

Why has God made me? The original floor-plan

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: 18 November 2012

Preacher: Richard Pratt

[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn in our Bibles now to Genesis chapter 1. We've been at the end of Genesis recently, but we're going all the way back to the beginning this morning, and I'm going to read some verses from there.

I'm not going to tell you the page number this morning, but it really is near the beginning. Just as you're doing that, let me remind you that in our evening service tonight, we have a service of admission to membership, and we have a large number of folk coming into membership in our fellowship this evening.

Fifty-two people are going to be taking vows of profession of faith and membership here. There will be four baptisms as well, and so please do come along this evening, and I pray for those who are going to be joining our fellowship.

It's such a great encouragement to us at this time to have all these folk who want to stand with us and want to serve the Lord Jesus with us here. So that's this evening, 6.30, and you'd be very welcome.

I'm going to read now from Genesis chapter 1 at verse 26 through to the end of the account, which is verse 3 of Genesis chapter 2. And this is the account of what God did at the very end of creation on the sixth day.

[1 : 1 8] Then God said, And God said to them, And God said, And God said, And behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit.

You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.

And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, and the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Because on it, God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

[3 : 0 7] Amen. May God bless to us this his word. It is my privilege to be with you this morning.

Thank you very much, Willie, elders, pastors of this church. It's wonderful to preach in a nation where your family name is a joke.

I can't tell you how many years it took for me to discover that was true here. I always wondered, why are they snickering? Every time they say my name, they're snickering. I don't get it.

But now I know, so I'm watching you. You know, as I've been here in Glasgow this week, looking at people, watching people, it often appears that people are wandering around with little to do, little to direct their lives, very little idea of where they're going.

Others seem to be rushing just as fast as they can in the straightest line they possibly can to get from here to there because they are on a mission.

[4 : 2 2] They're going somewhere. I wonder where they're going so quickly, but they're busy and they're going somewhere. And the reality is, is that when God created humankind, he created us with a mission, with a purpose.

But so very often we postpone and sideline this mission that God has given to us to the point that we end up simply wandering about aimlessly or pursuing things that are vain.

When I was about 10 years old, I had the privilege. I call it a privilege now. I didn't back then. I had the privilege of spending an entire summer with my father, adding a room to our family's home. I learned a lot about carpentry. I learned a lot about all those kinds of things. But every day my mother left for work, she would pass through our work area and she would simply say, all I care is that it doesn't look like it was added to the house.

So we worked very hard. We didn't want that to happen, that's for sure. We worked very hard to make sure that the brickwork matched up, that the windows aligned, that the pitch of the roof was just right.

[5 : 41] And when she would come home in the evening, we'd want to show her all the things we had done and she would just say, I don't care, I don't care. All I care is it doesn't look like it was added to the house.

Now I can guarantee you, if you drove to my parents' home today, it would take you about three seconds before you would say to yourself, that room was added to the house.

Because unless you're a master architect and a master builder, if you add a room to a house, it remains and it continues to look like a room that was added to the house.

That's the way a lot of people treat this idea that human beings were put on this planet for a purpose. They treat it as if it's something you consider and something you focus your life on as a room added to your house.

As if once I get everything else done, once I get all things in order, once I'm done with my education, once I find my spouse, once I have my children, once things are going well for me, I have a mortgage, I can pay for all these things.

[6 : 49] Once all those and many other things are straight, then maybe I'll consider the idea that God actually exists and has a purpose for people.

Even followers of Jesus will do this. We will say to ourselves, Oh, yes, yes, I know I'm supposed to be living my life for Jesus. I know I'm supposed to feel that I'm on a mission.

But so very often we set aside this idea of I'm on a mission. I have a purpose. I have a destiny, a job to do for Jesus until we have everything else straight.

My education, my spouse, my children, my mortgage. Then I'll ask, what would God want me to do with my life? But so long as that remains something that you push to the side and add on to your life, it will continue to look as if it were simply added to your house.

Well, one of the great things about the Bible is that it says that the purpose for which you and I live, the reason you and I breathe on this planet, is not something to be discovered as an add-on to your life.

[8 : 10] It is the original floor plan of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. And even more than that, it's the original floor plan for what it means to be a human being.

Have you noticed most people in the world today know just about as much about God and what it means to be a human being that they don't understand either very well?

Well, it's time to look and see what does it mean for you and me to be human beings living on this planet. And of course, to get the original floor plan for that, we have to look at the beginning.

Genesis chapter 1, where God first created us. And what I'm hoping we'll see is first what God called you and me. Do you remember how it's put here in Genesis chapter 1 in verse 27?

