

The Church's Parents, Part 1

Genesis 1:26-28

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Introduction:

In our sermon series on *The Christian in Every Stage of Life*, we have been looking at the church's married people.

- Today we are going to move on to look at *The Church's Parents...*

Once again, I want to encourage all of you who are not in this particular aspect of the Christian life to take an interest in this subject.

- As Christians, we are to care about each other, to encourage and to pray for each other, and equally important, we are to behold the beauty of Christ in each other.
- God Himself is Father and Son, and of course He made no mistake in using the same words when He gave us our language to describe our relationships with each other as parent and child.
 - We learn of God the Father when we see parents faithfully looking after their children. What a marvellous thing it is!

My plan in looking at the church's parents is to begin with an overview today, looking at what parenting is all about...

- And then next week to address more practical matters about how to be a parent.

For our scripture reading today, I have selected Genesis 1:26-28.

- Please give careful attention to the Word read:

Genesis 1:26-28: Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

May the LORD bless the reading and now the preaching of His holy Word.

This morning I want to begin by looking at:

- the purpose of parenting: filling the earth with godly people,
- at the disruption of that purpose,
- and then at the Lord's commitment to bring about that original purpose.

Let's get to it.

I. The basic purpose of parenting is to fill the earth with godly people.

A. From the beginning, God called the man and his wife to bring forth children.

1. You see in verse 28 how He tells them to be fruitful and multiply.

a. This is obviously talking about bringing forth children.

- He has created them and there are only the two of them, but He wants them to fill the earth with people.
- To be fruitful is to produce life, and to multiply is to reproduce themselves.

- b. The earth is very big, but the LORD is telling them to fill it up with people.
 - This is a mandate that will take many years to complete.
 - It was not something they were to do next week—it was an ongoing project.
 - c. When He says to subdue the earth, He is basically telling them to do what He did when He planted a garden for them.
 - They are to bring the earth into subjection to human purposes, not in a way that destroys it, but in a way that enhances its beauty and makes it a blessing to one another.
 - We make things for each other, we cultivate land, we plant gardens, we use the earth’s resources to benefit ourselves and others.
 - This is a way we show love to each other—everything from making supper to making jewelry is involved.
2. But this calling to fill the earth was more than a command to be obeyed (though it was that)—it was also a blessing to be received!
- a. When God speaks in this manner, His word carries with it a power to bring forth what He calls for.
 - For example, earlier He said “Let there be light”—and there was light.
 - The light did not obey God the way a person with understanding does, but God’s word brought it into being by His divine power.
 - In the same way, when He called for the earth to bring forth living creatures after their kinds, His call brought that about.
 - b. So here, in calling Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, God is blessing them with the ability to be fruitful and multiply.
 - And what a marvellous ability this is!
 - Just think of it—we can bring forth living beings like ourselves that have the ability to think and to walk and to love and to learn and to know God.
 - God, in His goodness and power, gave us this ability.
 - He built it right into us when He made us and He enables us to do it.
 - We are so used to it that sometimes we don’t stop to think how amazing it really is to be able to make new people!
 - c. Just stop and think about the remarkable creativity of this blessing.
 - Our Creator is the one who came up with this whole idea that children should be brought forth the way they are.
 - So that they are like us—the same sort of beings as we are—yet always different.
 - How dull it would be if we were all the same, like sausages off an assembly line—yet how would you like it if you had no idea what you were going to get—if one time you gave birth to a duck, and another time to a lamb.
 - The more we learn about the complexities that bring all this about, the more we ought to praise the Designer...
 - and the more ludicrous it gets for those who try to deny Him.

- Such complex, marvellous design obviously requires a designer.
 - It was always ludicrous to think otherwise, but even more so as we learn more about the complexities of life.
 - It becomes more and more irrational all the time—no wonder people are divorcing their minds from their bodies—even to the point of claiming identities that are contrary to biological realities.
 - You really have to divorce your mind from the observable world to believe in biological macro-evolution.

B. But what were these children that we are to bring forth supposed to be like?

1. Well, they were to be like their parents.

- It was Adam and Eve, as they were when God first made them that were to be multiplied.
- God wanted them to multiply beings like the beings He had just created.

2. And what were Adam and Eve like when they were first created?

a. They were the image of God.

- The call to multiply comes right after the statement that God made the man and woman after His own image.
- That means that they were to be like God in certain ways.
 - Not that they were to try to take His place—to be like Him in His unique position as the only true God who created all things...
 - that was Satan's version of being like God and it still is...
 - But they were to be like Him in reflecting His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth on a human level.
 - They were to be like Him in loving each other the way the three persons in the divine being; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, love each other.

b. And not only that, but they were in full harmony with God.

