

# Genesis 1:26-28 | Remembrance Sunday: People are Precious

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 November 2016

Preacher: Rev. Thomas Davis

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, for a short while I'd like us to turn back to the passage that we read in Genesis chapter 1 and we're going to focus in particular on the words of verse 26 to 28 so we can read these again.

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 upon the earth.

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

Now Genesis chapter 1 is a fascinating chapter and it is a beautiful document. If you read through it, it's beautifully written.

It contains some wonderful marvellous descriptions and the more closely you look at it you see that it has got a very intricate, very clearly defined structure.

[ 1 : 31 ] It's an amazing chapter and it was very moving sitting, listening to Ben read it and to hear the very first chapter of the Bible being read out.

It's an amazing chapter and it's full of amazing teaching because when you come to a chapter like Genesis 1 it's answering some of life's biggest questions. So it's a truly remarkable, remarkable document.

But for a lot of people Genesis 1 can be a stumbling block and they can't get past it.

Some people will read a chapter like that and they'll immediately dismiss both it and every other chapter that comes after it in the Bible.

And I remember hearing a woman once say, I don't believe in God, I believe in science. And I think that that kind of statement sums up the kind of mindset which sees Genesis 1 as a stumbling block.

[ 2 : 38 ] I don't believe in that, I believe in science. Now that's a really quite astonishing statement because it raises all sorts of quite remarkable questions.

If someone says I don't believe in God, I believe in science, are you saying science is a faith? Are you saying God and science are incompatible? Are you saying that belief is totally irrational and unreasonable?

Are you saying that faith and Christianity is just a leap in the dark? And a lot of people in the modern world want to make that claim against the Christian faith, that it's in contrast with science and it's in contrast with reason and it is a big leap in the dark.

Well, I once heard a wonderful preacher say the only thing you get from a leap in the dark is a broken ankle. And I agree 100% and the Christian church agrees 100% because the Christian faith is not a blind faith and it is absolutely not a leap in the dark.

The Christian faith is based firmly on evidence, coherence, rationality and truth. And the reality is that Christianity is not in conflict with science, neither is the Bible.

[ 4 : 05 ] The two go hand in hand, the two are focusing on different areas and the two complement each other beautifully. And so I would say that the message of the Bible and Christianity, when it's properly understood, makes perfect sense.

Now maybe you're saying in your head, well, prove it because I'm maybe making a big claim. Well, we shall attempt to prove it and to do so we'll look at Genesis 1 because both of our churches here and next door together we are both Bible believing churches.

Now that means that what matters to us is what the Bible actually says. Now notice that's not the same as what we might think it says, but what it actually says.

And the key question to ask when it comes to this contrast and dichotomy between science and faith is to ask what does the Bible actually say?

And so let's see what does the Bible actually say? We read Genesis 1 and it's giving a claim to be an explanation of the origin of life.

[ 5 : 16 ] It's telling us what happened at the beginning, telling us where the universe came from and it tells us where we came from. Now Genesis 1 is very selective.

It doesn't explain everything and it's purposefully selective and we'll explain that explain why shortly, but it doesn't explain everything. It just focuses on certain things.

So what does it say? And is what it says irrational and unscientific? Well, I'm no scientist at all.

I was an engineer before I became a minister. So I hope I have some element of common sense that I can apply to this, but I hold up my hands and say I'm not a scientist, but let's have a look at the evidence.

And I'm going to point out 10 things that Genesis 1 says. First thing Genesis 1 says was that there was a beginning. First words of the Bible in the beginning. Now, I am pretty certain that most, if not all, scientists agree with that truth.

[ 6 : 17 ] They agree that there was a beginning. Now, interestingly, they didn't always believe that. Because for many years, the commonly held theory was the steady state theory, the idea that the universe had always existed.

Now that would be in conflict with Genesis 1. Because Genesis 1 says there was a beginning. The steady state theory says there's no beginning. But now, since various discoveries were made, like those of Stephen Hawking regarding background radiation, the steady state theory has largely been abandoned.

Now, isn't that interesting? There's a conflict between the Bible and science, and who was it who had to change their mind?

The Bible said that there was a beginning. Most scientists would agree. Secondly, Genesis 1 says that light came first, and God said, let there be light and there was light. Now, I'm pretty certain that every science would agree that there was light first.

