**IT WAS VERY GOOD**

Genesis 1:26-2:3 (Key Verse: 1:31a)

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

In today’s passage we are going to learn about God’s creation of mankind, in last week’s passage we learnt about how God created the heavens and the earth, the sky (the lights that govern day and night), land and the sea, the vegetation and finally the creatures of the sea such as fish, the birds in the sky and the all the various animals of the land. We learnt about God’s perfect sequence in the creation of all creatures of the world, perfect preparation such that all creatures may survive. And as God created all these creatures, it says: “*And God saw that it was good.*” And today after God created mankind, it says *“God saw all that he had made, and* ***it was very good****.”* What did God mean by this? To understand this, we are going to look in detail how God created mankind, the purpose of creating the mankind and how God provided for mankind. We are further going to learn how mankind should respond to God who created them in this way. May God have mercy on us today to receive one word, be restored and live according to the purpose that God created us for.

The passage today begins in day 6 after God created the living creatures of the land according to their various kinds, the wild animals, livestock and all the living creatures that move along the ground. And now in **verse 26** it says: “*Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”* This verse first tells us about who God is, God said let us make mankind in our image, this time it does not say God made men, but rather let us. The us here represents the trinity (God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). To create mankind, the collaboration of the trinity is emphasized. Furthermore, from this verse we can see that when God created mankind, there was special attention with detailed planning, he did not outright create man, but put the matter on the table and said let us create man in our image, in our likeness. Furthermore, before creating mankind, God put the reasons on the table why He wanted to create mankind, God planned the purpose of creating mankind in details. He said: “*so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.*” There great meaning and purpose on the plan to create mankind.

After thorough planning, God was satisfied to go ahead to create mankind. And in **verse 27** it says: “*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”* God created mankind on the sixth day, the very same day he created the creatures of the land such as wild animals, livestock and the creatures that walk the land. Meaning mankind also took the form of a physical nature like the other creatures of the land, such as the need to eat, sleep, give birth and confined to the limits of time and space. But further to that, it says mankind was created in the image of God. What then does this mean? This means that mankind was created to have a spiritual nature as well, just like God mankind was created to have the ability to create, to be artistic, abstract thinking, to be rational, to have communal mindset, to love just as God loves. God created mankind in his own image so that he may have fellowship with him. To be truly satisfied, mankind needs to continuously have fellowship with God, live for the glory of God and please him. God created mankind in his own image, meaning to be like God, to be holy, to hate sin just as God hates sin. Furthermore, God created mankind in his own image, also means God created mankind to be able to do God’s work.

After God had created mankind in his own image, he did not leave it there, but he blessed mankind, both male and female. Let us look at **verse 28**: “*God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.””* God blessed mankind, both male and female by giving them a life of mission and purpose. God gave male and female a mission saying: “*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.*” To be fruitful and increase in number firstly is the mission and gift to have children and fill the earth, next week we will study about the first marriage, and we will learn in detail the blessing that God gives to the marriage couple.

Furthermore, to be fruitful and increase in number is to do the work of God. In a world filled with many people tormented by the power of sin, people with lost identity, no knowledge that they are created in the image of God. God wants us to go out there, preach the gospel, restore the people’s hearts to come back to Jesus. To be fruitful and increase in number means to transform Wits University campus and the world into a kingdom of priest and holy nation, increase the number of sincere Christian believers. This is a blessing that God is giving us today, it is a blessing because we are created in the image of God, we were created to do the work of God. Therefore, to be truly fulfilled we need to do the work of God. Many people today are wondering around in this world, doing many things, career, extreme sports, holiday, travelling around the world, but yet they are not satisfied. This is because as mankind we were created in the image of God, so to be truly satisfied we need to do the work of God. So to be truly satisfied, we need to study the word of God, pray and have a relationship with God and have God’s mission rooted and established in our hearts so that we can live daily with meaning and purpose.

Furthermore, God blessed mankind and said: “*Subdue the earth, Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.* To subdue and rule over, means to cultivate the earth and take care of it. To rule over and subdue, does not just mean to dominate but it means to be a servant, a shepherd for all living things and a steward of the world. Mankind is created to take care of the world as a mother takes care of her home and children. Man must take care of the world as a shepherd takes care of his flock. This means that man has a mandate to explore and learn about and understand the world so that he can help all creation fulfill God's good purpose and glorify God. As Christian believers we were created to take care of the world, when the world sees us, they should see God’s help.

As we learnt last week God created the heavens and the earth and all creatures in it, and today God is blessing us to rule over and subdue it, to take care of it. Meaning as creatures of God we were blessed by God to shepherd even at the work place, even in our lectures, the companies that were work for could only come to existence because of God, so as God’s creation we must rule over and subdue in those environments, the work place and our lectures should not intimidate us, but we should rule over and subdue, it is part of the mission and purpose that God has given us. We must lead, guide, take care and lead people to God. We must pray to God, have fellowship with him, study his word so that our colleagues at work may see God and be drawn to him.