1) He made them upright—they were (at first) completely without sin.

- As creatures, they knew that they were there for God.
- It was for them to obey Him, because He is God who made them.
 - This would be painfully obvious to us if we were not twisted by the fall.

2) They were also God's worshippers.

- They marvelled at His infinite, eternal, and unchangeable being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.
- They were full of praise to Him.
- They were full of thanksgiving to Him for all that He had given them.
 - It was their delight to sanctify the Sabbath as a holy day to Him.

3. Just think how beautiful a world filled with such people would be!

- What love would be seen—what harmony—what care—what purity—what joy and gladness!

TRANS> But from what soil were these children to be brought forth?

- Where were they to be nurtured and cultivated?

- C. The soil from which they were to come forth was marriage.
1. God designed it that children would be conceived in the embrace of a man and a woman.
 - This did not just happen—God designed it this way—it was intentional.
 - Once again—we have reason to marvel at His imagination.
 - Who would have ever thought of such a thing?
 - Certainly not mindless Mother Nature.
 - This is clearly the mind of God!
 - What a beautiful way to be conceived—in an act of beautiful tender love.
 - It is a sacred act to be cherished and revered.
 - By dishonouring sexual union, our society has at the same time become obsessed with it—as seen by everything from addition to porn to the molestation of children.
 2. God instituted it, as we saw recently when we looked at marriage, that a man would leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife...
 - And that the two would become one flesh.
 - To see themselves as one body, as we saw, so that a man would love his wife; so that he would nourish and cherish her as his own body.
 - Children were meant to be brought forth out of this rich abiding relationship between a woman and a man...
 - Where the husband deliberately pours out his life to nourish her and to cherish or warm her... just as Jesus does the church.
 - Where he tenderly provides for her in every way—spiritually, physically, and in promotion of her happiness—even sacrificing for her.
 - And she is to blend her life with his in beautiful submission to his agenda as the head of the home.
 - What a lovely thing.
 - 3. What a fine soil a home like this is for a child to be nurtured in.
 - Before that child is born, there is already a father nourishing and cherishing his wife... now the children are brought under this marvellous care.
 - And not only that, but before them is the example of their mother, cheerfully blending her life with that of her husband as head of the home.
 - Truly this is excellent soil for a child.
 - This is the soil God chose for little image bearers to be planted in until they go out and form their own homes.
 - How lovely!

TRANS> But now we must turn from this beautiful subject to a dark one.

- We must look at...

II. The degradation of parenting.

A. Sin came into the world.

1. The image bearers that God wanted multiplied became lying images.
 - They were still image bearers of God, but poor ones.
 - An image bearer is obviously supposed to look like that which it is an image of—but they become images that told lies.
 2. You know how this came about.
 - The one John calls (Rev 12:9): **that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world** came into the garden and deceived the woman.
 - He told her that by rebelling against God, by exerting her independence, she would become like God—able to determine for herself what is morally good and what is evil.
 - Satan made her think that subjection to God was dehumanising—that it would be better for her to be free of God.
 - And her husband Adam followed her in this rebellion.
 3. What a horrendous thing it was.
 - a. This beautiful couple, called to bring forth beautiful worshipping image bearers of God rejected God as their God.
 - They were no longer good soil for bringing forth beautiful children.
 - They were corrupt soil for bringing forth corrupt children.
 - b. No longer would they live and move in harmony with God's will—now they were severed from Him as their God.
 - Immediately, the ugliness into which they had fallen begins to emerge.
 - Adam accused Eve of leading him into rebellion.
 - Instead of following her, he should have offered to be punished for what she had done.
 - That kind of love was now a thing of that past—until Jesus came.
- The excellent soil that God had made for bringing forth children was now ruined.
- c. Now, corrupt children would be brought up in a home where
 - there was abuse, blame-shifting, negligence, excuses, selfishness, anger, bitterness, whining, treachery in the man...
 - and insubordination, rebellion, disrespect, resentment, murmuring in the wife.
 - and ungodliness in them both.

B. Let me tell you, this is **not** what God wanted multiplied in the earth!

- He has made that very clear!
1. As soon as the rebellion entered...
 - He drove the man and his wife out of the garden.
 - He told the woman that she would have trouble in bringing forth children and trouble in her relationship with her husband—
 - feeling more like a slave under his rule than one nourished and cherished.
 - And He told Adam that he would have much trouble now in providing for his family...

