

Isaiah 53

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[0 : 00] Sustainable, but nothing, is the cause of everything. Is it true or sustainable that some unintelligent lump is the cause of everything?

In the beginning, nothing created the heavens and the earth. In the beginning, none of its matter created the heavens and the earth. All in the beginning, God.

That's what the Bible says. That in the beginning there was God. This person with omnipotence and omniscience at his disposal. He there from all eternity. And he the cause of all that is.

And just pause for a moment over some of the refinements of that very simple statement. Remember those opening words of John's Gospel. In the beginning was the world, and the world was with God.

And if you reflect on that same thing to us in the beginning, there existed not simply some lonely, solitary, forlorn deity, but God the Father with God the Son at his side, and God the Holy Spirit too.

[1 : 49] This great trinity of love and fellowship. This complete circle of eternal life. God, his Son, his Spirit, God his Word and his Wisdom.

And there, in that great picture of the Triune and the self-contained God.

There, the explanation for the world in which you live, in the beginning, was the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God in the fullness of his attributes. God in the fullness of his threefold personhood. God in the fullness of eternal life and eternal love.

This self-contained God, who did not need a world or a creation of you and me, but who, out of the fullness of his goodness and beneficence, said, let there be, and there was.

[3 : 14] And then you'll find in the return of Genesis 2, another intriguing detail. But what's ascribed in Genesis 1 to God, is ascribed in Genesis 2 to the Lord God.

That is to Jehovah God. And what's that saying to us? Well, of course, the Lord Jehovah was the God of Israel.

And we've been told that that God of Israel wasn't simply some local deity, the God of the Jews, or the God of the Christians.

So that once beyond Israel, there was some other deity with a sphere of influence and control. But know that the Lord God, that is the Lord who called Abraham, and the Lord of the burning bush, the Lord who is our Lord, my Lord, you Lord, my Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.

So that the one who is our Redeemer is also our Creator. So that behind that whole enterprise of redemption, there lies all the power of the Creator God.

[4 : 52] And behind all this management of the universe, there lies the love that prompted to redemption. There's mighty synthesis of this real God, and the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth.

so that our Father, the one we call Abba, He is the Maker of the whole universe. And His writ extends, not only to every corner of this earth, but to every planet in our solar system, and to every solar system, and every galaxy in the whole universe, and that remotest star.

Billions, trillions of light years away. And the God who is with us tonight, who lives in your heart, who is at your elbow, that God is equally present in and to those remotest stars.

In the beginning God. People sometimes want to convey to me the impression that Genesis is a difficulty, that creation is a difficulty.

How can it be a difficulty? It is perhaps the greatest single concept to across the horizon of the mind of the human species.

[6 : 45] In the beginning God. In the beginning, the triune God. In the beginning, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the beginning, I say to you, in the beginning, Abba. And Abba created the heavens and the earth.

And then you see how the whole sequence begins to unfold. The earth was without form and void, empty. And there was darkness on the face of the deep.

There was no light. There was no order. And there was no life. And God successfully overcomes each of these negatives.

He eliminates the darkness by creating light. He eliminates the formlessness by all those great acts of separation.

[7 : 54] And He eliminates the emptiness by creating life in an astonishing variety and fullness of forms and species and individuals.

and the whole narrative moves along at breathtaking speed. I am assured and I believe it that this universe is some 15 billion years.

that this earth is some 4.4 million years. Well, let it be. The thing is that the story of those millions and millions of years is told in just a few verses.

And then we come down to this great moment when God says in verse 26 that God said let us make man in our image.

And it's such a beautiful thing. The tremendous speed to fast forward from the moment when there is nothing to this moment millions of years afterwards when God comes to create the man and then God says now slow down.

[9 : 32] Let's slow down. Because now we come to the really important thing and the angels say Lord you can't be seized.

These little creatures on that tiny planet and that insignificant solar system at the edge of somewhere. If you want to slow things down from that God is saying yes.

Now this is the important thing. And God said let us make man in our image so that the emergence of this peculiar creature is preceded by divine counsel and conference and that applies to none other.

Only in the case of the human species does God pause and deliberate. There is an interesting additional detail in Genesis 2 because when God creates Eve in Genesis 2 there is also divine speech.

It is not good for the man to be alone. Now I believe that Genesis 1 this verse without note 26 is a story of the creation of both Adam and Eve.

[11 : 01] and yet when God comes to create Eve again God indicates that here something of huge importance is happening and God explains why he is doing what he is doing because it is not good for the man to be alone.

And the narrative you see has rushed through the creation of all those other galaxies constellations solar systems it has gone through them at breakneck speed.

It sort of throw you in stars along the way. These huge huge bodies that dwarf our sun and it is almost being spattered everywhere and the rush in the narrative and then it comes to this great point here let us make man so important the emergence of this being.

And why? Because he is to be made or they are to be made in the image of God and in the likeness of God.

I am not going to expound tonight explaining what that means. Those ways in which by divine intention we are ourselves likenesses and reflections of God.

[12 : 35] So that as John Calvin would say to us even more than the physical world in all its glory vastness grandeur intricacy even more than that physical world shows us the glory of God the human being as the supreme revelation of God.

