

The Sabbath Blessing
Genesis 2:1-3

May 06, 2018

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

The biblical story of faith and giving begins in the beginning, in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 where there is the creation of the universe and the creation of humans. They are created male and female in the image of God.

I'm going to tell you about a story. I'm not going to tell you the story itself. I'm going to tell you about the story. It is the Babylonian Creation Story which is a myth about the creation of the world. In this story human beings are created to be slaves. They are created for hard labor, endless labor, with no rest. In this story humans are created to be slaves to the gods. This story is an imperial creation story. In this story the authority is delegated to the emperor. So, this creation story serves the needs of the empire. In this case, order comes out of military power. The earth is created by the power of the sword and controlled by ruthless authoritarianism. To put this in context. When the nation of Israel was conquered and exiled, they were held captive in Babylon where this was the worldview.

The Genesis creation story appeals to people who are on the receiving end of imperial authority. This story is preserved for us in the Bible. It is a contrast to the Babylonian creation story. Instead of humans being created to be slaves to the gods and the emperor, in Genesis the humans are created in God's own image, according to the likeness of God, so they can rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, all the wild animals, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created human beings in God's own image, male and female, in the image of God, to rule.

In Genesis human beings are not created to be slaves and toil in endless labor. In Genesis human beings are created in the image of God to rule the earth, to govern as God governs, not to conquer, not to control, and not to enslave. The divine purpose of creating humans is to rule the earth in God's likeness.

It gives me goose bumps to think about it. You see, I grew up in ministry where I virtually take everything for granted. The more popular biblical stories were what I knew, what I was used to, what I grow up with and confessed as a child to be boring. But when I take a break away from those patterns and habits and analyze the context of the Bible in its world setting, it is exciting. Set in world history are nations who conquer people. One way that they control people is by setting a worldview where the king is godly, at the top, ruling, and has all the power. And the people are at the bottom as slaves to serve the needs of the empire. Within that worldview is the realization that we are not made in the context of the empire, to serve as slaves. We are made in the context of God as rulers over the earth.

When I realized the significance of this, it is exciting! It is exciting to read, the more I read the more I wanted to learn and the more I learned the more I wanted to study. Then I could see how much we are all blessed?! Stewardship begins with us being created in the image of God, with a God ordained responsibility, to exercise power like God does. This is not the power of the emperor, or the power of domination, or the power of enslaving others. This is power that

is life giving, power that protects the earth, power that protects the people, and power that empowers others.

In Genesis God creates a world that is abundant. A world that is full of prosperity and abundant life, where there is more than enough for everyone. At the end of every act of creation God makes an assessment of what has been created and proclaims "it is good." God responds to creation as something that is good. When God is finished it is good!

I imagine it this way. God finishes creating, looks at it, appreciates the creation, and takes a break to admire it. God thinks "wow this is good, this is very good, I love it!" Then God decides "I want to share this moment with humanity." God wants us to pause and appreciate the creation.

Sabbath keeping is built into the very fabric of the universe. The Sabbath is a natural law. It requires faith to keep the Sabbath. Faith that God will continue to provide while you take a moment to appreciate God's creation. This story of creation is great, it is fantastic! Human beings are not condemned to endless toil and labor. They are created to rule the earth in the image of God and to take a rest. Creation includes leisure and joy.

Our economic system is built on assumptions that the resources are limited and scarce. This leaves us wanting more and not sharing what we have. The Genesis creation story tells us that we live in a world of abundance where everyone has enough to survive and thrive. God created and shares the resources with us which makes it possible for us to rule as God rules and to share God's resources with generosity, with abundance, and with love.

The Sabbath is a blessing. The story comes to a climax with rest, not work, not productivity, but rest. The Sabbath rest is the focal point. God on the 7th day rested. God admires the creation takes a break and appreciates it. The Sabbath is a blessing! We too can take a break and appreciate what God has given to us on the understanding that God has provided an abundance to share because we trust that God will continue to provide.