- But most striking of all, He told them that they would die and return again to dust—the stuff out of which they were made.
 - Instead of taking dominion of the earth, the earth would take dominion over them.
 - They were no longer fit to live upon it!
 - That was how incensed God was with what they had become.
 - Such image bearers must die and be cast from the presence of God.
- That is how God showed His displeasure from the start.
- 2. Then, after they multiplied and filled the earth, God showed them again how displeased He was with what they had become...
 - Here they had filled the earth with corrupt children instead of godly ones.
 - God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth.
 - He saw that every intent of their heart was only evil continually.
 - So He sent the great flood to cleanse the earth of them all.
 - It was a most violent flood—the storm of all storms with the ground opening up and waters bursting forth to wash away the filth that covered the earth... the human race... fallen from God.
 - Clearly God did not approve of what was being multiplied in the earth!
 - What had been His delight at creation was now offensive to Him.
 - It was never the mere multiplication of people that God wanted when He told them to be fruitful and multiply—it was the multiplication of godly people.
 - Indeed, this is terrifying—how must the LORD look at us today?
 - How vile we are before His holy eyes!
 - He is a consuming fire.
- 3. And since the great deluge, the prophets of God, and especially our LORD Jesus Himself, have told us that a day is coming when the earth will be purified by fire.
 - All who are on earth will be called before God to be judged, and all that have ever lived in the past will be raised up from their graves to be judged.
 - Jesus tells us that in that day, He Himself will be the One who orders all the wicked to be cast into the Lake of Fire with the devil forever.
 - God has no interest in filling the earth with wicked creatures.
 - This is not excessive, this not a defect in God... this is the love of God and the purity of God.
 - If He was okay with wickedness, He would be wicked Himself.
 - He will not have His world filled with such.
 - It was never His intention that the earth be filled with such.

TRANS> God will never tolerate corruption in His image bearers.

- His purpose is that the earth be filled with godly people who live beautifully as His image bearers and worshippers.

III. And now I want to assure you that God will not be kept from His purpose!

- He will fill the earth with godly people.

A. With His voice of condemnation, there was also a voice of grace!

1. The voice of grace was heard in the garden...
 - In Genesis 3:16, the woman was told of sorrow in child bearing, but she was also told that she would still bring forth children!
 - Likewise, the man was told that he would have trouble providing, but still he would bring forth fruit from the earth to provide for his family.
 - And besides that, animals were killed to clothe the man and the woman, and they were taught that by the shedding of blood there was forgiveness.
 - We deduce this because from then on, we see people offering sacrifices of atonement to God—it was something instituted by God.
 - And even more clearly, when God spoke to the serpent, He told him (in the hearing of Adam and Eve) that He would raise up a seed to the woman who would slay him—crush his head.
 - God would bring forth an insurrection against the insurrection of Satan.
 - A Son born of woman would bring an end to him and cleanse the earth of the rebellion and the rebellious.
 - All the while as wicked children were being brought forth, God would be bringing forth a people that would be restored to Him...
 - A people that would be redeemed by Jesus and sanctified by His Spirit to be a pure and holy people of righteousness.
2. This voice of grace was heard distinctly at the great flood.
 - We are told in the midst of all the dreadful prophecy of the flood that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.
 - He was preserved in the ark with his family, and upon exiting the ark, he offered sacrifices to God to atone for sin...
 - God then commanded Noah to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with redeemed people like himself.
 - People that, though sinful, looked to the promise of Christ for cleansing.
 - God was bringing forth a people for Himself to fill the earth!
3. Yes, much wickedness filled the earth again after Noah, but grace sounded forth from God to Abram or Abraham...
 - God told this man that He would bless him and make his name great—that he would become a great nation.
 - He showed him that it would be by His almighty power that a Son would come forth from his body who would bring blessing to all the nations.
 - It is clear that the people that came forth from Abraham were just like the other nations, except that God preserved them for Himself.
 - They continually went astray, but God kept chastening them and calling them back, sending famines and judges and enemies and prophets.
 - He simply would not let them go because He had purposed to redeem them that in the end He might have the world filled with godly people.

4. And then in the fullness of time, having preserved these people as His own, He brought forth the promised Son...to redeem them.
 - The son born of woman was none other the Son of God, conceived now in human flesh, to establish a people for God in the earth.
 - He Himself followed the LORD fully as no other man had done.
 - And then He Himself, unlike Adam, said, “punish me for what they did,” and so to the cross He went to be crucified for our sins.
 - The Father had sent Him to do that that He might have a purified people to fill the earth at last.
 - Here was the blood sacrifice that God appointed to atone for sin.
 - It was necessary to make it clear that God must justly punish sin.
 - To pardon without this would bring great dishonour to Him.
5. And all along, as the prophets had foretold, it was God’s plan when this Son came into the world to redeem people from every nation.
 - And so He sent His people out to the nations with His Holy Spirit to help them, and they preached the good news about Jesus coming to restore us to God by His death on the cross.
 - And all those whom God has appointed to eternal life believe—they come, looking to Jesus who was crucified for forgiveness, that they might be delivered from service to Satan and restored to God’s service.
 - God is filling the earth with them.
 - He is going to have the earth filled with Godly people in the end.
 - His plan will not be thwarted.