I do not mean for a moment but that there is a tremendous chasm between the divine and the human because the human too is from nothing.

God but he is from nothing made in the image of God. He is from the dust of the earth.

What could you make from dust? Could you make your likeness from the dust? God God made his own likeness from the dust of the ground.

And to this creature to this human species made from the dust God has imparted his own world his own logos so that we are able to speak and to think to speak to God to listen to God able to analyze understand God's universe.

[14 : 27] They tell me of course that there are so many resemblances between the human species and other related species and I see no great wonder in that because the same Lord made them all and made many of them on the same day so yes there are similarities and if you put them on a dissection table the human and the ape and the children see they look remarkably similar to the only one difference one great difference in that is this the chimpanzee never puts a human being on a section table writes no books about them elaborates no theories mindless object very similar to the chimpanzee manless subject manless inquire so utterly different man the human species the only creature that says to

God oh Lord oh Lord how excellent is your name in all the earth you can't teach our chimpanzee to drink tea you cannot teach him to write psalms you cannot say oh Lord my Lord man in the image of God and you note male and female created him the female with male subsumed under the generic man and the female with the male in the image of God and not the remotest hint of any kind of inferiority or difference incapacity or an image bearing mess or in being and those who want to argue for role subordination of the female to the male have to face the question why if we are both equally bearers of the image of

God on what basis is the one meant to be the inferior and subordinate of the other if it is complementarity it has to be a complementarity of equality because both the man and the woman are made in the same way and the same extent as bearers of the image of God and whatever we are going to make of the limitations that the apostle Paul imposes upon a woman's role as you understand it they must never lead you to overlook this fact that equally they bear God's image and it may be that

Paul's in question a whole interpretation of this role subordination because why would God make her equal and then tell her to behave as an inferior she is made in the image of God and then the divine sequence to follow up to this great emergence this emergence of the human species God blessed them and sent them God blessed them and you know it's an amazing thing but that blessing was never withdrawn even in the fall of Adam and Eve when God cursed the ground and God cursed the serpent God never cursed the man and the woman we are still a blessed species righteous and

God gave us those great erectors to increase the number and he said fill the earth unsubdued I think that this imperative fill the earth is quite separate and distinct from the first erector to increase a number filling the earth you remember Adam and Eve they are the only human beings on the planet the whole world from pole to pole from east to west is theirs and maybe even in the unfallen condition maybe they were reluctant to move beyond their given sphere and maybe they thought that the garden of

[20 : 42] Eden was their world and God said to them no Eden is great but Eden is not your world you have a whole earth he says and you are to fill it from pole to pole from east to west you are to explore colonize you are to fill every single kind of environment every kind of ecosystem other species they can't survive only in certain climates but this human species made by God so adaptable well of course the important thing is this that God has planted at the cove of earth humanity the instinct to explore to ask what's over the hill what's beyond the horizon what's across the river and I would hope for tonight that many young people hear what he or

God's word affirming what is one of the deepest instincts of their souls the instinct to live on the frontier and to want to cross the frontier to keep pushing back the boundaries in every field of human endeavor the Christian faith does not ask for a safe environment it does not want to live in its comfort zones it wants to ask why it wants to move over those horizons it wants to explore we may praise god for all we inherit from those who have gone before us in science in art in culture in theology that we are called upon to build upon these not called upon simply to conserve and consolidate what came down to ourselves it's not so like that man in the parable perhaps we have the one talent of our tradition and rather than invested we buy it and we say it has lost a thing and

God will say but what did it gain how we moved the boundaries pushed back the frontiers and God says subdue it and rule it and yes we have every right to engage in the pursuits of pure science and the pursuits of practical science and technology because us bearers of God's image we have a God given capacity to understand the world that your father made and a God given ability to harness all the resources of that world all the fertility of its soil all the riches of its oceans all the reserves of its many forms of energy they are ours ours to subdue and ours to hold and yet in

Genesis 2 that directive although not cancelled is modified and God says to us in these age old words of the King James version we are to to the ground and to keep it or more precisely we are to serve it and we are to guard it we have such complex bonds with the old and violent we are made from the ground we live from the ground one day I shall return to the ground in the meantime

I serve it and I guard it that word serve was used of the Levites as they served in the tabernacle it is a religious service which we owe to the world that God has given to us and we're here to guard it to guard it from all that threatens it to guard it from all that masks its liberatory glory its ability to appraise its maker we have to conserve it not simply as an environment for ourselves but as an earth which will continue to declare the glory of

[27 : 39] God and to magnify the work of his hands this whole world is my father's house I have a right an obligation even to feel at home and I do feel at home but I have a duty to respect it because of all the wisdom and power and love that God put into it yet I am his little creature his fallen sinful limited creature and yet charged collectively with this great responsibility serve it and guard it let's go forth into our studies our professions not as those respected by faith unencumbered by your faith let's go forth liberated by the teaching that God has given to us he has made this world he has made us in his own image and he is saying to us and to the young in particular you are the ones to serve and to guard the world that I have made may the light of the gospel and the glory of

God's word follow upon all your studies and guide all your research you