

WEEK 5 | CREATED HUMAN | FROM AND FOR THE GROUND

GENESIS 2:4-9, 15-17

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and **there was no one to work the ground**, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God **formed a man from the dust** of the **ground** and **breathed** into his nostrils the **breath** of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸ Now **the Lord God had planted** a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the **ground** – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work it** and **take care of it**. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

PSALM 139:1-18

¹ You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise;
 you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
 you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
 you, LORD, know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in behind and before,
 and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
 too lofty for me to attain.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
 Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
 if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
 your right hand will hold me fast.

¹¹ If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me
 and the light become night around me,'

¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
 the night will shine like the day,
 for darkness is as light to you.

- ¹³ For you created my inmost being;
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
 your works are wonderful,
 I know that full well.
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
 when I was made in the secret place,
 when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
 all the days ordained for me were written in your book
 before one of them came to be.
- ¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts,^[a] God!
 How vast is the sum of them!
- ¹⁸ Were I to count them,
 they would outnumber the grains of sand –
 when I awake, I am still with you.

Commentary and Background – Formed from the dust, and for the dust

Revisit Sabbath conversation

Having reflected last week on Sabbath, check in with the group about how this went or what was different as a result of taking a Sabbath. Explore together what resistance or challenges there are to Sabbath taking and make a renewed commitment to stopping this coming week.

GENESIS 2:4-9, 15-17

Note that the phrase 'This is an account of' comes up many times in Genesis from now on – each time referring to the next stage of the development of the story. What starts as the account of the creation of Adam, moves to the accounts of Adam to Noah, of Shem to Abraham, of Abraham, of Ishmael, of Jacob and of Esau. This is the first foundational stage of the creation of God's family on earth.

Note that the rivers and waters rise up from the ground to water the ground and serve it, bringing it to life, and how in the same way Adam (the human from the ground) rises up from the ground to serve it through work and tending. Without water and work the ground would remain barren.

Note too that the trees and plants of the earth grow up from the earth to feed and support the life of Adam who is given the task of **serving** and **taking care** of the earth, and how the breath of God, the Spirit, is given to each human to give them life. The same words for 'work' and 'taking care' are used vocationally in the same way later on in Leviticus for the priests serving, working and taking care of things in the tabernacle.

While all trees and plants are given for food, there is a constraint on Adam from eating of two trees – one which gives longevity and sustains life on an ongoing basis and one which gives wisdom and knowledge.

As is seen elsewhere in the prophets the phrase 'you will die' is referencing the eventual outcome of rebellious behaviour, a consequence of disobedience. Although we don't read about this part of the story at this point, the sense becomes clear when Adam (and Eve), having disobeyed God's constraint and sought life and wisdom on their own terms rather with reference to him alone, are banished from the garden and prevented from access to the tree of life (which would have sustained them on an ongoing basis) and thus, from this moment on, they were doomed to die.

Questions

- Why are there two creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2?
- What does this part of the narrative tell us about God?
- What does this part of the narrative tell us about humans?
- What does this story tell us about how God has structured things for life?
 - What role do water, humans, and the Spirit have to bring life?
- What does it mean to 'work and take care' of the ground?
- What does this story tell us about the choice God gives humans with the constraint on eating from the two special trees?
- What do they represent?
- What is the consequence of disobedience?

Other questions

- What does this story tell us about our vocation and the meaning of our work?
- What does it tell us about trusting God for life?