Maybe a big bang of light, they might call it. But I'm pretty sure they would agree that light came first. Thirdly, Genesis 1 says that there is a universe, the heavens and the earth. That's what that's referring to.

[ 7 : 21 ] I don't think there's a scientist in the world who will deny that there's a universe. Fourth, Genesis 1 says that the earth went from formlessness to form. The earth was without form and void, says in Genesis 1, verse 2, and darkness was over the face of the deep.

And so it went from that state to a state of being in a formed, orderly state. I think that sounds exactly like what scientists would say. Fifth, life on earth becomes more complex.

It begins with vegetation, then come creatures. God said, let the earth spread vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which there is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth.

And it was so. That came first, then the creatures came after. And again, I'm fairly certain, I'm not a scientist, but I'm fairly certain science agrees with that. Sixth, Genesis 1 says that life was in water before it was on land.

See creatures before land creatures. I'm pretty certain that's what science says as well. Seventh, animals existed before humans. Science would agree with you, I'm pretty sure. Eighth, Genesis 1 says that there was a first human being.

[ 8 : 25 ] Now, common sense alone tells that there must have been a first human being, however they came to be. Ninth, and this is actually cheating slightly because I'm going into Genesis 2 here, but it's the same document.

Genesis 2 tells us that the composition of humans is linked to the materials of the ground. Genesis 2.7, if your Bible's open you can turn over to it, but I'll read it.

Then the Lord God formed the man of the dust of the ground. And so when God made man, he used the existing materials of the earth. Man didn't appear kind of like magic, like that.

God formed him out of the dust of the ground. And I would expect that science would back this up. When you look at atoms and molecules, you'll find them in the ground, you'll find them in human

beings.

I think we're saying the same thing. And tenth, Genesis 1 tells us that humans are physically similar to animals. They are made on the same creation day, day six, and they inhabit the same environment, and they are provided with the same food.

[ 9 : 28 ] So Genesis 1 tells us that it is quite logical to expect similarities between animals and humans. And that's why when science observes similarities between humans and animals, such as between animals and apes, or between humans, the valves of our hearts and the valves of pig's hearts, in terms of the Bible, that makes perfect sense.

And so in these 10 ways, and I think in many more, I think as far as I can tell, there's not really any conflict at all. In fact, the only major potential point of conflict is concerning the word day.

And that seems to be where people get concerned. Now, it depends, of course, what you mean by the word day. Some people are of the view that it's 24-hour days, others are of the view that it's a much longer period of time.

And there are many, many theologians and many, many godly Christians who are far more knowledgeable than I am, who hold both of these views.

And I'm simply going to say that, I'm not going to tell you my opinion, but I'm just going to simply say that in terms of interpreting what the Bible says, both of these understandings are perfectly valid.

[ 10 : 42 ] We're not obliged to think that these were 24-hour periods, but you're entitled to do so as well. But we also have to remember that neither are we obliged to think that scientific processes are always constant.

The speed of light is 300 million meters per second. That's taken as a scientific constant, and that's an understandable scientific process to take.

But how do we know it was always 300 million meters per second? How do we know that? We can only measure it now.

Was it faster? Was it slower? We don't know. So certain things are open to interpretation. Anyway, I don't want to get sidetracked because the point I want to make is that Christianity and science are not enemies at all.

And Genesis 1 should not be a stumbling block. The Bible is not irrational at all.

[ 11 : 47 ] In fact, I would say that it is the worldview that says, I don't believe in God, I believe in science that is irrational.

That is the irrational worldview because Genesis 1 tells us that a purely naturalistic and a purely science-only worldview does not tell us.

Genesis 1 tells us that people are precious. And the reason people are precious is because God made us and God made us in his image.

That's what we read in these verses. Now, just for a moment, I want us to apply strict logic to the science-faith controversy. Let's just assume that they're enemies and they're totally incompatible.

And let's put the science-only view on this side and let's put the Bible view on this side. Okay? Now, on this side, science-only worldview, here's our brief description of the history of time.

[ 12 : 49 ] In the beginning, there was nothing. Then by chance, there was something. And from this something, order and life and humanity eventually came into being.

But ultimately, everything is just part of this something. And there's no difference between anything. And there's nothing that makes a stone or a germ or an animal or a human more important than each other.

