

# The Connection

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Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] So just to recap for those who weren't here last week, actually real quick, just in one word, let's, I don't know where Alex went, but let's try to get this right one this time. Shout out real quick. What did we learn about in one word last week?

Sabbath. Yes. So last week as a community, and obviously we heard James preach from Genesis 2 and we'll be continuing in Genesis today. But before we go on from there, we will have a special sharing in just a moment.

But I just wanted to share from our life group this week, you know, I was particularly encouraged as we dove deeper into Genesis 2 and discussed as a group, what does it really mean to truly rest? And just to hear from everyone, what is actual true rest? Is it, you know, the body being well? Is it my spirit? Is it my soul? Is it my mind? My emotions? I mean, just hearing everyone's thoughts in terms of how that works together.

And then honestly, most of us were probably confessing the ways we were not doing that well and just recognizing the ways we probably need more rest and true rest.

[0:58] And I was just encouraged both in our community and also just hearing just in different pockets of the community throughout the week as well, just the ways that the Lord was speaking to just individual people throughout the room in terms of, I know James gave his kind of example of his kind of one hour, just empty time with the Lord.

But in our life group, you know, everyone made kind of certain commitments about how they would spend just more dedicated time with the Lord and also just speaking with people throughout the church as well. I was just super, super encouraged to hear the ways that everyone didn't just take in the word last week, but also decided, well, how do I really live this out in the week to come?

One person who, after I heard last week's message, I told her immediately, which is Leora, who I'm going to invite to come up here and give her a round of applause. Immediately upon hearing last week's message on the Sabbath and rest, I know Leora had shared a little bit with our life group about some of her experiences with the Sabbath and with rest.

I was like, oh, we would be so blessed to hear the full story of, of course, before we do that, we would love to just pray over you and just invite God to, as you speak to us, to minister to us as well. So let's pray for Leora. So Jesus, we thank you that you're gentle and lowly in heart, that you're patient with us and that you desire for us to experience true rest.

[2:28] So in the ways that you've been shaping Leora and teaching her and instructing her and guiding her in the ways of resting in your presence, Lord, as she shares with us now, Lord, we just empower her to minister to each heart in this room, Lord.

God, would we continue to be a community that yearns to rest in your presence, especially as we hear from her sharing and her experience now, Lord. So thank you, Jesus. We pray this in your name. Amen.

So the reason I asked Leora to come up is because she has shared some of her recent experiences. Actually, can we get another mic real quick? She had shared briefly about some of her recent experiences before coming to Hong Kong and how she experienced true Sabbath and rest and what she learned from that.

So I was like, oh, we have to get Leora to share. So really grateful for you preparing this week. Of course, before we get into hearing about some of these experiences, I would be remiss if I didn't first ask, are you feeling rested this morning?

Because mine honor you because this week I know you were leading this conference for work and that took a lot of your time and your energy. So in an honest sense, are you feeling rested this morning?

[3:41] I'm slowly recovering from a very intense week as I spent yesterday resting. So I feel rested this morning. And then maybe before you share about your last season, maybe if you could just introduce yourself to everyone, because you've only been to Hong Kong less than a year, I believe.

Can you just real quickly tell everyone why has God brought you to Hong Kong and what you're doing here currently? Yes, I moved to Hong Kong in October of last year. And yeah, I'm here as a research assistant professor at Lingnan University teaching ethics.

Mostly AI ethics and ethics East and West as well. And yeah, so this door sort of just really opened up to me.

I wasn't really expecting to move to Hong Kong. But yeah, the head of department read a paper of mine and then got in touch. And yeah, I really felt like this was the next place that God was leading me.

So yeah, I moved to Hong Kong without having ever been to Hong Kong. So it was not an easy decision to make, but I'm here now. And we're super glad that you're here. And one thing that you shared with us in our first life group together a couple of weeks ago was your expectation for this season was just to really walk deep in community because you've kind of been in different places over the past few seasons.