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. Now, if you have been around Christianity at all, if you've heard anything about the Christian faith, you know that Christians will have this kind of talk on their lips.

[9 : 29] They'll say that people are the image of God. People are the likeness of God. And it's a lovely religious phrase to use to describe people. But if you were to ask everyone in this room to write down what that means, we'd have as many opinions as there are people in the room.

Because it's not something we normally think about. We may say it, but we don't think much about what it might actually mean. But to understand what the Bible means when it says that God made you and me his image, his likeness, we have to get in a time machine together.

We have to go way back in time. I mean, all the way back to the days of pyramids and ziggurats, back to the days of old people like Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner making movies about these things.

You know those things. It's way back then. And you might be surprised to know that Israel or the Bible is not the only group of people that used that expression, image of God, likeness of God, or

son of the gods.

They were all synonyms. In fact, the Egyptians used it. Babylonians used it. Syrians used it. Even Canaanites used that expression to talk about people, but only certain people.

[10:42] There was only one person in human society, as far as they were concerned, that actually had this title appropriately given to them, the image and the likeness, the son of the gods.

Can you guess who it was? Yeah, it was Yul Brynner. It was the Pharaoh. It was the emperor. It was the king. Everyone else is something much less than that.

That's how you control people. That's how you make them your slaves. And so you can see just how radical the Bible is. When Moses, one who was grown up and raised up within this empire of Egypt, actually is telling the people of Israel, it's a lie.

What you have been told for hundreds of years is not true. You are also the image and the likeness of God, which means you have the value and the dignity and the worth of the greatest king that has ever lived on this planet, even you.

Now, you can imagine just how difficult that must have been for them to believe. They were former slaves. They had been taught from the crib. This is not so. Pharaoh is the image of God.

[11:57] You are much, much less than that. It must have been terribly difficult for them to understand how their lives could have any significance. And I think we can sense how difficult it was for them because we have that difficulty too.

Oh, I'm sure in a group like this, there's someone who thinks too much of themselves. I'm sure that's true. Sometimes that's just bravado, defying what's obviously true, that I'm not all that. We act as if we are. But given that that's true, the rest of us here have the opposite problem. As we look at ourselves and we compare our tiny little existence to the vast reaches of the universe and of time, we wonder to ourselves, is my life worth anything?

Is my life significant at all? I know it's dangerous to talk about United Kingdom politics in Scotland. Is that fair to say?

Okay. I know it's dangerous, but I'm going to say something that everyone in this room will agree with. Are you ready for this? The prime minister is a very important person.

[13:13] How about that? Of course you agree with that. And you know exactly what we mean by that. If he decides that we are going to turn this way, it's going to have an impact on millions and millions of people, not just here, but all around the world.

If he decides you're going this way, it's going to have an impact on people, millions of them, all around the world. Now that's a very important man. And because of this, do you know what? You really don't want him to have a cold. You don't want him to catch the flu. I mean, can you imagine what kinds of decisions he would make if he had a sinus headache? Let's not have that happen to him.

Oh, no, no. And you know what else? You really don't want him to have an argument with his wife tonight. I mean, you can hear it, can't you? Oh, yes, you don't believe that? Well, watch what happens when I hit this red button.

And he pushes the button and the whole world goes up in nuclear holocaust. Yeah, you don't want him to have those experiences because he's an important man. But now think about yourself.

[14:21] There are people here today who have a cold. We don't care. You may have a terrible sinus headache. What difference does it make? If you can find a red button in your home to push, nothing's going to happen.

So clearly, he's important and you are not. But if that's what you believe about yourself, you are right where the evil one wants you to be.

Because people who do not understand that they were created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore that they have the significance and the value and the importance of even the greatest king that's ever lived on this planet, do you know what they do with their lives?

They waste them away. What difference will it make anyway? They waste their lives away.

Pursuing trinkets, pursuing passing pleasures, numbing themselves with alcohol and drugs. This is what people do when they do not realize what God has actually made them to be.

[15:40] His image, his likeness. His image, his likeness. But you know in the back of your mind, it's really not true. Every human being senses there's something more than what the world is telling me I am.

I am something more than what the world around me tells me that I am. You've all heard the stories of the grandmother who does nothing but raise her orphaned son to be a Christian, who does nothing but become a shoe salesman, who does nothing significant as a shoe salesman except share his faith one day with one of his customers, who does nothing significant except go home and share his faith with his next door neighbor who becomes Billy Graham, the evangelist of the world. You've heard stories like that. Now who in that series of events do you actually want to say was unimportant? Do you want to say that the only important person is the celebrity, the one who is on television, the one whose name will be remembered, the one about whom they write books and name highways?

