

Untapped Potential
Genesis 1:28-31

Opened in 2010 and standing at 2,722 feet the Burj Khalifa in Dubai is the world's tallest self-supported building.

On July 20, 1969 Apollo 11 safely landed on the moon with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin aboard.

Man has built massive sailing ships, put giant planes in the air, built super conductor computers, microscopes that probe deep into the building blocks of creation, telescopes that reach far into space, machines that lift tremendous weight and many other amazing achievements.

But even with man's vast knowledge and ability the passage that stands out to me puts man and all his accomplishments into proper perspective is found in Psalm 8:3-4 "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for Him?"

Communion is a reminder of what He thinks of us.

Harold Stigers wrote: "The sadness all too often attendant on the scientist's efforts is that frequently his efforts are done apart from any recognition of debt to God or of submission to His will, so that results are wrenched out of context to the selfish benefit of men."

He is simply saying that in all our technological achievements in science and industry man has failed to give God the proper credit. We think we're pretty hot stuff with all the advancements we have made, but compared to what God did at creation, we're nothing.

That said we find in our text today that God has given us the capacity to know our world and in that knowing there should be abundant praise for how

everything has amazingly been made.

Turn to Genesis 1:28-31 where we will conclude day six of the creation week. In verses 24 and 25 God has made the land animals – livestock, creeping animals, and wild beasts. They were made after their kinds. Then in verses 26-27 God made man. We noticed in those verses the uniqueness with which man was created. He was made in the image and likeness of God – created to be His image bearers. Like His Creator, man would have the ability to speak. He would be creative, have the capacity to love and enjoy fellowship. His was a life initially created without sin. Holiness was one of the traits of God passed on to man, but that was marred by sin. He was given the ability to choose and to act – to will and do.

Man was uniquely created because only man was created in the image and likeness of God. No other created thing bears that distinction.

In these closing verses we see God's commendation to man is clear, His consideration of what He had made is certain, and His creation is complete. Let's read our passage together.

I. GOD'S COMMENDATION IS CLEAR –
vs. 28-30

In verse 27 God created man and made a distinction within their kind making them male and female. Let me add here that He made one male and one female. He did not make man male and female suggesting dual gender giving each human the capacity to choose a gender. They were unique and distinct as a male and a female, which we will see in the next chapter.

Verse 28 begins by stating that after God created man He blessed them. Notice that it is plural – "them", that there was more than one, but not more than two. Again in the next chapter we will see that the word "them" refers to the male and female –

Adam and Eve. Remember that the word for man is the Hebrew adam and can refer generally to mankind or to Adam the person depending on the context.

We see in verse 28 that God blessed them. The dictionary defines a blessing as “the act or words of one that blesses or “a thing conducive to happiness or welfare.”

So how is that word used here? What does it mean that God blessed them?

Both the Hebrew and the Greek have two words each that can be translated blessing. One word esher (Hebrew) or makarios (Greek) is translated happiness. It is seen in Job 5:17 which reads “Blessed (happy) is the man whom God corrects.” We also see it in Psalm 1:1 “Blessed (happy) is the man who walketh not after the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

The passage continues by implying that the happy person is the one who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it who will prosper just like a tree planted by the water’s edge. You can read through the Psalms and find many verses suggesting that the truly happy or blessed person is the one who loves and fears the Lord, who obeys His Word.

In the New Testament we find the same word or idea of happiness appearing in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5.

Such happiness is also found in Romans 4:6-8 in the person whose sins are forgiven knowing that their relationship with God has been restored.

The other word in the Greek is the word for which in English we get eulogy. This word focuses more on good words spoken about someone like you might hear at a funeral or maybe at a dinner when honoring someone for their accomplishments. It means to speak well of. In his first letter Peter

instructs us to bless or speak well of those who mistreat us (I Peter 3:9).

This word can also refer to the blessing we offer before a meal. For example, at the last supper we read in Matthew 26:26 that Jesus took the bread and blessed it.

So is God wishing happiness on this first couple? Is He speaking well of them, even though they just arrived on the canvas of God’s created scene? Is He blessing them as if they were a meal?

The answer is in the Hebrew word used here. It is the word barak and is the word most often used in the Old Testament for blessing. It means to praise, congratulate or salute. We see it as the root of a name that appears in Job 32:2 and on the entrance the camp where I grew up. In Job, the meaning of the name is “whom God has blessed”. At camp its meaning was changed to “where God has blessed”. So the basic meaning of barak is to bless.

This word was used when God blessed Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. God promised to bless him by making his name great and through him blessing all the nations of the earth referring to the promise of the redeemer who would come through his lineage who had been promised to Adam and Eve.

When God blessed man He was making a statement about their wellbeing and happiness which would come through the fulfillment of conditions that we will look at in the next chapter. God wanted them to experience peace and prosperity and find fulfillment in all that was around them. It’s the same blessing given to His other creatures whom God also blessed. But that was all ruined when they disobeyed God and sin entered the scene.