[5:05] And one thing I really love that you shared was the fact that we are designed for community and designed for relationship. And the reason for that is because without one another, there's certain parts of God's heart that we wouldn't otherwise be able to see without one another pointing us to that heart, refining us to see that clear.

And that's exactly why we've brought you here this morning, which is to share your experience with the Sabbath and with the rest and what God's been teaching you. So could you maybe first tell us, though, just prior to Hong Kong, what you're doing in this last season and particularly what did God teach you about rest in that past season and where you were?

Right. OK, so since before moving to Hong Kong, I did my postdoc in Israel. And so that was between 2024 to 2025.

And so, yeah, I was there during the height of the war and I initially started off in Haifa, but that's like on the border with Lebanon. And so we would have rockets firing at us every couple of hours.

So it got a bit intense. So I ended up moving down to Jerusalem, which is a very different sort of vibe from Haifa. It's a lot more religious. And one of the most amazing experiences I had living in Jerusalem was experiencing how the Jewish people keep the Sabbath.

[6:27] And so what happens during Sabbath, which is Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, is that the entire city just comes to an absolute standstill.

And so the busiest time of the week in Jerusalem is Friday morning and Friday afternoon where everyone's just in a frenzy trying to finish up all their business.

They're like meeting up with business partners trying to like finalize contracts before before the Sabbath. You have people just going out to the markets, buying food and getting just the house ready in order to keep the Sabbath.

And then when the sun falls on Jerusalem, everything comes to a complete standstill. There's no public transport during Sabbath. Most shops and restaurants also close, except for the ones run by Arab Israelis.

There's no cars on the streets. There's no people on the streets. And there's just this like complete silence that descends upon the city. And depending on how religious you are, there are some very religious Jews who keep it very seriously.

[7:37] And so they have a lot of like a long list of things that they can and can't do on Sabbath, including switching off lights and turning on the gas stove and things like that.

So the very religious Jews would not do that. And so they would automate everything so that the lights just turn on automatically during the evening. Or if they don't have that system, what they would do is go out on the streets and grab a Gentile and force them to come in and switch on their gas stove for them and things like that.

Because they don't care if you don't keep Sabbath. They need to keep Sabbath. And so they do that. But even the very secular Jews, so the non-religious Jews, they would just take this time to completely switch off.

They would switch off all their electric devices, their phones, TVs, and just spend this 24 hours just with family, communing together, sharing good food together, laughing together.

And so, yeah, they take it very seriously in Israel, keeping the Sabbath. And some of the kind of highlights of my time in Israel was, yeah, during those kind of 24 hours of the week where I would just wander around the kind of empty streets of Jerusalem and just reflecting on God's goodness. [9:00] And then we would gather together in the evening with my kind of Christian family there to share kind of Shabbat meals, which is in the photos on the PowerPoint slide.

And so we would share Shabbat meals together and go through each of the processes that the Jewish people also would go through.

And so there's like a phrase that's continually repeated throughout the meal. I'm going to completely butcher the pronunciation of this, but it's like, which is, blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe.

I mean, if you watch like the Chosen series, that's like a phrase that's continually repeated throughout. And so they would say that phrase and say, blessed are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe, for giving, for bringing forth bread from the earth, for bringing forth fruit from the vine. And in each stage, they would remember who God is, what God has done for us and just reminisce on that. And so, yeah, it was just like at this time of realigning your heart to God's truth and his word.

[10:10] And that's just a really neat experience. And in that experience, I guess, how did that start to inform your view of what it means to truly rest in God and to Sabbath for yourself?

And so I think one thing it really did was completely transform my understanding of rest. So this is very much in line with what James was sharing last week.

But rest for the Jewish people and also rest from this kind of biblical perspective is very much equates to worship.

And the psalm that is read every Shabbat is Psalm 95, which talks about God giving the Israelites rest.

And the psalmist starts off that psalm with this invitation to worship. So it starts off something like, come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make joyful noise, the rock of our salvation.