And so although we exist in this thing, people are not particularly precious. They're just another part of this great big meaningless random something that happens to exist.

Now, that's that worldview. And it cannot get away from that conclusion if you push it logically.

Okay? So that's that side.

In the beginning, there was nothing. Ultimately, people are nothing as well. The biblical worldview on this side, we are told that in the beginning, God created.

[ 13 : 51 ] And this universe is his handiwork. And at the pinnacle of that creation, the last and most important thing that he made is men and women.

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 keeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. Now, according to that worldview, men and women are in a different category. They are spectacularly different from the rest of creation. They and they alone are made in the image of God. In other words, they are incredibly precious.

And so that biblical worldview reaches the logical conclusion that human beings are incredibly precious. Now, let me ask you a question. Are you here today on Remembrance Sunday because you believe with this worldview that human life is ultimately meaningless and pointless?

[15:00] Or are you here today because you know to your very core that people are precious?

And now let me ask you, which worldview is the irrational one?

You and I know how precious people are. And Genesis 1 makes it absolutely clear that human life is immensely precious. And that's why we're here today.

That's why we have a Remembrance service. That's why we are wearing these poppies because people are precious. And that's why Genesis 1 is selective. Remember I said a few minutes ago that Genesis 1 is selective and what it focuses on, that's because it is homing in on the pinnacle of creation, which is God's creation of humanity.

That is the climax of the week. And if you look through all through creation, God makes something and he says it's good. But it is only once men and women, humanity is made that he says it is very good.

[16:09] Verse 31, God saw everything he had made and behold, it was very good. And that's telling us that humanity is different, that humanity is special.

That's why God pauses and says, let us make. God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the three in one, God pauses and says, let us make humanity.

And in the Hebrew, the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, so this is a translation of the Hebrew, a special word is used to describe God's actions. He created.

Now, he doesn't use that word of animals and fish and plants and birds, but it uses it of God, of creating humanity. Humanity is precious.

Humanity is new. Humanity is wonderfully and spectacularly different. And at the heart of that is the fact that we are made in God's image. God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him male and female, he created them.

[17:13] Now, what does that mean? I'm sure you've heard since you were young that we're made the image of God, but what does that mean? Well, we could say many, many things, but basically it means that we are like God in certain ways, and we are like God in ways that the rest of creation is not.

So we have certain characteristics that make us like God and that distinguish us from the rest of the created world. And when you look through Genesis one, you can see that this is absolutely clear, because if you read through Genesis one and you read through the creation process that God undertakes, God generally does three things.

First of all, he plans and God said, let there be light. Then he creates and there was light. And then he admires.

God says that the light was good. This pattern, God, he plans and purposes to do something. He then does it. He then admires what he has done. In fact, all these things happen at once because even in planning and speaking it, the light comes into being.

But basically we have these three things. Plans creates admire. Now we as humans do exactly the same thing, don't we? Often we plan, often we create and make things and we often admire them.

[18:32] Now, as I said already, I am not a scientist and I'm definitely not a zoologist and I'm also not a particularly experienced crofter.

But we plan, we create, we admire. I am pretty confident that animals don't do these things.

As I said, I've never been an expert on sheep. But I see sheep a lot. I live next door to lots of them. And I've never seen sheep go into a field and call a committee meeting to plan how they're going to eat the grass.

They just go in. I've never seen an animal create or do a new thing. I'm pretty certain that 5,000 years ago sheep were eating grass and they're still eating grass.

But even in the last five years, you look at what we've seen created by the human race, even what you carry in your pocket. I've left my phone at home but I was going to take it out. You look at the advances in technology, even in the last five years.

[ 19 : 36 ] So 5,000 years sheep have gone from eating grass to eating grass. The human race has come a long, long way. And also, again, I'm not an expert in sheep but I often see sheep outside and I have never in my life seen sheep standing by the fence admiring the sunset.

But yet we humans know what humanity is, what beauty is. We know that when the sun is setting over Burnara, when you're looking down the Loch Nile, it's stunning.

Now the sheep are out there to see it all the time but they never look because they're not interested.

But we know what beauty is. So clearly, clearly, we are different.

And the Bible says, of course you are. That's how God made you. You are made different and you should never be surprised that you are different.

So we bear the image of God and it brings us many, many qualities that the rest of creation has. But bearing the image of God also means that we know the difference between right and wrong.