After God had blessed mankind with a life of mission and purpose, he went further to bless mankind more by providing for his and her physical needs, food to nourish their bodies. Let us look at **verse 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. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.”* God provided for mankind food that would nourish his and her body, this was not a once of provision but an everlasting provision, God provided for the man food that never runs out, he 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*” Today many people worry about food, what they will eat but yet everyday when they go to bed they are fed. When the Israelites where on route to the promise land in the wilderness God provided for them manna daily. God did this to teach mankind, to teach us that we should depend on him daily even for food. God did this to teach us that he is the creator, and nourishment for our survival comes from him. Yes, we have to work daily, it may seem like we are working for our food, but in actual fact, it is God who provides for us. The jobs that we have is provided by God.

After God had blessed mankind with provision from the seed bearing plants and trees that bear fruit, he said something that he had never said before. God created all the wonderful things such as the heavens and the earth, the seas, the sky, fish of the sea, birds, livestock and wild animals. But after he created mankind, he said some thing very special. Let us look at the key verse once again, **verse 31a**: “*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”* When God created mankind in his own image, blessed him with a life of mission and purpose, placing him as a steward, shepherd for his creation, and when he looked at everything he had created, he said it was very good. Before with other creations, he said it was good. But after he created of mankind whom he created thorough planning, great intention and purpose, and looked at everything he said it was very good. Creation was good, but when mankind was added on the mix, it was very good. So this tells us that mankind played a very significant role in all the creations of God, it is only when mankind was created that God was very pleased.

This tells us that God is pleased with us, we are precious and very important to God, because of me and you the world is even more pleasing to God. God said it was very good after he created mankind in the image of God. We learnt that to be created in the image of God means we are spiritual being, who are created to have fellowship and relationship with God, with creative minds for the purpose of God. So, God is very pleased when we live according to our creations, when we have a relationship with him, when we fellowship with him, pray to him and apply our creativity for his glory.

Furthermore, we have learnt that God created us and blessed us with a life of mission, to be fruitful and increase in number, to subdue and rule the earth. And God was pleased, and said it is very good. Again, this means to truly please God, we must live according to the life of mission he has blessed us with, bear children and raise them with love and care and with God’s principles. We must go out and preach the gospel to campus students and bring them to God, increase in number, transform Wits campus into a kingdom of priests and holy nation. We must live according to the blessing of God, take care of God’s sheep as Shepherds. Work hard by faith, so that Jesus Christ may be revealed, so that the world may know that our God is indeed the creator of the heavens and the earth. When live like this, God is greatly pleased, he said it was very good.

Lastly, God was very pleased to provide for us, provisions that never run out, through seed bearing plants and trees with fruit that have seed in it. God said it was very good, meaning his provision are all sufficient for mankind to survive, to be fulfilled, to be happy and nourished. It was not just enough, but it was very good. I love food, good food, so when food is very good, it means it is delicious, satisfying, and it makes me so happy. So, God’s provision is very good, satisfying, and brings us joy.

Indeed, when God created mankind, he thought about everything, not just to make us survive, but to fully satisfy us, to make us happy, and mostly importantly God was very pleased with us, regardless how we look and where we live. However today many people are living with doubts about themselves, they are wondering around seeking validation from the world and none is found, instead they are enslaved by sin, they live with emptiness and bitterness. But glory to God, for giving us this message of restoration today, restoration of our dignity, for revealing to us that when God created us, he was very pleased, he said it was very good. We do not need the world to validate that, God said it. Instead of seeking validation from the world that we are good enough, we must live according to how God created us. We are created in the image of God, we are spiritual beings, created to have fellowship with God as our Father, without shame we must come to God with confidence. Because of sin we were separated from God, but because of Jesus’ blood, our relationship with God has been restored, we are legitimate Sons and Daughters of God created in his image. Let us repent from our sins, come to God, live according to the blessing he has given us, a life of mission and purpose, a life of stewardship for our family, friends and our Bible students on campus. Let us live with joy and thanksgiving to God who provides for us the perfect things, seed bearing plants and trees that have fruit with seed in it for nourishing our bodies.

When I think about this, I am very challenged for I have been so much affected by how I am perceived by people, especially at work, I have struggled to say no on many things because I thought they will think I am a bad person. Because of this my identity was controlled by people, but from today’s passage I have learnt that my identity comes from God who created me. When God created me, he said it is very good. I may look different, behave different, but in God’s eyes the creator of the heavens and the earth, I am very good, created to bring perfection in God’s creation, created in the image of God, created for a purpose. I am challenged by this passage, to focus on the purpose that God has created me for, to do the work of God, to carry out God’s mission which he has blessed me with, to be fruitful and increase in number, to rule over and subdue the earth through stewardship and shepherding of God’s creation. Please pray for me to hold on to this and overcome depending on people to define my identity.