[11:09] And so resting is about stopping and remembering who God is and what God has done for his people. And that remembrance leading to this posture of worship and of reverence.

And of course, this is like a very different understanding of rest from what the world teaches us. The world teaches us that rest is about, it focuses on me.

It's about, it's about my well-being, it's about securing me time, and it's about self-care, it's about pursuing my hobbies.

And all that can be good, it's not bad in itself. But it's a very different understanding to what rest is in the biblical sense. So, yeah, so biblical rest is God-centered rather than centered on the self.

And it seems like the world really, it tells us to rest, but then at the same time, it is very difficult to rest. Because it teaches us that, you know, we are the authors of our own destiny.

[12:17] Our own future is in our own hands. And that makes it very difficult to rest, or rest just becomes a means to becoming more productive. And you're kind of running even faster in an achievement of your own goals.

But Psalm 95 says that we can rest because we are not in control, but God is in control. And because we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

And so we can rest because we know that our future is not in our hands, but in the hands of God who deeply loves us and cares for us as his flock.

And then, yeah, just another thing, experiencing Sabbath has also really highlighted the beauty and simplicity of the gospel. You know, just as God rested from his work, because his work of creation had been finished, we can also cease from our self-justifying works because of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

And so experiencing Sabbath in Jerusalem at the heart of where everything happened was really, yeah, an amazing time where I could really reflect on that and the beauty of the gospel.

[13:36] And then just the last question for you. You've come from a place where literally they would halt for 24 hours to a city that never stops.

So now that you're in Hong Kong, drawing from your experiences in Israel and Jerusalem, I guess, how has that influenced how you rest now or how you practice Sabbath now that you're in Hong

Kong?

So I'm not going to lie, it's not been easy. I feel like I've gone from one extreme to the other. But I think the one thing that my experience in Israel has shaped me is that I now associate rest with not just doing whatever I want during a particular time, but with recentering myself to God's truth.

And so even if you believe the God to be true, we are constantly being bombarded by messages of the world. Some are true, some are like half-truths, some are complete lies.

And it's very easy to just allow that to seep into your heart and mind and shape the way you view God, view your self-worth, kind of set priorities in your life.

[14:55] So one thing I've been doing is kind of intentionally setting time aside to filter all of that out and remind myself of God's truth.

And so one thing I've been trying to do more often is memorize scripture and just go on walks where I speak those words of truth over my heart and mind.

And I found that to be particularly helpful in a city like Hong Kong, where there's so many messages being shouted at you from all angles.

Yeah. We appreciate you sharing your experience with us this morning. I'm so glad to have you part of our community to share this experience. And of course, I know many in this room have been in Hong Kong for a long time, so I'm sure there'll be areas that you'll be able to draw from each of us in terms of how we rest well, especially as you continue to adapt into this new season here.

But super grateful for you. Thank you. So let's give Leora a round of applause. Thank you. Thank you. Can you read some last five first? In a minute? In a minute.

[16:01] Cool. Before we move on into the rest of our time, let's just invite God in as James opens the word to us. May our hearts be open to what he has to share with us this morning.

So, Lord, we are submitted to you. We're open to you this morning. Would your Holy Spirit cut us open to receive all that you may speak to us, convict us on.

And God, would you just embed it deep in our hearts, Lord. The same as last week, as we heard stories of people learning what it means to rest well and really trying to do that even in the midst of this city and its busyness.

God, we pray for just more faith in this community to continue to be obedient to ways that you'll call us through your word this morning. So speak through James in the ways that you have been speaking to him this week on what it means to follow this word, to know this word, and to know deep in his heart.

In the same way, would your spirit speak through him to our community this morning? So, Jesus, we thank you and praise in your son's name. Amen. Amen. I invite everyone to stand to read Psalm 95. Okay.

[17:07] Now, as we tend to do in honor of the word and respect of the word, we're going to open up the Bibles to Psalm 95. And if we ask everyone to stand as we read this word.