[ 20 : 48 ] And at the heart of being a human being and the image of God is the fact that we are responsible. And that's part of what's been emphasised in Genesis 1, verse 26.

You can see it there on the screen. Let us make man an image after our like this and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth.

Now that word dominion is very, very easy to misunderstand. It can sound oppressive. It can sound like that God wants us to exploit the earth, that God wants us just to use and abuse it and do what we please.

Now that is absolutely not what that word means. The word dominion basically means to rule. And in the Bible, the concept of ruling means first and foremost, you are responsible for the kingdom that you have been given.

A king in the Bible was responsible for his people. He had to protect them. He had to look after them. He had to make sure that they were okay. And being in the image of God means that we have responsibility.

[ 21 : 56 ] God wants us to live in the right way and to look after our fellow creatures. And in fact, responsibility is at the heart of what makes us humans.

Responsibility is at the heart of what makes us human beings. And we can prove that when we think of war. Because if you think of the atrocities of war and you think of somebody who has done a horrific crime in war, can that person say, it wasn't my fault, I was acting like an animal?

They can't say that. Because they did what they did as a human and therefore they are responsible and accountable.

Now, could an executioner at a Nazi concentration camp excuse himself by saying, I believe in the survival of the fittest and these Jews weren't fit enough?

Thank God that the Bible tells us that he can't make that excuse. Now I don't know what science says about that, but I know what the Bible says.

[ 23 : 17 ] The Bible tells us that the atrocities of war are wrong. And they are wrong because people are precious.

And as I said, that's why we're here today because people are so, so precious. And that's why the loss of life during war must never, ever be forgotten. Now it's really important for my generation, anyone who's 30-ish and under, it's really, really important that we remember that because we are more removed from the war than any other generation.

Those who are older than us can either remember it or can remember vividly its effects. We are in a different world and we've got to make sure we remember because everything that we have is because of what these people did.

And so the Bible is teaching us that humanity is precious and that must shape how we view a fellow human being today. We must have that view of one another because we look back at history, we look back at the war and we think, how could people do such a thing and how could lives be treated so casually?

How could life be seen as so worthless? How could it be treated with such contempt? And it's vital that we don't think like that, but what really, really worries me is that the same things are happening today.

[ 24 : 50 ] We look back at the Holocaust and we think, oh, that's a bygone era, that never happens, doesn't it? Because I think that the reality is that the same things are happening today and thousands upon thousands of lives have been lost in conflict since the new millennium began.

And I have to say that so often I am absolutely dismayed by our media. I'm not standing here to kind of make a statement about the media, but I can't help but say it.

I am dismayed at the way things are reported in our country. Because if five lives are lost in London or in Paris or in New York, then the Western world stops and there's headlines everywhere.

But if 20 or 50 or 80 or 100 lives are lost in Afghanistan or in Syria or in Iraq, then it's just a minor news item.

Now while I was writing this, I kind of thought to myself, well, let's have a look and see. It's always the BBC News website. I go to and I took a screenshot of it for you today. I don't know if you can read that, but up at the top we have an awful tragedy in London, which is awful.

[ 26 : 08 ] Five, and I think there was even more than five lives lost, which is terrible. Then you have another selection of headlines, housing benefits. I don't know why on earth we want to know how the US voted on drugs, porn and death, but anyway it's there.

Canada's immigration website has crashed. And then down there you can see the paler one. It says, I can't read it on this screen, airstrike kills civilians near Raqqa.

So it's a kind of a minor headline. And when you click on that report, you see that it was reports of 20 perhaps more people killed.

And did you know who they were killed by? The Western Coalition. That's bombing.

Now, you look at the priority that's given to that compared with everything else.

[ 27 : 06 ] That's modern Britain. And I think that is sickening. And it's the same again. Last night the headline, I wasn't 80 people, 50 people, I can't remember, killed in Pakistan.

This morning it's a minor headline. It's moved right down the list. If that was London, the world would have stopped. Now, is a life in London worth more than a life in Afghanistan?

The BBC News website seems to think that it is. Thank God that the Bible says it isn't. The Bible says that every life is precious.

And that must be the way we think of everyone. Every single person, the people in Raqqa, the people in Syria, the people in Pakistan, they are all made in the image of God. The man, the woman, the child, the elderly, the sick, the poor, the weak, the criminal, the alcoholic, the drug addict, they are all made in the image of God.