God’s blessing on this very first couple was a declaration of His inherent goodness on them.

Let’s consider His three part blessing.

First, there is God's blessing for prosperity.

A. God's Blessing For Their Prosperity – v. 28a
 “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth’”

Now we read back in verse 20 that the waters and the skies were to *abundantly* bring forth those creatures that would fill sea and sky. The word “abundantly” implies that when God created them He didn't just create two of each kind, male and female, but that He created an abundance of each kind so that there would have been schools of tuna and flocks of geese and so on. But for the male and female He created only one of each and to them it was given the responsibility to abundantly populate the earth. Man was to flourish and fill the world.

God's blessing was for them to be enriched and fertile. Let's be clear, as we will see in chapter 2 that God created the man, Adam, first and he was by himself. Verse 18 says he was alone. Then Eve was made from Adam's rib and to them they were to “fill” the earth with their kind. Your translation may have the word “replenish”. Some scholars believe that word suggests Adam and Eve weren't the first people God created. To them the word replenish implies that there were others before and were destroyed between verse 1 and verse 2. That's why the earth was void and empty waiting for God to create again. So the better word is “fill” meaning they were the first and they were to reproduce after their kind in order to populate all of the earth.

You might remember years ago when there was a big debate about the overpopulation of the world. A population crisis is defined as when both space and food will be lacking because of the population growth. There are still those today who believe the food supply can't sustain the world's growing population. Scientists estimate that by the year 2050 there will be 10 billion people on the earth. China has a 1 child policy. If you have more than one child the government will fine you. They argue

that to become prosperous, the nation must curb its population growth. They assert that limited living and land resources as a result of overpopulation lead to poor education, environmental hazards, poor medical care, and a low quality of life for the population.

Medical advancements around the world are allowing people to live longer. Population alarmists suggest that the current global population growth will outgrow the earth's ability to sustain that growth.

Now I'm not a scientist but it seems to me that in the world God created, the earth would be able to sustain all creatures with what they would need for food as they filled the earth.

Man was given the responsibility to populate the earth. The same responsibility was given to Noah and his family after the flood. Spread out and fill it up. God has never rescinded that commendation.

We not only see God's blessing for prosperity, we also see God's blessing for position.

B. God's Blessing For Their Position – v. 28b
 “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

We were created to have dominion over God's creation.

Psalm 8:6-8

Psalm 115:16

The words subdue and dominion are military terms. But it doesn't mean here that we are to conquer it and do with it what we want. These words have a twofold meaning. The first is that we are to learn all we can about it.

The word “subdue” suggests a need to study the earth, not just study to know it, but study to understand it and our understanding make application for its benefit to us. It’s not just in studying its beauty and complexity but also to understand and use what has been made for our benefit.

The ocean has a creature called the peacock mantis shrimp that is one of the most beautiful, yet one of the most deadly. It stuns everything in its way. It will strike its prey at a force of 55 mph and accelerates faster than a .22 bullet. At .003 seconds it will strike with 340 pounds of force, the same force used by a person breaking a cement block with a Karate chop. In the wake of their punches, the surrounding water boils. When the bubbles collapse it produces pinpricks of light as well as shockwaves that heat the surrounding water to 10,000⁰F, the same temperature as the surface of the sun. Even if the mantis shrimp misses its mark with the jab, the shockwave alone will kill the prey. You might ask how it survives its own power? It has several layers of protection. The outer layer is a ceramic like shell with several soft, elastic inside layers stacked like corkscrews. These inner layers absorb the shock. Scientists are hoping to design a carbon fiber material to strengthen aircraft, automotive panels, football helmets and combat armor.

Box turtles, garter snakes and wood frogs make antifreeze within their cells in case subfreezing temperatures reach into their winter holes. Extreme cold causes the water around their cells to freeze and their heart to stop, but the antifreeze in the cells keeps them alive.

Biomedical research is looking at fluorescent proteins found in jellyfish that help to determine cancer cells deep within tissue as well as other microbes and viruses.

God’s amazing creation is filled with yet untapped

potential and part of our subduing it is to study it so we can unravel greater applications for man’s benefit.

Scientific advancements and research is paving the way for us to use more of it for our good. This stuff didn’t just happen by chance, God made it that way so that as we studied it, we would find more application for its use.

Henry Morris writes “Science is man’s disciplined study and understanding of the phenomena of his world. Technology is the implementation of this knowledge in the effective ordering and development of the earth and its resources, for the greater good of all earth’s inhabitants (including such fields of human service as engineering, agriculture, medicine, and a host of other practical technologies). This twofold commission to subdue and have dominion, to conquer and rule, embraces all productive human activities. Science and technology, research and development, theory and application, study and practice, and so forth, are various ways of expressing these two concepts.”