So we'll give everyone a second to get to Psalm 95 and then we'll ask Leora to read for us this morning. psalm 95 oh come let us sing to the lord let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation let us come into his presence with thanksgiving let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise for the lord is a great god and a great king above all gods in his hand are the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountain are his also the sea is his for he made it and his hands formed the dry land oh come let us worship and bow down let us kneel before the lord our maker for he is our god and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as in merivah as on the day at massa in the wilderness when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof that they had seen my work for 40 years i loathed that generation and said they are a people who go astray in their hearts and they have not known my ways therefore i swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest this is the word of god please take a seat always so exciting for me when we get to meet people that the lord brings into the community and so thank you leora for sharing that always super exciting and intimidating for me as i find out there's more and more people who are so intelligent in our congregation uh just to be able to be blessed by you it's really good a bit disappointed in alex i told him if it's interesting just keep going uh and i don't have to preach because i didn't really prepare that much um but but then he didn't he didn't read those signals and now i'm here um so here we go um wow psalm 95 come let us just bow down and worship him that is the most important thing and well actually when you were sharing i can just imagine being there and everything stops and i was like oh well i guess we do have that in hong kong we have it every few years it's called typhoon 10 and where we finally do all

stop typhoon 8 doesn't stop us by the way i've seen i mean i know people who have been in malls in typhoon 8 still looking for mcdonald's uh but typhoon 10 is the day that we do really sabbath and stop um and can you imagine being a gentile in jerusalem during that like on that day it's kind of like a gentile for rent just just walk around okay you want my help how much does it worth to you um but that low grade hum of anxiety uh that we experience being in this city it's a real thing right it's a very real thing i fall asleep uh with a white noise machine uh mostly because i've got a child in my room so i'm trying to uh kind of absorb the sounds but then i realized one time when i was on a work trip i was on my own in the hotel room i was like why can't i fall asleep thankfully it's uh it's a playlist on my spotify account so i put it back on and aren't we just so used to that just so used to that low grade hum of anxiety and if you're the same as me then the answer the first thing i would do if i was you and the first thing i'm doing is go to the sabbath if you have that anxiety in you then the goal is to get back to being in the place of peace the bible calls that word what does the bible call that word shalom what does the word shalom really mean it means wholeness it means that life is complicated

and complex and busy but yet in this big mosaic that is life there is shalom i believe the garden of eden had shalom it had this peace and i realized the moment we turned our backs on god we have let go of that shalom and let go of that peace and now we're in this place where we're just trying to figure out how to get back there and so let's go back to genesis chapter 2 it's been fun for me to go through this and i'll tell you what happens on monday i open up my bible onto the next passage that i'm going to be preaching on and i always think i have an idea about where i'm going and then the moment i open up the word and the moment i read it i'm like oh actually god i think there might be something else that you're trying to show me here and then as i just digest it and think about it and then i'm like okay i think there's something for us here and so we're going to go through this i'm going to carry on through um genesis chapter 2 i thought i was heading straight to marriage i thought i was heading straight to uh being in a uh in a marriage that reflects god's love between a man and a woman uh but actually it's not even just that there is so much more uh to this but just again in case you forgot uh from last time god goes through days one to six every day he says and there was evening and there was morning the third day and there was evening and there was morning the fourth day and you reach day seven he does not say that anymore the work is finished the perpetual state that creation is supposed to be in to flourish to have shalom is every is all here and we start from a place of rest that's why the sabbath is friday evening who goes to sleep going oh this is the beginning of my day none of us we will crawl into bed because we're exhausted from the day that we've had but we start the day we're resting i'm going to start my day by going to sleep and then i'm going to wake up and then i'm going to work from that place of rest we completely turn it around and go the other way and we don't have that shalom interestingly here genesis 1 he tells us creation it's the wide lens of just how we all came to be and then scripture stops and then goes into chapter 2 and it doesn't carry on chronologically it stops for a little bit and then it zooms back in to day six the macro lens for the photographers where it goes actually let's focus on one thing let's focus on that six day where actually god creates man and woman and so we get actually a glimpse into what god's trying to show us here and yes there is relationship there is relationship between a man and a woman that is called marriage but there is also so much more than that i'm here to present to you in the time that in the too much time that we have left alex lee the idea that there is a blueprint for humanity right here if you experience that low-grade hum of anxiety like i do that maybe we have strayed in terms of what we were created for and maybe there's something here in genesis chapter 2 that we can look at that tells us what it was supposed to be like what humans were supposed to be like and i'm going to share this in three points here when we are were created to be humans we were created for relationship but relationship with three different things and we can see here from scripture that's what we're going to be looking at but first of all all of this is about god if you look at chapter one all the way to the beginning of chapter two god is described as god god god in the original it would be elohim this is the god of power this is the creator god who comes in to speak things into existence he is an almighty god but can you see that it's really interesting as soon as we head into chapter two from verse four onwards it's no longer just god what is it it's the lord god it's yahweh elohim something happens brothers and sisters when it goes from just creating and just showing off power to suddenly he wants to focus in on one thing and what's he trying to focus in on he's trying to focus in on relationship the word yahweh is his actual name it's not just a god of power but it's a god of presence it's a god of relationship so even just that little bit there god's trying to show us hey i'm as big as can be but i also know you and i also want to be known by

