

Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration

Sermon for September 5, 2021 Pastor Chris Sicks

Today we are beginning a sermon series about marriage. My wise wife suggested that before we look directly at what God's Word says about marriage, that maybe I could preach about the big picture of God's Story.

So that's what we are going to do today. The Bible is one big book, telling one big story in four chapters.

The first chapter of God's Story is creation. In the beginning, God made everything from nothing. And everything he made was very good. In the garden there was plenty of food. People lived in peace with God. There was also peace between husband and wife—the first two people in creation.

But very quickly, evil entered the world. In English we call this second chapter the Fall. The first human sin was rebellion against God the King. Rebels fight against the King, and they fight with each other. That's why rebels cannot stay in the kingdom of peace in the garden that God had made.

The story would have a sad ending, but God had a good plan. The third chapter is called redemption, or salvation. God the Father sent God the Son to earth to be born as a human being and live a perfect life. He suffered the punishment of a rebel, so that rebels like us could become sons and daughters. Redemption gives us new life and hope for a better future. But we are not in the garden anymore. We live our new lives in this old, broken world.

Until the Restoration. While we live in this broken world, we look ahead with hope to Chapter 4 in God's Story. One day Jesus will come back and bring us to heaven. In heaven there will be no more sin, no more tears, no more rebellion. We will live together with God in peace and joy forever in the new heaven and new earth.

Those are the four chapters in the story. We learn about the first two chapters in the Old Testament. Then the New Testament begins with the birth of Jesus Christ. The New Testament tells us about chapters three and four. Together, the Bible is a story about a rescue plan that God has been working on throughout his Big Story.

For today's sermon, I want to take you quickly through all four chapters of God's Big Story. We are going to look at a lot of scripture. Because God is the author of the story. He can tell the story better than I can, from his own word.

Before we begin would you pray with me? Holy Spirit, please open our hearts and minds to Jesus the Living Word. Father, we want to be obedient, joyful, and productive sons and daughters. Please use your word, by the power of the Spirit, to make us more like Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

Chapter 1: Creation

God's big story begins in a garden and ends in a city. Today we live in the middle, between the garden and the city. To understand our lives today, we need to go back to the beginning. To the garden that God made.

Genesis 1:1–3

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

We see in these verses that God made everything in the heavens and on the earth. We also see that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in Creation. God the Spirit is there. God the Father speaks. God the Son is the living Word that is spoken.

After making the light on the first day, God separates heaven and earth. He makes the sky, and the sea, and the dry land. Then God fills each of those places with the right kind of creature. Birds for the sky. Fish for the sea. Plants and animals for the land. It's a good plan. It's a beautiful creation.

Next, God makes human beings to enjoy his creation.

Genesis 1:26–27

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God made us like him in many ways. We aren't equal with God, of course. But we are his representatives on earth. We are like living statues that remind the world who is the true Creator and King.

When God made us, he made two different kinds of human beings. He divided different aspects of his image between the man and the woman. Men and women are equal in dignity and value.

Genesis 1:28–31

²⁸ 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." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Because God made us in his image, he shares some of his qualities with us. God is king, but he allows people to have dominion over the earth. Adam and Eve have responsibility to take care of the garden and to use the animals for good purposes.

God also allows us to share in his creativity. God made two people, and then blesses them with the ability to make more people. We see in verse 29 that the plants have seeds so they can reproduce. The plants can make more plants to fill the earth. God also put that same power in the man and the woman. But the man and woman do not reproduce like the plants and the animals. Human reproduction is tied to relationship. God made the world in love. God had a good, open, loving relationship with Adam and Eve. And when the man and woman came together in love, they

discovered that they could fill the world with more images of God. Let's look now at one more passage from the Creation chapter.

Genesis 2:8–9

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In the garden Adam and Eve have plenty of food. They are happy, and safe. Everything is how it should be. Everyone is where they should be. Until the fall happens.

Chapter 2: Fall

Genesis 3:1-5

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Evil comes into the world through rebellion. Satan was an angel who did not want to follow God, so he left heaven and took one-third of the angels with him. Satan wants these new human beings to join him, too. Satan comes to the garden to recruit Adam and Eve by speaking to them with lies. Satan wanted to be like God. And in verse 5 he promises Adam and Eve that they can be like God if they disobey and eat the fruit.

Genesis 3:6

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Notice the words delight and desire in verse 6. In the creation, God gave his people everything they could desire. They had a rich, delightful garden and an entire world to enjoy and explore and fill with children.

But sin focuses our hearts on what we do not have. Sin makes us want what is forbidden, because we are all rebels like our ancestors, Adam and Eve. "Don't tell me what to do" is the message inside every human heart.

Now let's see how God punishes rebellion.

