

Week 2: Living as Modern day Kings and Queens

Introduction:

Ok, so we're Kings and Queens. Cool. But for those of us who live in the Chicago suburbs, what does 'ruling' look like?

Last week, looked at Genesis 1, which contains human job title

So God created human beings^(d) in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

Gen. 1.27 NLT

and job description.

*"Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. **Reign over** the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."*

Reign=Rule=Work: Theologians refer to this the cultural mandate. Let's break it down:

Be fruitful and multiply:

- means more than 'reproduce'.
- I'm pretty sure this would happen with God having to command it.
- The key is in the next line: Fill the earth.
- God is commanding them to take their fledging family and make it into something more. A society, a community. . .make space for relationships to happen.
- In other words, build:
 - neighborhoods,
 - schools,
 - sports, teams, public organizations,
 - just governments and economic systems that help everyone reach potential.

In other words: **Develop a Social World**

Second part:

Govern it (Subdue). Strong word. Overpower enemies. . .rape.

- Take something wild/unruly and bring it under control. One reason used
 - Last week: Evil already in garden:
 - And chaos that evil brings must be strongly **confronted and driven out!!!**
- But also carries with it the meaning to taking the raw, uncut potential of the earth itself and makes something beautiful, beneficial. To shape physical world in such a way that is life giving and enriching. Translated it **Exercise Skilled mastery**.
- God is saying :
 - Plant crops,

- design buildings,
- program computers,
- make music,
- shape life enhancing works of art.

In other words: ***Develop the Natural World.*** God says, “Go make a world”.

Sounds similar to what we see God doing in opening chapter of Genesis. . .taking the untamed chaos of the early earth (darkness and void) and separating:

- the water from land,
- light from darkness,
- making it a place inhabitable, hospitable for life.

So likewise, as those who bear God's image, Humans are to carry on this project To govern over/subdue his adolescent world and to wrestle out all of its untapped potential.

But not in a way that:

- trashes the environment,
- pollutes the atmosphere,
- stockpiles nuclear weapons,
- strip mines the topsoil,
- of any other stupid things we've done in the name “progress”.

No, there's a specific kind of world we are to make.

It's called Eden.

In case you haven't noticed, there are actually two creation stories in Genesis.

- Chapter 1 gives us the 30 thousand foot view . Creation of earth, homospieans.
- Chapter 2 zooms the camera into on a particular human couple. Adam and Eve.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Gen. 2: 12 NIV

2 phrases I want to break down. **1st is Work:** (HEB. **Abad**): Interesting : Sometimes its translated 'service" Used for priest in the temple.

So work. . .in some way. . . is service. . . service to God.

ABAD is **also** translated in the Hebrew Bible as **Worship**. So work and service aren't two separate ideas. They are connected at the hip.

So see why it's tragic that so many Christians think of worship as something that only goes on in a building from 10:30- noon on Sundays. But from the opening pages of God's story it tells us. . . .

ALL of life is worship.

And as in weekly assembly, it's in our work, that one feels/experiences the presence of God (what Bible calls the **GLORY** of God). .

- So as we work, we worship. .. and as we worship. . .
- We (as well as those around us) experience the beauty of God's presence through what we do.

That's why the Apostle Paul said,

"³¹ So. . . whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." I Cor. 10:31 NLT

Remember, our job title is to be image bearers of God. To make the invisible God visible - to mirror and to mimic what he is like to the world around us.

So, if God's glory is his visible presence and beauty, then, we glorify God as we:

- serve him, using the raw materials of the world to shape something exquisite.
- But also as we take that which has been damaged and destroyed by the selfishness of human sin and transform it into something enriching and life-giving to all.

So you see, getting up and going to work everyday. . .is an act of worship to the God who made you.

Our work is one of the primary ways we glorify God!

Next phrase (in Gen. 2) is **TAKE CARE**. In Hebrew, literally means to watch over, protect, guard, police, and stand up for creation.

The first human was an environmentalist. We should be too.

But is also has the sense of drawing out of something so that it can reach its full potential.

- **Gen. 2:** Gold, resin, onyx, etc.
- I used to read this and think: Who cares?
- Writer saying Eden is bursting with raw materials. It's spilling over with pent-up potential.
- Everything you need to make a civilization is there. . .all you have to do is cultivate it

But it's going to take some work.

"Rearranging the raw material of God's creation in such a way that helps the world in general and people in particular to thrive and to flourish." Tim Keller

This happens when:

- A farmer takes soil and seed and rearranges it into a crop teeming with food for people to eat and enjoy.
- When a builder takes a tree and a rock and rearranges it into a beautifully designed home for someone to sleep, eat, play, build community w/ others.
- When a fashion designer takes fabric and cloth and rearranges it into something with shape and beauty and functionality.
- When a musician takes a sound and a tone and a melody and rearranges it into something coherent and mesmerizing.