you so then it says the lord god and then what we see is he is not only creator he's not only just the god behind the glass partition but he actually wants to be with us he's not just the creator he's the gardener he actually comes right i mean who how many people love uh the theater show wicked or the film wizard of oz and he's not the wizard of oz he's not hiding behind a big machine and a big face he actually steps out into earth and steps into relationship with god he is yahweh he introduces himself in his own way and so we see here again chapter two verse six and the mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground then the lord god forms the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature so we are created from the dust from dust we came from dust we go we actually are part of creation we are part of the earth but we aren't just dirt because if it was just dirt and dust that we were then it would be pretty it would be pretty tragic it would be pretty uh devastating that there really is no meaning to life but we hold in our existence this paradoxical tension that we are not only dirt but we are also glory not our own glory but the glory of god is breathed in to us so then we have this moment where we can actually see where we should just be humble but we are just dirt of no worth god himself breathes life into us and because of that now we have significance we have intrinsic value not only do we have a soul we are a soul and that is man and that is man that sits right there um during the during the times of the bible especially in the new testament there's a group of people called the gnostics and the gnostics would be saying hey there's all this spiritual realm that we need to explore and that they would use it actually to control a lot of people and one thing they would say is that hey the spiritual realm is the good stuff the physical realm is the bad stuff but what we're seeing here is that that is not the case that we are actually made from dust dirt but we also have the life of god inside us saint erenius says this the glory of god is man fully alive but the life of man is the vision of god let me read that again the glory of god is man fully alive so if you want to see the glory of god it's us living in the way that we were supposed to be living created for what we were supposed to be created for the glory of god is man fully alive but the life of man is the vision of god and the only way we can have that kind of glory shown is if the life of man focuses fully on the vision of god focuses on beholding who god is it's about that's why the sabbath is there that we just spend our time not taking a day off doing the fun things that we want to do but it is that we would feast on god psalm 27 4 right that the only thing we ask the only thing we seek is to dwell in your house all the days of our lives and to seek to gaze upon his beauty and to inquire in his temple so that's why we are what we are and we were made from him remember genesis 1 god says we are made in his image so we're made in his image and we also breathe his life that shows the first relationship that man was supposed to have the blueprint of humanity is to have close intimate relationship with god if you are feeling as their life isn't to the full if you are feeling just things are just not clicking that's the first place i would go on your sabbath i'll get god am i in a right relationship with you am i connected to