And that is why when you look at the life of Jesus, you see that he treated everybody equally. And he went to the lowest of the low and he showed them love and care because he knew what we should know, that every life is so precious.

[ 28 : 31 ] And do you know that that means that you are so precious as well? You are a precious, precious life. Your life is not pointless, your life is not meaningless, you're not some random blob that happens to be here.

You are precious. You are precious to this community. You are a precious friend, a precious neighbor, a precious member of our village.

And above all else, you are precious to God. You are so, so precious to God.

And Remembrance Sunday in many ways reminds us of two contrasting but vital truths. They remind us how precious people are, but they remind us that the world is not what it should be.

Because the lives we are remembering today were lost in conflict and they were lost in things that should never, ever happen. And the state of the world that leads to these conflicts is our responsibility as the human race.

[ 29 : 37 ] And people are so often quick to blame God and so often quick to say it's God's fault, but part of being in the image of God means that we have the capacity to make decisions and we have the responsibility to be accountable for those decisions.

And we are responsible for our actions. The American people have elected Donald Trump. For better or for worse, they've done it, they're responsible. We have voted to leave the European Union for better or for worse, but we have voted to do that.

We are responsible. If we want the privilege of liberty, we must accept the burden of responsibility.

And the result is that because of the way we have turned away from God, humanity is what C.S.

Lewis called a glorious ruin. He is glorious and precious in that he is made from the image of God, but at the same time he is a ruin because we keep doing crazy things to each other and we keep on hurting one another and we keep on behaving in a way that is absolutely crazy.

And we only have to look at the world around us to see that that is the case. We have wonderful qualities from God, but we have tragic flaws that are our own doing.

[ 30 : 49 ] And the vital question, and this is our last point, the vital question is what is God doing about it?

And this is why it is a tragedy if Genesis 1 is a stumbling block to you. Because if you come to Genesis 1 and you say, oh, I'm not going to believe that and I'm not going to believe any of the rest of it, then it is a tragedy.

Because if you want to find out what God is doing about the problem of sin and the problem of evil, you have to read the rest of the Bible.

And what does it say? Do you know what the rest of the Bible says? The rest of the Bible tells us that human life is more precious than we ever imagined.

There's no cheap death. There's no worthless life. There's no pointless existence. Every life is incredibly precious. And for that reason, God tells us that he cannot and will not turn his back on humanity.

[ 32 : 03 ] We rebelled against God. Adam, who God created, ignored what God said and disobeyed, but God did not turn his back on him. And throughout the whole Bible, you read God's perfect plan coming together, which culminates in God sending his own Son, God himself, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to save us, came to rescue us from the mess that we have got ourselves into.

And the Bible tells us that in order for that to happen, Jesus had to die on the cross. And in dying on the cross, Jesus took the consequences of our sin and he took the consequences of our failing upon himself so that we could be released from it.

The cross is just a great point of exchange where our sins are placed on Christ, our failings are placed on Christ and his perfection is placed on us.

And the Bible tells us that Jesus rose again and he has conquered death and every single person who trusts in him will have eternal life.

And the Bible tells us that all of this is because God loves you.

[ 33 : 33 ] This one tells us that God thinks that humans like you are precious. The cross proves that he means it because there God was true to his word.

There he showed just how precious you are. Now you and I know that people are precious, but I hope you realize that God sees you as so precious that he sent his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

Eternal hope, eternal peace, heaven with him forever. God is calling you away from this world with its cold, harsh, scientific view of life.

God is calling you away from this selective philosophy that's prevalent in the Western world that is more concerned about the death of Europeans and Americans than we are about other races.

God is calling you away from this empty world view that ultimately says people don't matter. God is calling you to the truth, to the truth that people matter, to the truth that you are incredibly precious.

[ 35 : 12 ] Now I know that you know that that is true, that people are precious because that's the whole reason that we are here today.

You are immensely precious. The people who were lost in the war were immensely precious and we remember them with a solemn, with a heavy and with a thankful heart.

But we thank God for his commitment to us, for the fact that we are precious to him and that he is telling us today that if we trust in him, if you trust in him, he will save you, he will hold you, he will love you forever.

People are precious, you are precious. God is calling you, but it's your responsibility to respond. Amen.