

The Heartbeat of Creation  
 Sermon for 27 July 2025  
 Texts: Gen. 22; Matt. 11:21-24; Mark 1:40-45

As I was reviewing a message on paying attention to what's going on in the text—especially as a means of grasping the relevant context for that text, it occurred to me that the creation of Adam and Eve, the book of Job, the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and of Moses all had one thing in common and that one thing is maturity. Back when God held all the cards, that is, in the act of creation, what God made from the dust were adult, fully mature persons. Neither Adam nor Eve developed in a mother's womb. They never felt their mother's warmth, fluctuations of temperature, the flux of hormones and the dependency of drawing food and oxygen from their mother's own body. They had no human parents, experienced no childhood and did no attending school—they were created mature, intelligent, wise and conversant adults. Of course, all of this was quite new, anomalous; meaning it had never happened before. But given the predominance of perfect in that age, we might infer that this spontaneous adulthood was also perfect. Adam and Eve were created perfectly capable of the kind of love that God desired from them. *Don't lose, or misplace that point—the ideal, or goal of it all is a mature, conscious, genuine love as between consenting adults.* God wanted it voluntary, free and ardent. David was praised as being a man **after God's own heart**—as a trait most commendable in him, or in Job, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as Moses, and the prophets/leaders of God's own people. "What's going on?" is right up there with "What's the heart of the matter?!"

The heartbeat behind creation, behind the power that created, and the might that filled the universes with innumerable stars and solar systems like unto our own. The heartbeat confirms that God is love—and that the love story of God towards us encompasses the full arc of redemption/salvation history.

Context is a word that gets bandied about a lot these days. We are told that context, in essence, is king; it determines everything. No, that is an exaggeration! It's important, however, there's internal context (what's happening within Scripture) and there's external context (a sense of historical setting, cultural mood supposedly in place at the time, the chronological setting of the passage). We should note this critical qualification: the first context is in the text, but the second is brought to the text. The inspired word of God is the controlling authority internally, but human authority is the controlling authority in the external context. With the latter, scholars, theologians and students give it their best shot but that take is subject to revision and review, and the authorial bias must always be on the table. So the challenge is how to get to, or bring to light what is in the text fully, accurately and helpfully.

Now Job was a mature, godly man. He freely and fervently loved God and his family. He was attentive to the spiritual things that matter, defending widows, assisting the fatherless and blessing the poor—he was loved by God and he was loving towards others. It was this that provoked Satan, every faithful act of love and worship (including sin sacrifices for all his children and his wife, we may presume, they may have **cursed God in their hearts**—Job 1:5) enraged the enemy of our souls. So, our accuser, and slanderer said of Job **Does Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not put a hedge about him and his house, and all he hath on every side? . . . But put forth thy hand and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.** (Job 1:9-11) So this cursing God is a big deal. The slander is that Job is insincere, that his relationship to God is all about money, advantage and security. Job is a carnal/fleshly materialist, swaddled in prosperity—just like every other of your image bearers. Cold, calculating and hateful charges lodged against Job who, understandably, takes these accusations personally. Job is not aware at

the outset that he is God's hero in a cosmic contest; that he was chosen to represent God and to demonstrate moral free agency before a watching world. That's the heart of the matter.

What Job is up against, we are all up against: Satanic opposition. And because we regularly pray, **Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One** I think that I should give you a brief bio of Satan, a picture of what it truly is. Satan's two greatest achievements have been 1. To convince the world that he doesn't exist and 2., failing that, to reduce his reality to a fantasy figure—a little red imp with horns, a tail and a trident fork. Satan exists and it is more than an imaginary, action figure, cosplay evil.

Satan is a blood-thirsty, possessive, envious, evil, greedy, lustful, anxiety inducing, violent, indolent, treacherous, unfaithful, treasonous, slanderous, prevaricating/lying, betraying, controlling, willful, confusing, rebellious, revolting, reckless in abandon, mean, proud and spiteful, mean, cruel, careless and neglectful being—and these very same qualities are characteristic of all of those who have disconnected from God. **And in the enmity between Satan's seed and the seed of the woman,**(Gen. 3:15) **these are the choice weapons of oppression, destruction and death.** However, when Satan is reduced to a fantasy figure, all this reality is overlooked—escapes/hidden from our view. This impersonal, malevolent and vicious being is fearfully hateful and that is who the Evil One actually is.

