



Sermon – January 9, 2022

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Verses Covered This Week

Hebrews 11:1 – 3, 6, 13 - 16

Genesis 1:26 – 28

Genesis 3:6 – 7, 15

Genesis 6:5 – 7

Genesis 50:19 - 20

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to start in Hebrews chapter 11 today. Hebrews 11. And that may strike you as a strange place to begin when we're starting a study through the book of Genesis. But I think we'll all make sense in just a moment. If you're a guest with us, whether in the room or watching online, welcome home. We're so glad you're here as we turn our attention to the book of Genesis. This is the perfect time to jump in with us because we're going to be going verse-by-verse through this book over the coming weeks and months asking God to show us His truth from His word. If you weren't with us right after Christmas, maybe you were off with family over the holidays. We took some time to look at Jesus' words in Luke chapter 24 when he talked about how He is both the focus and the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament including the book of Genesis. That He is the center. He is the key. In other words, we looked at our approach to Genesis and now this morning what we're going to do is we're going to look at an overview of the entire book of Genesis. That's right, we're going to do the whole book of Genesis in one sermon. But before we jump into that, I want you to know that starting today, we're back to our normal Sunday activities right after the service we'll have life groups. And if you haven't yet stepped into one of those, what a great way to start off the new year by jumping into growing with others in knowing God more. We'll also be here tonight at 5:00 p.m. with Awana and our student ministry with Zeal as well as our Re|engage, Re|generation ministries for adults. And I'm trusting that even though we're covering the whole book of Genesis in one sermon, I hope to have us wrapped up in time to send you to those Sunday night activities tonight at 5:00. We should be able to get it all squeezed in by then.

And when's the last time you went to some place that you had never been before? Maybe it was a, for some of you this morning as a first time guest or you've never been to Central, and for

most of us, what we do is we type in an address or a location into our map app on our phone and it pulls it up. And before it starts those turn by turn navigations, what my map app does is it shows me to big picture of where I'm going. I can see where I'm starting. I can see my destination. I can see the full route. And by seeing the big picture, it allows me to understand each turn that we take in order to get there. And in a similar way, that's what we're going to do with the entire book of Genesis this morning. We're going to look at the big picture. And what does that word Genesis mean? It's not some 80's rock band that featured Phil Collins. It's not a 90's gaming console that features Sonic the Hedgehog. The word Genesis means beginnings. And we all know that beginnings shape everything. You can tell a lot about the future of a building based on the foundation that's there at the beginning. You can tell a lot about how your day's going to go by how it starts. You can tell a lot about how a road trip is going to take place based on how you get on the road at the beginning of things. Beginnings are everything. And what we're going to find here in this book is we see the beginning of it all. The beginning of our universe, the beginning of our sin. But most importantly, the beginning of our hope. And that's why I want us to turn our attention in just a moment to Hebrews chapter 11 because the entire book of Genesis is telling us a story that's captured in this chapter of Hebrews 11. Maybe you're familiar with it. It's often referred to as the hall of faith. It's this hallmark of all of these amazing people and their faithfulness in the Old Testament. And there's a sense in which Hebrews 11, verses 1 through 22, is its own overview sermon about Genesis. It looks at these key characters and the faith they displayed in what God is doing in this book.

And before we begin to read there, I just want you to think about the way that Genesis is laid out. It's structured in two separate parts. So the first one, Genesis 1 to 11, tells us the story of the beginning of the universe. And then in Genesis 12 through 50 it tells us the story of the beginning of God's people. So it's our primeval history and then our patriarchal history. It's our foundations and then it's our family. It's our past and then our parents. It's all working together to show us how God begins the universe. How God begins the story of redemption. Now this book was written by the prophet Moses. Most scholars believe that Moses wrote Genesis while Israel was wandering in the wilderness. Having come out of Egypt, having been surrounded by the Egyptian gods and their pagan stories about what they believed about who God is and how He created the world. And God knew that the people of Israel were about to step into the promised land where they'd be surrounded by Canaanite gods with their own views of who God is and how He created the world. And right there in the middle, in the wilderness, in that season of waiting, God gives His people a word, a first word, a story of the beginning. And that's exactly what Genesis is. Genesis is an origin story. It gives us a picture of our past and a preview of our future so that we can know how to live in the present. But in addition to that, it's also a theological history. It gives us a window into what God has been doing in the past. It helps us to make sense of our own lives today.