All of this is the work of cultivation. Of drawing out something's potential. In fact, our English word culture comes from this idea of cultivation. Good culture is the result of people hard at work, rearranging the raw material of planet earth into a place of delight.

So we are not called to just ANY kind of work. Some work doesn't do this at all. Some work is destructive to the earth and dehumanizes people. We're called to a very specific kind of work. To make a **garden-like-world**. Called to partner with God Kingdom where humans can experience loving community with their Creator and each other. . .and all the earth around can flourish and thrive.

That's the kind of world we are invited to make. So let's put all this together. We are to:

- Develop a Social World
- Develop the Natural World
- And do it in a way that helps the world in general and people in particular to thrive and flourish.

This, my friends, is our job description.

Here's what we need to understand: the garden God placed Adam and Eve was not to remain a static thing. . . its dynamic.

The garden was designed to go somewhere.

God's vision was for the order and artistry and beauty and community of Eden spread out over the whole earth.

I mean, what do you think of when think of the early earth (Pic: Early earth), think of a violent, untamed wilderness with large deposits of untapped potential.

Not only was it a place with very little life. It was a place with:

- no infrastructure
- no roads,
- no schools,
- no bridges,
- no cities,
- no symphony performances in the park.

And so God forms humans and invites Adam and Eve to join him in working, shaping and making a world.

So Adam and Eve are more than farmers and landscapers. They're

- explorers,
- designers,
- architects,
- community organizers,
- urban planners,
- city makers.

That's why, at the end of the Bible, when the prophet John describes the world that's coming because of Jesus, he writes about it in the language of Eden. In the last two chapters of Revelation we hear allusions to the 1st two chapters of God's story.

- A tree of life
- Rivers
- No curse
- They will reign for ever and ever

But in describe the future this way, John is not saying that the future is a return to the past. It is a return to Eden. But notice something has changed. It's not a garden anymore. **IT'S A GARDEN LIKE CITY.**

Why?

Because God's plan all along was not that the garden remain a garden. . . it was supposed to become **a garden city**. A place where all kinds of diverse people gather, connect, grow in their relationship with each another and their Creator God.. . and WORK together building a world that is life giving, life affirming.

Q: So what does all this mean for the here and now?

Apostle Paul, in letter to Jesus followers living in city of Corinth, writes how he and he friend Apollo both play a role in helping the church there get started. He puts it this way.

⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. I Cor. 3: 6-9

Q: Did you hear that? Planting, watering, growing. This is Eden imagery. It's like any first century with a Jewish heritage would have picked up on the allusion. What Paul says next removes any doubt.

“ God's co-workers”

Echos Genesis imagery of “Partners”, “Co-Reagents”

Important, because many of us in the church see ourselves as God's employees, not his partners. As if we're working FOR God. And there is some truth to that. God alone is the one true King of the universe, and we serve at his pleasure. (Paul often refers to himself as servant).

But if we're God's coworkers/coregents. That means we not only work **FOR God**, we're also working **WITH** God.

I mean, think of it:

Q: What's the difference between an employee and a partner? One word- ownership.

ILL: Think of employee at typical grocery store a rush. (High School Job)

- Get a rush
- Loud, stressful, Go, go, go, hectic. It was hard work.
- After over, everyone would grip to each other about it and count down the hours until they could grab their pay check and go home.

ILL: Often wondered if that store had been a co-op. Then not just employee, I'd been a partner.

- But my guess it would have been different.
- Work the same job, but harder. Same shift, but longer.
- Same rush, but instead of dreading it, thinking “SWEET!”
- Why? Because NOW I have skin in the game!

Q: What does this have to do with what we're talking about? Only this:

Conclusion:

- When you go to work tomorrow, remember, you're not just a designer of clothes, cars, computers. . .you're a partner with God, taking the human project forward.
- You're not just a mom or dad, getting your kids off to school or reading a bedtime story. . .you're living up to God's call on your life to *'be fruitful and increase in number'*
- You're not just contractor, working long days in the heat to build a house. . .you're cultivating the earth, drawing out its potential, and reshaping the world into an environment for people to thrive as God intended.
- You're not just a:
 - Student going to class
 - Or a train conductor going to the station
 - Or a chef designing a new recipe
 - Or a scientist in his or her lab
 - Or a checker standing behind a register.

You're a modern day ADAM and EVE. And if you haven't noticed, this world is not quite yet a Garden CITY. And your job is to:

- develop the social world,
- develop the natural world
- and do it in a way that that helps the world in general and people in particular to thrive and flourish.

Your job is to take all the pent up raw materials that are spread out in front of you, and work it, wrestle with it, subdue the chaos and disorder, and take God's creation project forward. . .doing it all as an act of worship. . .so that God's glory, beautiful presence might be made visible to those around you.

ILL: Christianity Today "Business declares the glory of God"

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/phoenix/business-declares-glory-of-god.html>