Is that what you want to say? Of course not. That grandmother who faithfully served the will of God on this planet was just as vital, just as crucial, just as essential to the work of God as Billy Graham himself.

And that's true of you too. Can you begin to believe for a moment that maybe the choices you make, the decisions you make about your life, your choices of career, your choices of spouse, your choice of what you do with your time, what you do with your money, actually matter to the history of the world?

[17:39] I kind of like that. Because frankly, I'm one of these people that looks around and wonders, you know, is life really worth it or not? And it helps me to hear that the Bible tells us we are the image and the likeness of God.

But you know what? Sometimes you can have a title for a job that sounds really good and then the job can be terrible. Have you ever had a job like that? Great title, terrible job.

I had one like that when I was a teenager. In fact, it was my first full-time job. I was a teacher of guitar in a music studio in my hometown, but I needed a full-time summer job.

So I asked the owner, can I have a job this summer? He said, sure, of course you can. I said, well, then what will it be? He thought to himself for a moment and said, how about this? We'll call you the assistant to the owner.

Now at 17, that sounded really good. Because as far as I was thinking, that meant that when he leaves the office, I get to boss people around, right? Assistant to the owner means I'm next in line.

[18:44] That'll be great. I'll get back to everybody. But what I discovered was assistant to the owner sounded great, but what it really meant was I had to do everything no one else wanted to do.

Clean the windows? I had to do that. Clean the toilets? I had to do that. Deliver that grand piano up that flight of stairs by yourself? I had to do that. And I did many times.

So you can have a great job title, but it can actually be a terrible job. But it's not the way it is with this job title image of God. The job itself is absolutely phenomenal.

Listen to it. In verse 28 of chapter 1. And God blessed them. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion.

Some of you have heard that passage before. And you know what? I may as well have read that passage to you in Russian for all it means to you and me. I mean, when was the last time you went to a party and you were introduced to someone and they say, Well, what do you do?

[19:59] And you say, Well, I'm fruitful and multiply. How about you? Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Hi, I'm Richard. I have dominion. How's that going for you today? Of course not.

It's in the Bible. And many of us here actually believe what this Bible says. But those would be the last words we would use to describe what we do. What our role is in this planet.

And sometimes that's because we simply don't know what this might mean. So let me give you a clue. When God made the world, he made it a lovely place.

And he put humanity in one little garden called the Garden of Eden. But he wanted humanity actually to spread the Garden of Eden all around the world and make the entire world as lovely and as perfect and as wonderful as that garden itself was.

And then just as God had always come down to that little garden, he would then fill the entire world with his glory. Because of what human beings had done to the world.

[21:09] In fact, that's the way the Bible actually ends. The Bible actually ends with God's glory filling the entire universe, displaying that he is the creator, that he is the Lord, and that every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father.

Whether in heaven above, on the earth, or beneath the earth. That's where all of history is going. And it starts right here. And what is it that God tells humanity to do?

He says, I want there to be more of you. You see, rather than being the virus of the earth as we're usually treated by the world around us today, we're actually the solution to the problems that we're having on this earth.

So I want you to fill it up, he says. And then I want you to rule. I want you to fix it. I want you to make it just as great as it possibly can be.

You see, the mission of humanity did not begin with sin. If Adam and Eve had not turned away from God, I suppose they would have had little babies who would do the image of God thing.

[22 : 21] And they would have had babies who do the image of God thing. And they would go on and on and fill the world up and fix everything and make it lovely. And then God's glory would fill the planet. I suppose that is what would have happened if Adam and Eve had been faithful to God.

But you know what happened. Starts with an S, ends with an N. I'm in the middle of it. Sin came into the world. And because of that, this mission that humanity has has become complicated.

It didn't begin with sin. It became complex because of sin. So that now we don't simply have babies. We actually have to train those babies to be followers of Jesus, don't we, mothers?

Now we don't simply have our own babies and train them to be followers of Jesus. But you and I have been commissioned to make more and more and more redeemed images of God around the world.

Images of God who know the Lord Jesus and who serve him faithfully. That's one side of our great mission in this world. It's why you are on this planet.

[23 : 30] To make more redeemed images of God around the world. And then together, what do we do? We subdue the earth. We rule over it.

We have dominion over it. It does not mean we exploit it. It does not mean that we abuse it. It means we unearth its great potential and bring out the wonders that God put into this planet so that it would be appropriate for him to come and dwell in every place.

And so that's why when you think of the Christian mission, you don't just think in terms of reaching out to the lost, telling them about Jesus. As important as that is, multiplying is very important.