you i was made to look like you i was made to breathe your breath maybe i'm going wrong somewhere because i've distanced myself from you maybe nothing in this world makes sense or is satisfying because i'm actually not made from this world and for this world i was made to look like him i was i have life because of him it's a c.s lewis quote from mere christianity that says if i find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy the most probable explanation is that i was made for another world saint augustine says we are restless you have made us for yourself oh lord our hearts arrest us until they find their rest in you maybe that's where we're going wrong every now and again i walk down queen's road central uh and as i'm walking there's cars on the road many many cars it's a busy road and every now and again i see a lamborghini driving on that road and when we say driving we don't really mean driving he's crawling and i look and i smile and i snigger and i'm like you weren't created to be here queen's road central or hong kong for that matter maybe certain roads on the south side of the island or new territories maybe not central not queen's road essential you are trapped you weren't created for this um it's going to put him on the spot here i hope he won't mind um uh pastor gabe uh he's one of our you know just our dear dear uh pastors here uh we do we do a daily prayer call um and uh but one of the problems is one of the big problems with pastor gabe because he's nearly perfect in every other way is that is that his phone he's not an apple user uh so he doesn't like apple correct and so he has these other headphones and they're just tragic and when he when when we're trying to talk to him and hear his call there's just so much noise and and so his dear wife uh jojo uh actually was like hey you guys on the call are really really clear what's up with that i said well it's because there's only really one pair of headphones that are really good for this the apple airpod pro third generation and it has noise

cancellation and it has voice isolation it is gold it is so good and so bless you out of your love for your husband you bought him a bit the other day we were on the call and it was still wasn't good and we realized why he's pairing this glorious pair of headphones with an android and he doesn't get to choose the voice isolation that is only for those who have been saved and so we pray for gabe that he would recognize and realize that his apple airpods were made for more but until then there would be that low grade hum of noise that we will all hear him through in ecclesiastes 3 he says you if it you have planted eternity in the heart of man like you know something is out there but you go and chase everything else that you can see and then you wonder why you don't feel like you're flourishing you wonder why you don't have that shalom start with the vertical axis of the relationship with him you were made in his image yes you were dust but he breathed life into you and now he is closer than you can ever imagine the fact that you woke up that you got out of bed that you can breathe that you can sit here and fall asleep is because of him to be human to follow the blueprint of humans that flourish is to be in relationship with him and number two we also need to work this came to my dismay as i was reading this um chapter two let's go again uh verse we'll rewind a little bit verse five for the lord god had not caused it to rain on the land and there was no man to work

[33:34] the ground so he does he he creates the universe he creates the world but then he deliberately says here oh everything is created but there's no one to work the ground which tells me something else which is actually to be human that we also have to work that was part of creation that was part of our purpose the work comes before the fall so those of us who sit here going my work is evil well i don't know what job you do but the work itself is not we were created to work i also want to be sensitive here that actually we live in a society we live in an economy where that isn't even easy to one find a job and two to find a job that you think you are fit for and then to have contentment i get all of that and we're not necessarily here to kind of wrestle through and address that and actually as a pastor i'm sensitive to that because even this week i'm talking to people those of you right here who actually you are working you do believe that you're supposed to work you just want to find the right job and i'm praying that the lord would show you where he is leading you and what he created you for so i'm not here to necessarily address and saying hey you better get your act together and go work or stick it out in your job this is not what this is about but just if we just take a step back and go okay work is not evil it was created and then what does he do he plants he creates a garden verse 8 and then the lord god planted a garden in eden and the ground the lord god made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight of and good for food and then what does he do if we go further down a little bit verse 15 he says the lord god took the man and put him in the garden of eden to work it and keep it the hebrew there what there actually means work means to worship it's the same thing so adam gets plonked into a garden and says you're going to worship me through your work here you're going to work and you're going to cultivate and you're going to keep this ground you're going to be fruitful and you're going to multiply you're going to have dominion over this you are going to work is what he's saying here and actually everything that he needs is already there there's this passage here from verse 9 to 14 he says he makes every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food both beautiful and functional that means he gives us everything that we need not just that he also gives us rivers and trees and then gold and bdellium and onyx stone everything that man needs all the raw materials there that we need to flourish are already in place our job is to work it our job is to mine for it to find it to refine it to craft it all for what all for the glory of god when was the last time you looked at your work and went okay this is my worship to you god this is me worshiping you through doing this incredibly mundane earthly activity me just reassembling these raw materials these papers that i have whatever it is that god has put in front of you when was the last time you said okay actually that is my worship to god that is what i was made for the work is your worship we were created to order those things now work is also hard but i'm very keen to not talk about that just yet because that is chapter three when the ground becomes cursed so if you're sat here thinking james you're being insensitive to me because you don't know how my work is i'm here to tell you uh blame eve when she ate the apple no don't just that's a joke i'm saying work got really hard after the fall because before it wasn't supposed to be evil before we were supposed to work and cultivate and keep but it would actually be easy but that's not how it ends and that's not how it proceeds but we're going to leave that if you can bear with me we're going to leave that to next week because the fall happens in chapter three but for now we work and we don't use work to find our purpose we don't use work to find our identity we work from a place of rest knowing who we are just like adam he was

