are called to share this with others so that they can be reconciled to God and become new creations themselves and together we can care for God's creation as He intended.

#### 2. Worship their Creator

Last week we saw how Creation points us to its Creator. And as we turn to look at the Creator, we must praise Him. Psalm 33 begins by saying:

*Let the godly sing for joy to the LORD; it is fitting for the pure to praise him.  
Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre;  
make music for him on the ten-stringed harp.  
Sing a new song of praise to him; play skilfully on the harp, and sing with joy.*

To finish this sermon, I wish we could join together to sing out loudly in praise of our God! We can't sing, but we can still praise Him. As a closing prayer this morning, I'd love to have all of us celebrate God's creation by reading a Psalm together. We can't sing it, but we can say it together. I've prepared a choral reading of Psalm 104 which praises the God who creates. Some of the lines I will say, some we will all say, and sometimes the men and women will have their own lines to say. The worship team will lead us, just as if we were singing in parts! Will you join me in praising our Creator God?

## Psalm 104 – A Choral Reading

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| LEADER | <i>Let all that I am praise the LORD.</i>  |
| ALL    | <i>O LORD my God, how great you are!<br/>You are robed with honour and majesty.</i>  |
| WOMEN  | <i>You are dressed in a robe of light.<br/>You stretch out the starry curtain of the heavens;<br/>you lay out the rafters of your home in the rain clouds.</i>   |
| MEN    | <i>You make the clouds your chariot;<br/>you ride upon the wings of the wind.<br/>The winds are your messengers;<br/>flames of fire are your servants.</i>   |
| LEADER | <i>You placed the world on its foundation<br/>so it would never be moved.</i>  |
| MEN    | <i>You clothed the earth with floods of water,<br/>water that covered even the mountains.<br/>At your command, the water fled;<br/>at the sound of your thunder, it hurried away.<br/>Mountains rose and valleys sank<br/>to the levels you decreed.<br/>Then you set a firm boundary for the seas,<br/>so they would never again cover the earth.</i> |
| WOMEN  | <i>You make springs pour water into the ravines,<br/>so streams gush down from the mountains.<br/>They provide water for all the animals,<br/>and the wild donkeys quench their thirst.<br/>The birds nest beside the streams<br/>and sing among the branches of the trees.</i>  |
| LEADER | <i>You send rain on the mountains from your heavenly home,<br/>and you fill the earth with the fruit of your labour.</i>   |
| WOMEN  | <i>You cause grass to grow for the livestock<br/>and plants for people to use.<br/>You allow them to produce food from the earth—<br/>wine to make them glad,<br/>olive oil to soothe their skin,<br/>and bread to give them strength.</i>   |
| MEN    | <i>The trees of the LORD are well cared for—<br/>the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.<br/>There the birds make their nests,<br/>and the storks make their homes in the cypresses.<br/>High in the mountains live the wild goats,<br/>and the rocks form a refuge for the hyraxes.</i>  |

LEADER *You made the moon to mark the seasons,  
and the sun knows when to set.*

MEN *You send the darkness, and it becomes night,  
when all the forest animals prowl about.  
Then the young lions roar for their prey,  
stalking the food provided by God.*

WOMEN *At dawn they slink back  
into their dens to rest.  
Then people go off to their work,  
where they labour until evening.*

LEADER *O LORD, what a variety of things you have made!  
In wisdom you have made them all.  
The earth is full of your creatures.*

MEN *Here is the ocean, vast and wide,  
teeming with life of every kind,  
both large and small.  
See the ships sailing along,  
and Leviathan, which you made to play in the sea.*

WOMEN *They all depend on you  
to give them food as they need it.  
When you supply it, they gather it.  
You open your hand to feed them,  
and they are richly satisfied.*

MEN *But if you turn away from them, they panic.  
When you take away their breath,  
they die and turn again to dust.*

WOMEN *When you give them your breath, life is created  
and you renew the face of the earth.*

LEADER *May the glory of the LORD continue forever!  
The LORD takes pleasure in all he has made!  
The earth trembles at his glance;  
the mountains smoke at his touch.*

ALL *I will sing to the LORD as long as I live.  
I will praise my God to my last breath!  
May all my thoughts be pleasing to him,  
for I rejoice in the LORD.  
Let all sinners vanish from the face of the earth;  
let the wicked disappear forever.  
Let all that I am praise the LORD.*

LEADER *Praise the LORD!*