God has given us a wonderful and amazing creation in which to explore and know for our benefit and enjoyment, but just like any good thing can be used for good, its understanding and application can be abused and used for evil purposes.

Atomic energy can be used to produce power for electricity, provide medical applications, but can also wield death through a bomb.

The same implements that can bring life into this world are the same implements that can take a life through abortion.

Not only should we study God’s creation to find application for our use, the second idea found in the words “subdue” and “rule” implies that we also use its resources wisely. We are its stewards, its care takers. God has given us the responsibility to tend

it and keep it. That is part of our position, a position for which we are held accountable. Everything we learn about the universe is in fulfillment of this command.

Man lost that rule when he sinned. Yet we see in the person of Jesus what it was like to subdue and rule God's creation.

In Luke 5:1-7 and John 21:1-6 Jesus showed His rule over the fish.

In Matthew 26:69-75 Jesus showed His rule over the birds.

In Mark 1:13 and 11:3-7 Jesus showed His rule over animals.

At His creation, man was given the blessing of position, to know and understand his world with the intention that it would provide for him.

There is one other blessing besides prosperity and position. It is God's blessing for provision.

C. God's Blessing For Their Provision – v. 29-30

“Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.’ And it was so.”

Man and all the other creatures alive were originally vegetarian. Their food was seed-bearing plants and trees that bore fruit. All those pictures with dinosaurs eating each other are wrong. All beasts were vegetarians to begin with. Changes came after the fall there and then after the flood man was given the right to take animal life for food, but before the fall man was not to shed blood.

Isaiah 11:7 indicates that the carnivorous animals will one day return to that state. That verse says the lion will eat straw like an ox.

Man was made to work. Work uses up stored energy. Energy from food would be required to retain health and strength for work. If we think God's creation is amazing with all its many applications, think about how wonderfully man has been created with our ability to digest food and convert it into energy. It didn't just happen by chance. God designed us. It's like gas in your car, which is converted into energy so your car will move. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

The provision for food would be in abundant supply and would meet the needs of mankind as we filled the earth. God provided what man needed.

That's a good lesson for us to remember that God will take care of us if we trust Him and obey Him. Implied in the words subdue and rule is obedience. Obedience is necessary for His blessing.

God blessed man with prosperity

God blessed man with a position of responsibility

God blessed man with provision for his needs

God's commendation is clear.

God's consideration is certain.

II. GOD'S CONSIDERATION IS CERTAIN –
v. 31a

“God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.”

This doesn't mean that God compared what He made on day six with the other five days and consider everything else to be average and this was exceptional. God sat back and took a look at everything He made with an eye of approval. He looked at the light He made on day one. He looked at the sky which separated the waters above the earth from the waters on the earth on day two.

He looked at the land and sea and the vegetation He made on day three.

He looked at the greater light that ruled the day and the lesser light that ruled the night and all the stars

He made on day four.
 He looked at the birds in the sky and fish in the sea
 He made on day five.
 He looked at the three categories of land animals
 and He looked at man that He created on day six.
 He looked at everything and it was all very good.

As I have said before He couldn't have done any better and He wouldn't have done anything differently. It was all just as He said when He spoke "Let there be...and it was so...and it was all very good." There was no disease. There was no struggle for survival. There was no disorder. There was no death. There was no sin. If any of those things existed it could not have been called good. But God looked at it and it was exceptional.

The words of Revelation 4:11 invoke our praise for His creation.

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being."

All creatures big and small,
 The Lord God made them all.
 To Him our voices do we raise,
 With humble hearts and grateful praise.

What God made brought Him great joy. The literal reading would be that all He saw was exceedingly good.

As we conclude day six there is one more point that we need to mention.

III. GOD'S CREATION IS COMPLETE –

v. 31b

"And there was evening and morning – the sixth day."

In the Hebrew there is a definite article. The word "the" stresses the completion of God's work. Everything He wanted to do, He did. There was no need for overtime. He got it all done according to

His plan. There would be no need to go back later on and change anything. There was no need to add to it because He somehow forgot something. His work was complete. His work was finished. Evolution thinks that there is still more to come, that over time a mutation will make something new, but God looked at it all, said it was very good just the way it was and then ceased from His work. And because He was done, God rested, but that's for next week.

Man has and will continue to do amazing things through ingenuity and application. Man will discover new things through research. We continue to build on what we have learned for our benefit. God made it and He gives us the capacity to unlock more doors into His creation. Who knows what is yet waiting to be discovered. It truly is untapped potential. We have been blessed by what God has given and He deserves our praise. All these resources are for our discovery and use. Let's be good stewards of God's creation.

Let's remember that His creation is for our good and His glory.

Let's give Him the praise He is due because He is worthy of.