May the coming year bring prosperity to your soul.

*Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*

 3 John 1:2

We all desire to be healthy and to have the things we need while in this world; and anytime we are in this condition is a time to be thankful to God; for all good things come from Him.

But John points out a more important prosperity we need: the prosperity of our soul. Our soul prospers first off by accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In this way, our soul is made alive again by coming into relationship with God. Then, as we live the Christian life, following Jesus above all others, our soul prospers even more by conforming to Jesus and His will.

An interesting thing happens. The more our soul prospers, the less we are concerned about worldly prosperity. We begin to focus on the more important task of storing up treasure in heaven.

That treasure will be waiting for us when we get there and it will satisfy us for eternity.

In Christ’s love

John

 12-26-21

Genesis 1:26-31

Last week we began considering God’s sixth day of creation. He started by calling forth the land animals following the previous pattern of having each stay within its own kind for reproduction. While we don’t read the blessing to be fruitful and multiply here, it is implied, and is specifically stated after the flood. God wants His creatures to become plentiful in the earth He has created.

In verse 26, for the second time on the sixth day we read, “*Then God said*.” This second time was in reference to the creation of mankind, but there is a difference from what we have read before. Previously, God said a command and what he said took place. This time God talks about what He is about to do. God, the Trinity, speaks with Himself about making human-beings; He holds divine council with Himself.

We noted that even though He was holding council, there was no discussion or exchange of ideas. This is because God is one and is in perfect harmony with Himself, even though the mystery of the Trinity is a reality. In this divine council, God chooses to create a living being that is in His own likeness; His own image. We are created by the Trinity. It is significant that when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour; and we follow the command of Jesus and make a public declaration of our faith by baptism; we are baptized into the Trinity: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have begun a new life; we have become a new creation.

We human-beings are created image bearers of God. While our natural inclination, especially in our fallen state, is to be puffed up in pride about this, it ought to humble us. What an awesome responsibility we have to correctly display some of the attributes of the Creator of the universe; especially when we consider that He gave us dominion over the rest of His creation. We see dominion over His creation brought up in the divine council in verse 26 and then actually brought about in verse 28.

Immediately after the council, God puts His decision into action. Verse 27: *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* The Bible is very clear that God followed through on creating people. First off, God created man. We were indeed made by God as human-beings right from the start. We did not evolve from some earlier creation. There was no pre-human that we came from.

There are Christians who try to mesh what the Bible says with the scientific idea that people evolved from some form of primate. The theory basically says that God created a group that belonged to the animal kingdom yet resembled man. Over time, God brought about one of the group that would have been a chief among them who would have been Adam. Adam would have been able to have a mate from this group and so would his offspring.

The theory is more elaborate than this but you get the idea. You can also see that it doesn’t match what Scripture tells us. God had finished with the animal kingdom. Man was a special creation that bore His likeness. No other part of creation has this distinction. The Bible is clear that God specifically created man as we see in verse 27. In chapter 2 verse 7 it says, “*Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground*”; and that He “*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*.” The New Testament also holds this view: 1 Corinthians 15:45, “*So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.*’” It is terribly important to have a first Adam because Jesus Christ is the last Adam.

One more thing we read in chapter 2 of Genesis is that none of God’s creation was found to be a suitable partner for Adam so the LORD God created Eve.

This brings us to another vital part of verse 27, “*male and female He created them*.” Chapter 2 gives another creation account that comes from a slightly different point of view and fills in a couple more details, which we will get to later. But God made a man and He made a woman. The account of the rest of animate life gives the impression that God made more than just one pair of each animal; there are terms like “swarm” and “teem”. With the image bearers, He began with creating just one pair.

Notice that both the man and the woman are image bearers of God. Both are created in His image and likeness. The two sexes are equal before God, one is not to dominate the other. Now, each is assigned their own roles by God, but they are still equal in His eyes and His love.

As beings created in the likeness of the Almighty, men and women both carry the responsibility of His image. And this makes sin all the more deplorable. When we sin, we besmirch the image of God that we bear; we shirk the tremendous responsibility we have. When we sin, we act in ways beneath the other animate creation that we are to rule over.

How glorious God is. He made us knowing full well that we would fall; that we would sin. He made us knowing this and He already had a very costly plan to redeem us from our failure. When the time was right, He put His plan into action and brought about the means of our redemption; Jesus Christ. It brings God much glory that He still loves us and has saved us.

Of course, Paul warns us in Romans 5 and 6 that we should not get the idea that we should continue in sin so that God’s grace may abound; so that He would be glorified by our evil deeds. When we resist sin, He is glorified even more. His grace and the work of Christ on the cross gives us more reason to resist sin and live a life pleasing to Him. He gives us the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in resisting temptation and living a more holy life.

In verse 28, we see that God blessed the man and the woman. From the very beginning, God has wanted nothing but good for the people He created. Even in our sinful state, the Bible tells us over and again that God wants His people to obey Him so that He can bless them with good. He has plans to prosper us and not to harm us. Again, the Bible is the account of God working to redeem us and Jesus said that He would not cast out any who came to Him. That’s in John 6:37.