But that's not all that Genesis is. Genesis is also our family story. We've had a lot of family in town for my, in my particular family this past weekend because yesterday was my 40th birthday. I'm feeling old today. I remember when I was a kid, I was about 10 when my dad turned 40, and no offense dad, but I thought you were so old at that point. I thought that was like the gateway to when you start eating bran for breakfast and you get the bread with the sprinkly, crumbly nuts on top. Like that's the pathway. And yet here I am. And we had family and we had friends in and when we had a little celebration on Friday night, one of the things my family did is they set out all these pictures from my childhood and our family and people went around and looked at those.

And you can get a window into who someone is by looking at the past in their family. By taking snapshots and pictures of where they've come from. You can see how it is that shaped them into who they are today. And that's precisely what God has given us in the gift of the book of Genesis. He has, this is not just some distant story that's disconnected from us. If you are in Christ this morning, this is our family story. These are our spiritual grandparents. This is our family lineage. Ancestry.com can't take you this far back into your past. And yet God in His kindness has made Himself known through His word from the very beginning. But there's a danger when it comes to opening the Bible to look at a book like Genesis.

Genesis is probably one of the most read, yet least understood books of the Bible. And our familiarity with it can blunt its affect in our lives. We think we know what's there. We know just enough to be dangerous but not enough to be thoughtful. And as you look at the text, you're going to find all of these issues that are contemporary, cultural flashpoints in our society today: creation, evolution, gender-identity, marriage, sexuality, race, capital punishment, abuse. You could go on and on and on. It's all there in this ancient text. And yet the book of Genesis is not primarily about contemporary cultural flashpoints. It's not even primarily about the characters that we read about. It's not primarily about the rules that you'll find there. It's not primarily about the historical stories that are captured there. The entire book of Genesis is just like the whole story of Scripture is primarily about one thing, and that's our Savior. That's why Hebrews 11 is going to call our attention to this text this morning and show us how it is that we should make sense of the entire sweep of the book of Genesis. Look with me now. Hebrews 11 beginning in verse 1 and then we'll pray.

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the people of old received their commendation. ³By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Let's pray together.

Father, in this time as we start this journey through the book of Genesis, I pray that You would do a work in our hearts. That through this study in the months to come, You would help us to know You more. To see us for who we have become in our sin and to see us for what we can become through Your Savior. Then I pray even now that You clear the distractions. That You fix our hearts affection and our mind's attention only on You and Your word so that by Your power of Your Spirit, You might change our lives. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen.

So what's the book of Genesis all about? Well, the book of Genesis, just like the entire Bible, is telling us the unfolding story of the kingdom of God. Last year on Wednesday nights we did a study on our Wednesday night equip class where one of the weeks we talked about the kingdom of God and the primary definition we used there was by an author named Graham Goldsworthy. I love it because it's simple and clear. He says, when you look at the Bible the easiest way to understand the kingdom of God is this: the kingdom of God is God's people in God's place under God's rule. God's people in God's place under God's rule. And what we find in the book of Genesis is this unfolding a story of God's beginnings for us in which this kingdom plays out in three distinct phases, three distinct realities. And the first one's captured here in these first three verses of Hebrews 11. When you look back there, what we're going to see first is Genesis

speaks about the created kingdom. So that's what Hebrews 11 is pointing us to. It starts where Genesis starts. It begins at the start of the universe. It's telling the story of how God created His kingdom. That's captured in Genesis 1 and 2. And the author of Hebrews speaks about it here. And what Hebrews reminds us of is that Genesis doesn't give us every answer we would like to have about the creation of the world. But it does answer the three key questions that every one of us is longing to know. What is God like? Why do I exist? And how did we get here? And Hebrews 11 speaks briefly to each of those. So look back at verse 1. He is addressing the question, what is God like, when he says:

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

He is speaking about the character of God. What He is like. The God of the universe, the God that created everything, the God that is holding all things into place right now is a God who is worthy of belief. He is a God who is worthy of hope. And as verse 1 tells us, He's a God who is worthy of trust. The conviction of things not seen. That's what God is like. Genesis is going to make that known to us in the months ahead. But look also at verse 2 where he answers that second question. Why do we exist. It tells us there:

²For by it the people of old received their commendation.

