TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Daniel Balch / Opening Prayer by: Bobby Rader
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Danny Balch

#837 I Need Thee Every Hour
#543 Wonderful Words of Life

Scripture Reading by: Braylen Butler
#383 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

Communion Devotional by: Robert Ward
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#867 To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way
Sermon: "A Gracious God"
Jonah 3:10-4:2

#915 Trust and Obey
#/881 Mansion Over the Hilltop
Closing Prayer by: Daniel Balch

Robert Ward's small group will meet today at
5:00 p.m. at the building

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Jan. 26, 2025

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

White Winter Hymn
The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

- Psalm 19:1

This past week, we enjoyed the rare sight of snow blanketing our town—and, in fact, the entire Gulf Coast. We relished spending all morning long out in it; from pictures I have seen, I know that many of you did too. And while I realize that not all of us might have been quite *that* excited about it, no one can deny the beauty of the landscape, even if you only experienced it through the window of your warm house.

As I enjoyed this exceptional blessing, my mind could not help but turn to thoughts of God as Creator. He was the ultimate source of this phenomenon; he is the source of everything that is. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth **(Gen 1:1).** He is the Creator of human beings **(Gen 1:27).** He is, indeed, the Creator of all things **(John 1:2-3)** That means that he is distinct from creation: he made it and rules over it. The term theologians use to describe this is *transcendent*—he is above creation, greater than it and independent.

But at the same time, God is also very much involved in creation. We realize that in the sense of initially forming everything, of course. But beyond that, existence continues to depend on him **(Col 1:15-17).** As Paul puts it in his sermon on Mars Hill, *In him we live and move and have our being* **(Acts 17:28);** or, to quote the Hebrews' writer, *He upholds the universe by the word of his power* **(Heb 1:3).** The technical term for this is *immanent*: God remains in his creation. Thus, God is distinct from creation, but it is utterly dependent upon him.

Creation, then, reflects the glory of the Creator. God created humans in particular *for my glory, whom I formed and made* **(Is 43:7).** But the entire universe is intended to demonstrate his glory, as the passage heading the article indicates. What does creation show us about God? Primarily, it reveals his power and wisdom: *It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens*. **(Jer 10:12).** Who could look into space and see the sun, moon, and stars without seeing his power? Who could look at a leaf or a living cell and not see wisdom? His might and his design is beyond our comprehension. When we think on it, that should cause us to praise him!

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Staci Lunceford Copeland has been placed on hospice.

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Oscar Cantu, Jennifer Stelly, Dr. Hugo Thomas, Steve Ward, Geri Cryer, Gloria McKelroy, Scott Overton, Rickey Lucas, Debbie Lynn

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific, Mani Pagidopali in India

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Minister meet Monday, Jan. 27th at 3:00 p.m..

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Feb. 4th at 8:00 a.m.

Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to Pat Hobbs and her family on the passing of her mother, Winona Angelle. She passed away early Friday morning. Funeral arrangements are pending.

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	Bryant Perkins
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

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That leads us to consider what creation has to say about the world itself. Because God created the universe to manifest his glory, we should expect it to fulfill its purpose. And, in fact, we see in **Genesis 1** that everything he created was good—*very good*, actually. God delighted in the world he had made. While it is true that sin has marred it, God still cares for and delights in it.

That means that we should see it as good, too. We ought to take pleasure in what God has created. Paul warned against those who *forbid marriage*—part of what God created in the beginning—and *enjoin abstinence from foods*. He called that *doctrines of demons*. Instead, he said, *Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving*. **(1 Tim 4:4).** God's created world can be used in sinful and selfish ways, but that danger should not keep us from enjoying it with thanksgiving. We should instead seek to be like the early Christians, who *ate their food with glad and generous hearts*, always grateful to God, trusting in his provision **(Acts 2:46).** When I think of some of the natural marvels I have seen across this country—the majestic Grand Tetons and Yellowstone on a crip winter morning, the imposing Sequoias seemingly towering over the entire earth, the awe-inspiring, surreal spectacle of the Grand Canyon, the colors of autumn painting the Blue Ridge—how can people see such magnificent beaty and not believe in God? We should express our thanks for those wonders, and we ought to take care of them as good stewards, just as Adam was charged to tend the garden **(Gen 2).**

That brings us finally to how the concept of God as Creator—and we, consequently, as creatures—should shape us. For one thing, our creaturely status means we have a responsibility to the Creator. *Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?* (**Rom 9:21**) God created us with the freedom either to accept or reject him. But a proper understanding of our relationship will lead to our recognition of complete and utter dependence on him. He is the Creator; we are the creatures. He possesses wisdom and power; we are weak and ignorant in comparison. Everything in the world belongs to him; what we possess, we have according to his mercy. How can we not respond to that with thanksgiving, with worship and praise?

That knowledge should also prevent us from elevating anything else to the place only he rightfully deserves. Paul writes about those who engaged in all sorts of sinful behavior, fundamentally *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator* **(Rom 1:24).** How can we ever do that if we truly understand our place? We must not allow anyone or anything to be our god but God.

Finally, we must remember that the Creator is ultimately in control. This is effectively what he reminded Job, when he questioned him about his oversight of the universe **(Job 38:1ff).** He made all things in this world; he continues to rule over them. We must trust in his wise and benevolent rule.

May we all truly see God as our Creator, appreciate his care over creation, and accept our creaturely status with greater trust in him.

Bryant Perkins