But we also talk in terms of our mission being justice, mercy, kindness, standing with the weak, making sure that this world in which we live upholds the goodness that God has intended for his world to experience.

And that's our mission. Sometimes I think I must be the only person in the world who gets up in the morning and actually asks himself, is it worth breathing again?

[24 : 55] I mean, most people get up and keep breathing in the morning because they're afraid of the alternative. They're afraid of death. I want you to hear me.

I'm not afraid of it. I welcome it. So when I get up in the morning, many times I simply have to sit back and say, do I really want to go at this again?

Yesterday was hard. Today is probably going to be hard. And tomorrow difficult as well. Do I really want to devote myself? What is my reason for living?

So what is the reason for which your heart keeps beating? What is the reason for which your neurosynapses continue to fire in your head?

Why are you on this planet? If you know the Lord Jesus, if you are his follower, then you know what your purpose is.

[25 : 53] If you're not a follower of Jesus, the first step toward gaining this purpose is to come to him, to come to him and to follow him. And say, teach me why I breathe.

But when you do, you discover that the purpose for breathing. It's not to have more fun. Not to have longer holidays.

Not to have a list of things that you want to do before you die that include even greater recreation than you already have or more possessions than you already have. None of those things that perish and blow away with the wind.

But rather your purpose is to make more and more and more redeemed images of God around the world and together with them to subdue the earth and have dominion over it in the service of God. Making it the way he wants it to be. So how are you doing at that? You know, Adam and Eve didn't do so well.

[27 : 05] When that commission was passed from Adam and Eve to the nation of Israel, they did okay in some ways, but in the end, even they didn't do very well. And so for thousands of years, for hundreds and thousands of years, human beings have been waiting.

They've been looking. They've been hoping that somewhere, somehow, sometime, someone would get it right. And solve the problems that we have on this planet.

Make everything new. Make it wondrous. Make it appropriate for God to be here. They longed for thousands of years for such a man. And you know his name.

They looked for someone who would obey God perfectly. And who would be rewarded with the dominion over all of creation.

They longed for him. And you know his name. Do you ever wonder why you're putting all of your hopes in this one man, Jesus?

[28 : 15] Do you ever wonder why you must forsake all of your own efforts to have righteousness and goodness in God's eyes and belong to him and him alone? Do you ever wonder why every word that came from his mouth is life to you?

It's because he's the one that got it right. In fact, he was so wondrous that he actually died on a cross for people like you and me who don't get it right.

That we may receive the blessings of God as well. So just before Jesus left this planet and went to be with the Father in heaven, he said something to his disciples.

And it had to do with this mission we're talking about. This is what he said to them. He said, guys, it's in the Greek. Guys, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Do you know what that means? All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus. Do you know what that means? It means that he was saying to them, I'm all that.

[29 : 30] That's how good I have been. That's how much God approves of me is that he has raised me from the dead. And now I'm about to ascend into heaven and rule over all of heaven and all of earth.

It is all under my feet. And if we had been Jesus, you know what would have come next. We would have said to our disciples, now just sit back and watch the show.

Because you won't believe what I'll do as the one who has all authority in heaven and earth. But is that what he said to his disciples? He said, I'm all that.

I'm in charge of it all. That's how great I am. But now, disciples, go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything I've commanded you.

And I will be with you right up to the end. In fact, Jesus is giving his disciples and all who follow him even today the greatest privilege imaginable.

[30 : 39] He has guaranteed by his own life that we will succeed, that he will one day make all things new.

And he looks at you and me and he says, let me give you a privilege, not a burden. Let me give you honor, not enslavement. Let me give you something you can find unimaginable.

You are able to join with me in that mission. You. I.

We are in mission with him today. Wouldn't you like to know what the stock markets are going to do tomorrow, today?

Wouldn't you like to invest in something that's absolutely sure, absolutely guaranteed, that it cannot lose, that it will win in the end? Wouldn't you love to be able to do that?

[31 : 47] Well, you can do something much greater than that. You can give your life to Jesus of Nazareth, who proved by his resurrection and ascension into heaven, that all who stand with him will overcome.

You can understand what my mother wanted. She really wanted that extra room to look like it was a part of the original floor plan.

But because it wasn't, it remained an add-on, and you could tell so even today. Please, by the mercies of God, don't allow yourself to set aside another moment, another day, answering this very question.

Why has God made me? Let's pray together. Our Lord Jesus, we honor you and bless you for all that you have done, because apart from your good work, we are nothing.

We have no hope apart from you. And so now we come to you, Holy Spirit, with a simple prayer. Make us like Jesus. Amen.

[33 : 08] Amen.