In other words, he's telling us the reason we exist is to please God, to receive the commendation of the God that made the entire universe. And how is it we do that? Well, what we're going to do as we journey our way through the text today is I want you to hold your spot here in Hebrews 11, but also turn with me back to a few different spots in Genesis, starting in Genesis chapter 1 in verse 26. Slide over there with me in your Bible because in the opening pages of this book, we see an answer to the question, why do we exist. If you don't have your Bible, you'll see it on the screen. How do these people of old receive commendation? By living according to the calling of God that He gave in the garden and that continues for us. And you'll see it here, these words that God speaks on the sixth day of creation when he says this:

²⁶Then God says, "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 on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And 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."

So why do we exist? It tells us right here in the text. Look at these threads that come out here. The image of God, the dominion of God. The blessing of God. We are called to live the life that God designed for us in the garden before our sin destroyed it all. That's a life worthy of commendation like Hebrews 11:2 speaks of. But if you look back at Hebrews, you'll see in verse 3 the third question about creation that comes up here in the created kingdom which is the question, how did we get here. And that's why verse 3 of Hebrews 11 says;

³By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

Genesis is telling us this powerful creation story. You remember how it all begins in Genesis 1:1 don't you? In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. So right there, the first verse of the Bible God is setting the scene for the story of salvation. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. That's how we got here. The God of this world as Hebrews 11:3 tells us took what is invisible and made it visible. Took what was in darkness and brought it to light. Took what did not exist and spoke it into existence. Hebrews 11:1 through 3 is showing us the first dimension of the kingdom in Genesis that it is a created kingdom.

But now look down with me beginning in verse 6. I want you to notice the second phase of the kingdom that plays out in the book of Genesis. It's not just the created kingdom, but the corrupted kingdom. So look at what verse 6 says. The author of Hebrews commended the faith of Abel and Enoch and now he has this to say in verse 6.

[⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.](#)

So what's happening here is Hebrews 11:6 is showing us the battle that is raging beginning in chapter 3 of Genesis when the fall of man happens. When sin enters the world, what is the essence of that battle? It's a battle, as verse 6 tells us, of faith. Will we live in a way that is faithful to God? The question that verse 6 is holding in front of us as we live in a corrupted kingdom right now is, are we living to please God? And the answer to that depends on, do we respond to His design with faith? And the answer to that question over and over again from the Garden of Eden forward is; no, we reject God on our own. We turn away from Him. That's why I want you to look back with me in Genesis chapter 3. And let's look together at verse 6. You know this story well. When the serpent comes to tempt Adam and Eve he puts the forbidden fruit in front of Eve. He seeks to pull her towards sin. And this is where that corruption begins. Notice what verses 6 and 7 say to us.

[⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.](#)

And from this moment forward, rebellion reigns. Sin enters the world. The kingdom is corrupted. The *shalom* is shattered. The peace is destroyed. And it comes on the back of the temptation that the enemy brings. The temptation that leads us away from living the life that Hebrews 11:6 calls us to; one that is pleasing to God, one that is rooted in faith. They put more faith in the serpent than they do in the Savior. That's exactly why, for you men in the room, we're gathering two weekends from now for our 2nd annual Central Men's Retreat. And I want to challenge you to join us. We're going to be looking at the 3 Temptations Every Man Faces. The same temptations that Adam and Even encountered in the garden. And when we get together, we're going to have Kevin Ueckert and Sam Bernal and Marcus Hayes with us to speak to those pulls towards our appetites, towards ambition, towards approval. Those ways we seek to please ourselves rather than to do what Hebrews 11:6 says, to please God. We want to challenge you to come and join us to start your new year centered on Christ instead on centered on

yourself. Because this corrupted kingdom that comes is the result of when we turn inward in our sin rather than upward to God. And we see it begin there in the garden with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. But turn over a few chapters to Genesis chapter 6 with me. Because after Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, after Cain and Abel live, then comes the story of Noah. We're familiar with him and the building of the ark. But why was that ark necessary? Look with me in Genesis 6 in verse 5. Look at what happens as a result of our sin. It says this:

⁵The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

So notice what's happening here. Sin has become so great that God has determined that the only solution is a worldwide judgment upon it. Our rebellion against God earns us the judgment of God. In other words, it's as if Adam and Eve took from the garden an asymptomatic case of sin that even more potent and transmissible than the latest variant of coronavirus as infected every human that's ever existed, including you and me. And as we live in this corrupted kingdom, we live in a time where we deserve the judgment of God that He brought upon the people in this time period. Because with that sin comes pain. With that pain comes brokenness. And that brokenness often shows up in two key areas in our work and in our relationships. And the reason for that goes all the way back to Genesis 3. After Adam and Eve sin, He, God, speaks a word of judgment against the man and the woman. Saying that the man will struggle to bring forth fruit from the ground because of thorns and thistles. By telling the woman that she will have pain in childbearing. There will be difficulty in our work and in our marriages. In just a second, I want you to watch a video on the screen with me about that issue of marriage. Because the, the subject of marriage and its difficulties comes up over and over again in Genesis and throughout the Bible. It's one of the primary arenas where we feel the pain of the corrupted kingdom. And one of the ways that we at Central are committed to helping you thrive in your marriage is through a Sunday night ministry called ReEngage. Where whether you if you were to put your marriage on a 1 to 10 scale right now, whether it's a 2 or a 10, every one of us can grow in our marriages. And we want to challenge you to take that step to overcome the corruption of the kingdom that infects and affects your closest relationship by joining us on the upcoming Sunday nights of this semester. And I want you to see a little bit about it now if you'll turn your attention to the video screens.

Marriage matters. And that's why we want to help your marriage thrive. If you're facing the challenges of this corrupted kingdom that's been infected and affected by the sin around us, we want to challenge you to join us tonight at 5:00 to go deeper together. Tonight's it's kind of a taste and see, come experience what ReEngage is all about and we'll be kicking things off officially next week. And so I want you to make plans to join us. We'll have childcare available for your kids. But notice back with me. We were just looking in Genesis 6 about the judgment of God that comes as a result of our sin that corrupted the kingdom. And we stopped in verse 7 but I want you to see how the text goes on. Because right after this word of judgment, there's a word of hope in verse 8 where it has this to say:

⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Do you see it? Do you see that phrase? Found favor. Now why is it that Noah found favor? Is it because he was more holy than all of those that were around him? Was it because he had earned his way to the favor of God? By no means. In fact, when you look back at Hebrews 11, what you'll find is right around verse 6 it commends Noah, not for his performance, not for earning the favor of God, but for faith. It is only by faith that we can find the favor of God in a corrupted kingdom. There is nothing we can do on our own to make ourselves right with Him, to earn His love, to receive His favor. That's what Genesis is showing us. All throughout the Bible we must look to Christ for the favor that Noah found. And that favor that comes points us to the last reality of the kingdom that we see in the book of Hebrews. And I want you to notice it with me a little bit further down in Hebrews chapter 11 and in verse 13. Because we talked about the created kingdom now the corrupted kingdom. The third dimension of the kingdom that Hebrews speaks about that's present in the book of Genesis is the coming kingdom.

So notice how he talks about it there. After He's commended Noah and Abraham and Sarah for their faith, the author of Hebrews has this to say beginning in verse 13:

¹³These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and heaving acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵And if they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had an opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city.

So what the author of Hebrews is reminding us of is that Genesis doesn't just give us a picture of our past, but a preview of our future. A glimpse into a coming kingdom. One as it speak about here in Hebrews 11 was such that they lived as sojourners and strangers and exiles in the land. They were looking for something that was far off that greeted them from afar that wasn't yet near to them. They longed for that future country, that heavenly one. They longed for the city of God that He had promised. And the whole book of Genesis is setting the stage for the entire story of Scripture to show us how God is faithful to preserve and to promise. And I want you to see the way it talks about preservation towards the end of the book of Genesis in Genesis chapter 50. You know this story. As we get to the end of this text, it narrows to a focus on one of Jacob's sons named Joseph. The one, the younger brother that all his siblings hated. Who left him for dead and then sold him into slavery. He is taken into Egypt where he is banished to prison but he escapes because he is able to interpret dreams that he is set over the kingdom of Egypt to help propel the land forward in a famine. And his brothers in a time of desperation sojourn their way to this place and they come upon their brother, not even knowing it's him. And he provides for them. And ultimately he reveals his identity to them and they are undone. Assuming that this one that they left for dead and sold into slavery would now get his revenge. But I want you to see the way that Joseph speaks about the providence of God. The preservation of God in Genesis 50 beginning in verse 19. He helps his brothers, and to us, to make sense of the providence of God in our pain when he says this.