Genesis 3:17–19

¹⁷ And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

After Adam and Eve ate the fruit, all of their relationships were damaged. These rebels wanted to be king and queen, so their relationship with God the true king was damaged. God had given them the power to rule over the earth, but now they experience conflict with the earth. Work becomes difficult. Disease and disasters threaten their safety and lives.

Sin also damaged the relationships between Adam and Eve, and their children. One of their sons will murder his own brother.

We see in the New Testament book of Romans a terrible picture of how human sin corrupts our lives.

Romans 1:28–32

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

That's the bad news. Anyone who is awake and aware today knows that brokenness is everywhere. It affects everyone. All the suffering we see in the world today is the result of the rebellion against God that Paul describes in Romans chapter 1. When creatures break their relationship with their Creator, everything and everyone are broken.

Who can end all this suffering? Who can fix all this brokenness?

Only the true God who exists in unbroken relationship with himself. Three perfect persons, united in one perfect community we call the Trinity. They had a plan from the beginning, to make sure that God's Story will have a happy ending. Let's look at the third chapter.

Chapter 3: Redemption

Matthew 3:13-16 ¹⁶ And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Here again we see all three members of the Trinity at work. They were there at creation. And now they are working together to bring redemption. Redemption comes from the word redeem. Redeem means to buy back, or to fix what is broken. That was the mission of Jesus.

God the Father is "well pleased" with Jesus the Son in verse 17. Let's look at why the Father is pleased.

Matthew 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Here we see another character from the first chapter of the Story. Satan returns with lies and temptations. He wants more rebels to join his cause. If he can get God the Son to join him, then Satan will have lots of power.

But Satan cannot influence Jesus. Jesus responds to Satan's temptations with the Word of God. Jesus is not vulnerable to Satan's lies because he is in a secure, unbroken, perfect relationship with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Together, the three persons of the Trinity had a plan to fix what was broken. To redeem us from sin and death. But to do it, Jesus the Son would have to die a rebel's death so we could receive eternal life.

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

Because Jesus lived a perfect life, his sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty for all our sin. He suffered once for our sins. The righteous Savior died for unrighteous rebels like you and me. He was put to death so we can be made alive.

Romans 8:1–2

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Satan continues to whisper lies to us. He wants us to feel condemned, to believe that our relationship with God is broken. But like Jesus, we can be strengthened by the Word of God in verses like this.

If you have trusted in Jesus for forgiveness, and believe that his death was sufficient payment for your sin, then you are set free. That's the Good News! Do you believe it? Do you understand what these verses are saying? Look at the freedom God promises to everyone who believes in Jesus and calls him King:

Colossians 1:13-14

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Redemption. That's chapter three. God buys his people back from the slavery of our own sin. He rescues rebels like us from the darkness of our own kingdoms. Now we live as citizens of the kingdom of the Son. Our relationship with God is now restored. It is healthy like it was back in the garden in Chapter One.

2 Corinthians 5:17–21

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Do you see the word creation there in verse 17? The same power that God used to breathe life into Adam is the power that gives new life to us. Our souls are born again when we are reconciled to God through Jesus.

But the world is still broken. We now live between the garden and the city. Our relationship with God is fixed, but our relationships with nature and other people remain broken. We fight with each other. We experience war and crime and disease and natural disasters.

But we have hope. And as messengers of reconciliation we are God's ambassadors of hope. Our mission as Christians is to love God, to love one another, and to bring many people with us to the final chapter where we will all be together in heaven forever.

Chapter 4: Restoration

In the last book of the Bible, the apostle John tells us what will happen after Jesus returns to bring all of his followers home to heaven in his Father's house.

Revelation 21:1-4

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. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ 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. ⁴ 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." ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

Doesn't that give you hope? In a world with so much death, and crying and pain, we need hope. Do you see in verse 3 the reason why there will be no death or crying or pain in heaven? Because "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."

Before the fall, Adam and Eve had peace because they lived with God in a healthy relationship. That healthy relationship with God meant that every other relationship was healthy too, with other people and with creation. In chapters two and three, everything is broken because the relationship with God is broken. But in heaven, everything broken will be fixed, because the relationship with God will be permanently fixed.

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

John describes the city of God, where all of the redeemed people of God will live forever. In the city we see "the river of the water of life" and "the tree of life." The river and the tree of life that were in the garden in Chapter One are here again in the city in Chapter Four.

God's Big Story moved from Life to Death to Hope and then back to Life again.

I know I had to move through the four chapters quickly. But this is a good way of understanding the Bible, so we will look at this model again in the future. I hope you have been encouraged today. I hope you see how God fixes our relationships with each other when our relationship with Him is fixed through Jesus. And I hope you love Jesus a little more after hearing about all his plans to save you and take you home to live with him forever.

Please pray with me.