The Evil One is also thuggish, like a stalker. He carries the hidden chains of your former bondage, your captivity, your addictive patterns and rattles them to entice you back into your past. "I will care for you," he promises, "if you will submit to me . . . or treat me as your god." His allure is the allure of the familiar, the predictable and the reliable—the numbing effect actually works. You feel nothing until nothing is all you have left . . . that, and death.

An aside, if you are born again, you are either the new "I;" or you are not. If new then do not dwell any longer on what you were. That is a residual of the past, that is a "has been," You now belong to "what is yet to be," or, as we say, "the Kingdom come" which is now and ever shall be. Live in what by the grace of God you are becoming as you grow in Christ—having left behind the inferior, and attained the superior, or ultimate. You have been moved from "ugly and cursed" to "beautifully blessed!" Sleeping beauty is awakened, the toad's been kissed and you've been set free! Both prince and princess are transformed when the curse is lifted. Loneliness and dislocation are abolished.

The test of any spiritual discipline/adventure is this: does it increase my depth, extend my reach and glorify the Giver?

So Job the good and godly, mature man is like a middle aged Adam and Eve in that he exemplifies the kind, or quality of love that God created us for and desires wholeheartedly from us to share with us. The same is true for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—all of whom were in their upper years like Zachariah and Elizabeth who mirror Abraham and Sarah. **That being part of the point! Moses was in his eighties before his great adventure was initiated. Jesus, in his thirties was relatively young!**

Let consider the context of Mark 1. The internal context of Mark 1:40-45 includes noting how early this interaction is in the emergent ministry of Jesus. A leper approaches Jesus, **beseeking Him and falling on his knees**—that is, asking to be healed and worshipping Jesus. This worship, expressing a need, and trusting faith **moves Jesus with compassion.** This compassion is behind the revelation **God so loved the world that He gave, or sent His only**

**Beloved Son** that lost sinners might be saved, the power of sin be shattered, people might be cleansed, healed and helped. ***This is divine energy with a heart behind it as expressed in real time.***

The actions of Mark 1 are actually expressions of divine compassion. They were not about showmanship, or a publicity stunt. Jesus defers to Father God: **I only do what I see the Father doing—He acts out the Father’s will and thus expresses divine, redemptive compassion.** I do not think that the healing is aimed at producing faith—it’s already present—and, further, it is not about inducing proper worship because that is already transpiring. The rejection of publicity is carried by Jesus’ stern warning . . . **see that you say nothing to anyone** but, rather, handles this with discretion. The man, however, chose to **proclaim freely** what Jesus had done for him as a gesture/an overt expression of divine compassion. All in the text. All discoverable by examining what is actually going on on a personal level!

What about the instruction **go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded?** What about this peripheral matter? Couldn’t one argue that his passage was about “religious continuity,” about not rocking the boat of Jewish religiosity? Is it correct to elevate divine compassion over such a consideration? And what about true worship, the leper’s faith. Well, neither of those things is wrong, or inaccurate. The question is whether or not these outweigh the matter of compassion which seem supremely important, or central. They add detail but seem more incidental. If one were preaching on religious continuity, this passage would be serviceable—but integrity would require acknowledging the secondary status that point holds there, in the text.

If we move over to Matthew 11, the central point appears to be the meaning of “signs,” what Jesus calls the “works” he performed in Capernaum such as the leper in Mark 1, demonstrable divine compassion. Jesus performed wonders to signify the proximity, or nearness of Kingdom as promised by God. It is not merely what Jesus did, which is notable, but **what these actions signified/ the context** that makes sense of the text.

All “works” undertaken in public so as to be recorded/reported—that is, to be “seen,” noticed and made aware of. For if people noticed them, joy at the promise and repentance would surely have followed—rather than an insatiable demand for more and more supernatural displays, **the works. But each of these acts, each work, was a demonstration of the power and presence of God; that He had drawn near as love incarnate and was “at hand.” It expresses the redeeming power of God’s love.** Because they had witnessed these things, seen them with their own eyes, it was incumbent upon them to make sense of them—to see them as they actually were.