¹⁹Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

And can you imagine the pain Joseph must have experienced when in the multitude of people that were rushing to Egypt to look for help, all of a sudden he comes across his own brothers, the ones who betrayed him, who deserted him and abandoned him. The pain that would have come and yet here as he speaks about what has taken place, you see this mix of pain and joy. And the only way that you can explain someone like Joseph having joy in the midst of the pain is because they see the bigger picture of the purpose of God in their pain. That he is preserving a promise. And what is that promise? He tells us there that what they meant for evil, God meant for good. That he was taking from the deepest wounds in Joseph’s life and using it to heal the wound of a world in famine. And that’s the way that God works over and over again in the book of Genesis. He takes what is intended for evil and He works it for good. And that doesn’t stop at the end of the book of Genesis. Over and over again in the Scripture. Over and over again in your life, God is allowing the consequences for the broken world around us for the sin within us to play out in a pain that affects us so that He can take what appears to be evil and then use it for good. God is protecting. God is preserving. God is preparing even in the life of Joseph. See, the providence of God shows up in incredible ways in the book of Genesis. He preserves his promise through ways we never anticipate. He takes a man like Noah, a rookie carpenter and a rookie captain, and he saves the world from a flood through an ark. He takes a man like Abraham who’s been promised an offspring that will fill the, be as numerous as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seas and he takes his only son, He sends them up the mountaintop, and just as Abraham is about to sacrifice his firstborn son, God provides a ram in the thicket. A substitute to die in his place. Over and over again we see God raising up people to preserve His promise. And you see it right here in the life of Joseph. That this one, a dream interpreting slave who saves the world from famine. And each of these moments, each of these instances are a foretaste of what God does for us in Christ.

And the first glimpse of what God will do through the coming Messiah is buried right at the beginning of this book. And it’s the last place I want us to look this morning. Which is back in Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15. Because here in this text, we find in the aftermath of Adam and Eve’s sin, the first promise of salvation. The first promise of redemption. The first promise of forgiveness. The first promise of, of deliverance. And I want you to notice the way that it talks about it here. God is bringing judgment upon the serpent who deceived Adam and Eve. And as He does that, there is this promise that radiates forth through the entire story of Scripture when it says this.

¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Now here it is. This is the centerpiece of the whole Old Testament. Every promise of redemption that is present in the Old Testament radiates out from this one verse. It all finds its beginning right here in the promise of a skull-crushing seed of the woman who will come to bring victory, who will come to deliverance. And what we find in the book of Genesis is that from that point forward, God is keeping His promises. He keeps His promise by raising up the seed of the woman. Promise here in Genesis 3:15, and that seed comes through the line of

Abraham and it narrows down through him. And then from Abraham it narrows down to Isaac. And then from Isaac to Jacob. And ultimately Jacob to Judah. Here at the end of Genesis, and the promise is made in Genesis 49 that one day God will raise up an offspring from Judah. And the scepter will not depart from him. And his enemies will be defeated. And we know one day God would send forth His Son, a second Adam, a son of Abraham, a new Israel, a lion of the tribe of Judah to make a way for you and for me. That's the story of Genesis. That's what we get to spend the next months studying together. And it's at the heart of what Hebrews 11 is picturing for us today. That's why I think it's so fitting we get to turn our attention as we wrap up towards the Lord's Supper. If you haven't already grabbed your elements, in just a moment we'll have a response song. And as we're singing, I want to encourage you to come pick those up. Because we get the chance, not just to hear the word of truth through God's word, we get to taste and see that the Lord is good. And there's one thing that I want you to think about as we do this. It's a family meal. It's a celebration. It's a remembrance that God has kept His promise. And we invite you to the table this morning. And before I pray, I want to challenge you to reflect on these words from the apostle Paul when he says this in 1 Corinthians 11:27:

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Let's pray together as we examine our hearts.

Father, we come to Your word because Your word is truth. And I pray even now as we turn inward, as the new year begins, as so often people are reflective about what's taken place and introspective about what is to come, Lord. Would You open our hearts? Would You help us to see ourselves in our sin and brokenness and in the healing and redemption that we have in Christ? And even now, Lord, as we prepare ourselves for the table, would You help us to taste and see that You are good. That You made a way for us through Your Son. That You sustained us just like You did so faithfully to those people of old all the way back to the book of Genesis. And may it stir our hearts to live in a way that is pleasing to You. And we ask this in Christ's name. Amen.