God’s blessing often involves offspring as we have seen in the creation account and it is no different here for the man and woman. God tells them to “*be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth*”. This is very similar to what God said about the fish and birds, and what He implied about the land animals; but there is a difference. In verse 22 we read, “*God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply*…’” God’s blessing was about them; His command was regarding them. When He blessed the people, He spoke to them.

“*God said to them*…” God establishes a relationship with the man and woman. He communicates with them and has a fellowship with them. He is treating them differently from the rest of His creation because they are different; they are image bearers. This is definitely a relationship between a superior and a subordinate; but it is a relationship. In fact, it is the beginning of a covenant. This will be known as the Adamic covenant and we will look into it more later when we have more details.

As with the animals, God’s command to them to be fruitful is certainly a mandate to have children and populate the earth that God has made and prepared for the people. But, as we consider the rest of God’s special revelation given in the Bible, it is apparent that there is more to fruitfulness for human-beings. We are to bear fruit in our own lives by becoming more like Christ. We are to increase the Kingdom of heaven through sharing the Gospel and discipling other Christians. We have good works to perform that glorify God and bless other people on the earth. We are the vineyard and when the owner comes back, He expects a return.

Part of the command given to the people in verse 28 is to subdue the earth and we need to be careful with what that means. It does not mean destroy it; it does not mean carelessly use its resources until they are depleted; it does not mean wreak havoc on the environment; it does not mean disregard for animal life. It does mean we can use what’s here; it means we can cultivate wilderness areas for growing beneficial food for people; it means we can have places to live. Overall, along with ruling over the animals, it means being good stewards of the earth.

Unfortunately, this is carried to extremes where groups try to deny others the use of what the earth has. This is part of the fallen world we live in where people tend to think they know better than God. What the Christian has to be careful of is not to overreact in the other direction. The earth is ours to use but we are called to be stewards of it. It does still belong to God and we are simply caretakers.

Next God gave the first people dominion over all the other animate beings that God created. Ultimately, God still provides for His creatures. As we read in Psalm 104:27-30, they still depend on God for everything:

*They all wait for You
To give them their food in due season.
You give to them, they gather it up;
You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.
You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
You take away their spirit, they expire
And return to their dust.
You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;
And You renew the face of the ground.*

But we are still responsible; in Proverbs 12:10 “*A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal*”. We are above the animal kingdom. We can make use of them; we can use their strength and abilities to better our lives and the lives of others; after the flood, we were given permission to eat meat. But we do not have permission, or even any reason, for cruelty.

On this unique sixth day, for the third time, we read the words, “*Then God said*”. In verse 29 this statement doesn’t bring about the creation of anything new, but establishes God’s intentions for life on earth. Again, He is talking directly to the people He has made. God is sharing with them what His plan is. How different this is from anything else God has made. Human-beings are indeed a special creation of God’s; and the Bible lets us know how much God desires a relationship with us. He wants to be our God; and He wants us to be His people. That is so touching; it is so endearing; the love our blessed God has for us ought to overwhelm us. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, it can do so.

All the living plants that God had the earth bring forth are given their purpose: they are food for mankind and for all the animals of the earth. God provided all that was necessary, be it grass for the cattle or fruit and vegetables for mankind. Even spices to give flavorings. He provided all that was needed and more; variety and abundance to keep life interesting.

Yes, this indicates that all the animals ate plants in the beginning; even the ones with sharp teeth and claws. We can only speculate why God made animals with this kind of equipment when they were only meant to eat grass. But we can be sure He had good reason because all He made was with wisdom. And the time will come again when the carnivores will go back to eating plants and this will be during the millennial reign of Jesus. From Isaiah 65:25, “*The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox*.”

The end of verse 30 reminds us once more that God is sovereign. After recording everything that God said the verse tells us: *and it was so*. What God spoke came to be, whether creation or ordinance, regarding animate or inanimate, the power of God’s word was, and is, total.

Throughout the creation account, God has surveyed His work and pronounced it good. We expect nothing else from God who is all good; who is beyond temptation; who is absolutely holy. Here at the end of the sixth day God looked at everything He had made “*and behold, it was very good*”.

Prayer

Lord God, thank You for the creation account. By reading this, Your true word, we are reminded of Your power, of Your sovereignty, and of Your goodness. We are somewhat aware of the complexities of life, of living creatures. Yet You brought them into being by Your word in accordance with Your will.

Everything You made You were able to pronounce good and we know that Your word is truth. All You made is good and evil is something introduced to Your good creation. And because You are good You will redeem Your creation through Jesus Christ.

We look forward to that new creation; we look forward to that coming reign of our Saviour Jesus. We just ask that Your Holy Spirit keep us prepared for His coming. Preserve us from deception and give us the drive to be at work when our Master returns.

It is in the name of our sovereign Master we pray

Amen