TRANS> But what does this have to do with parents?

- Is it just that God is going to fill the earth with godly people that are called from the nations?
 - No, God also fills the earth with godly people through Christian parents.

B. The church has a two-fold mandate for filling the earth with godly people.

1. Yes, we are to go to preach the gospel to the nations.
 - We are to call them to trust in Jesus for forgiveness and to come and join us His people—His church—His redeemed people who trust in Him.
 - We are to baptise them when they profess Him, and we are to teach them how to live as His people, following Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.
2. But those who believe are also called to bring up their children in the nurture and discipline of the LORD.
 - a. God declared from the beginning that His promise was to those He called and to their children.
 - 1) Noah and his children were all on the ark.
 - 2) Abraham and his seed were given the promise along with the sign of circumcision to show that God was their God and they His people.
 - 3) And when Peter first preached the gospel after Jesus rose and was ascended, he declared that, “the promise is to you and to your children.”
 - He said that when they were being baptised, and from then on, all the baptisms were household baptisms (when there was a household).

- b. We might say that when you are redeemed by Jesus and you marry, you and your spouse became the soil out of which God brings forth redeemed children.
- 1) We saw that at creation, marriage was the soil out of which godly children were brought forth.
 - It was good soil because the children were brought up in a home with a man who nourished and cherished his wife as his own body and with a woman who cheerfully conformed her life to his as her head.
 - We saw how the children were brought into that place of love and trained up in that soil as godly people.
 - 2) Well now, the marriage of redeemed people is the soil out of which godly children are to be brought forth.
 - We are to marry only in the Lord—believers are to marry believers...
 - and in these homes, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her... they are to nourish and cherish their wives as Christ does the church...
 - And the wives are to submit to their own husbands as the church cheerfully submits to Christ, wanting to conform our ways to His.
 - Such couples, being redeemed by Christ, are to bring up their children in the Lord.
 - They are to bring them up as those who look to Jesus for the forgiveness of sin in a home where He is served.
 - They are to bring forth children in the soil of a home where prayer and the word are heard, and where God is worshipped in Christ.
- c. God's promise is to us and to our children.
- 1) Election is random in one sense, but in another it flows through godly households.
 - God has said it does.
 - If that were not so, it would be just as likely for the children of your unbelieving neighbour to be saved as for any of yours.
 - But such has never been the case.
 - It was not Noah and some random individuals on the ark, but Noah and his sons and their wives.
 - 2) Christian parents have promises and they are to bring up their children in the hope of those promises. The promise is to us and to our children.
 - They are to look for God to work in their sons and daughters as they bring them up in a godly redeemed household.
 - In Psalm 103:17-18, the Lord promises that: **The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, ¹⁸ to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.**
 - That is all the more so now that Jesus Christ has come!

C. I say then, how glad we ought to be for the church's parents!

1. Here we have the soil from which godly children come forth and fill the earth!

- God will have the earth filled with godly people at last, and this is one of His ways of doing that—through Christian marriages.
 - The other way is through evangelism.
 - Both ways are extremely important.
2. So let's give thanks for the church's parents and pray for them and for the children they have brought forth.
- Pray that they will be faithful so that their children can be brought forth in godly soil, in redeemed soil, that they too might be redeemed.
 - Many churches ignore the special promise to parents.
 - They refuse to baptise the children of believers and do not insist that they bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.
 - The children are treated as those outside of Christ instead of those who have the covenants and the promises.
 - We must insist that Christian parents recognise their calling and we must encourage them in it.
 - Next week, we will look at ways parents are to bring them up in the nurture and discipline of the LORD.
 - But this week, let us rejoice that God is filling the earth in this way.
 - Pray that Christian parents will be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, not merely with children, but with godly children.
3. I tell you, at the last day, He will raise up all those who have been redeemed and they will be brought to perfection.
- On that day, the wicked will be cast out.
 - Then there will be a new heaven and new earth, filled with godly people redeemed by Jesus Christ!
 - God will have it so
 - He will not be thwarted.
 - He will fill the earth as He purposed from the start.