So if we “see” these works, as recorded in scripture, and affirm them as expressions of divine love—things that actually happened and that are consistent with our core belief that **God is love**, we need never make excuses for our embrace of miraculous healings, or deliverances, or salvations. I happen to love the lines of Theseus in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, “I pray you, your play needs no excuse . . . never excuse.” (Act 5 Scene 1) We may boldly declare, **God is love** and His works demonstrate it. John Wooden wrote, “Never make excuses. Your friends don’t need them and your foes won’t believe them.” Perfect.

May I boldly state to you: the gospel needs no excuse, friends, never excuse!

So now we come to Genesis 22 where the horrifying request made of Abraham to offer up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. Does this represent a compassionate and merciful and loving God? Indeed, what kind of a good God would make such a heinous demand? And the faithful response is *this One*—for the God of Abraham is Father God, is our Creator, is God Almighty, is the one true God—there is only one true God— and there is none beside Him!

The best answer is bound up in this, or found by answering this question: ***what in the world is actually going on in the text? What's the heart of the matter?*** If we ask that, the right question(!), we learn that what is apparently going on is a cover for what is actually going on. God is cancelling child sacrifice, not requiring, or endorsing it. That is why an angel intervenes and that is why a ram, a substitute for Isaac is found tangled up nearby. Meaning, the ram is suitable for sacrifice, Isaac is not. The surrounding culture, pagan and heathen cultures (a matter of cultural context—not found in the text!) we are informed (by supposed authorities!) practiced child sacrifice as a manner, or mode of appeasing their gods, their blood-thirsty *gods* (or demons, I would prefer to call them). ***That cancellation is what is actually going on.*** The request to Abraham sets up this graphic repudiation! (Or, cancellation/nullification). God never planned to have Isaac sacrificed in the first place.

Perhaps the blood-thirstiness of the demons has not, however, disappeared. Babies are sacrificed regularly to the gods of “mental well-being, higher education/higher pay, career and lifestyle preferences and financial responsibility.” If you “see” the reasons/ or justifications for abortion in this list, you will have identified the contemporary grounds for children sacrifice in our own day. Child sex trafficking is another ritual sacrifice . . . and blood letting. Yes, many children are disposed of by murdering them. It’s demonic, awful and intolerable<sup>1</sup>. The church must oppose, disarm and extirpate these practices. For on account of such things, the wrath of God is coming.

The dolt atheist Richard Dawkins has many, many blasphemous and unlovely things, too slanderous repeat about God. They are unrepeatable lies and bad, bad gossip—so I won’t repeat them. I will say that because Dawkins believes “God is the most unpleasant character in all fiction” most of his slanders fall to the ground betraying only that he apparently claims to know a lot about a non-existent god, a fictional and non-existent god—which is to say, he knows a lot about nothing. I believe that such belief is evidence of a psychotic disorder, an evident break with reality. Sad. His “god” is neither the biblical God, nor a God with whom I would care to associate—let alone love or worship. Dawkins is disturbed by certain passages because he is unaware of ***what it actually going on.*** . . . some of your family members, friends and associates may be as similarly deluded as Mr. Dawkins. He is thoughtlessly and deliberately ignorant as well as deranged and disconnected. God can heal delusion, just like hearing, blindness or sense of touch. But typically those who do not believe in healings, the supernatural, or God tend to be imperviously close-minded . . . and very miserable.

When someone denies truth, especially absolute truth, along with the existence of God as a moral being/divinity, it may be helpful to ask. “Where do you get your sense of justice, or of right and wrong from? What’s your authority?” Ask gently and kindly and be prepared to take note if you need to—especially if you anticipate a follow-up. It is better to keep quiet and have people think you might be a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt. In the free for all of social media, and the sea of opinion we all sail in, we need to keep our cool and maintain our

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<sup>1</sup> Calling Baal, or Molech worship a fertility cult is a lie—it’s infant sacrifice. Infanticide. They are practiced in pursuit of prosperity, and the mother’s well-being.

stand on Scripture as the revealed word of God! Because we cannot escape the battlefield of ideas, it is advisable to keep our armor on, read widely and wisely and cultivate thoughtfulness. If we have the truth and know it, we should fear no one and practice loving every one with all our hearts and minds.

To move things upward, and forward causes the Kingdom to advance, and truth to prevail. The Kingdom progresses, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. Where the heart of the matter is exposed and the gospel is preached. **Amen.**