created put in the garden and you work to move things together and shuffle them together so that they would glorify god some of you are sat here going well work is not only hard that we'll talk about next week but sometimes work also feels pointless well here this is where the gospel message can come in right and speak to you your work is not pointless for the one reason and the one reason is because jesus christ came lived and died and rose from the dead the resurrection and he showed us that work wasn't supposed to stay just in the garden in one place but it was actually supposed to spread to the point where we would all live in this garden city where all would be beautiful all would be flourishing but sadly we turn our way from god right that's chapter three and then the rest of humanity but what we see here is that your work is not in vain because of christ and let me tell you why in 1 corinthians chapter 15 this is caleb's favorite verse is the one that got him to come to christ 1 corinthians chapter 15 verse 58 he does not labor in vain right let's just go there just have a look i want you to look at this and actually if you're wondering and if you have a scientific mind and you're like oh how does creation work and how does how does all this even happen i don't even believe in these miracles uh and all these uh different things well let me take you to 1 corinthians chapter 15 which i realize i can't multitask and do okay the creation account works because of jesus because of the resurrection actually that isn't even the biggest leap the biggest leap here is about the resurrection of christ that someone died came as dust and then rose again and at the very end so actually if you want one chapter to look at but to convince you of miracles to convince you of the resurrection this is it chapter 15 of 1 corinthians now at the very end of this it says this therefore my beloved brothers be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the lord knowing that in the lord your labor is not in vain you work you have purpose and it is not in vain because jesus christ came and died the death that we were supposed to die and now he is making all things new again so your work has a role in that whatever it looks like and you're like james you don't know how boring my work is it doesn't matter you do not labor in vain because in your working christ is glorified in your working christ is moving he is reordering reassembling making all things new through your work so that's why we must have a good relationship with our work uh dorothy sayers says this work is not a necessary evil to be escaped it is the natural exercise of man's god-given creative powers an essential way in which he participates in god's creation tim keller in his book every good endeavor if every anyone's struggling with work that's the book to read trumped by tim keller work is a primary place where we live out the command to love your neighbor because god is the true worker we work in his image i'm also here to say that actually some of us we have actually bought a lie the lie of what work really should be we think that work should be where we find contentment that we have a salary and that from that work we will also bring impact what we have is a form of modern consumerism where we think the work is supposed to serve us and give us our identity give us everything that we need to help us feel happy with ourselves but that is not what work was supposed to be some of you are actually in really tough work situations and my prayer is your pastor is that i'm not here just to tell you hey just look on the bright side of life and just keep working what i'm here to say is what if the work that god has put you into the garden that he placed you in remember adam was plunked into the garden what if your next question is god how can i worship you here how can i serve you here even in this tough work environment who do i need to reach out to and seek out and find to love and to serve and this job isn't great and lord can you give me a new one soon but in the meantime who am i supposed to be serving here how am i supposed to be worshiping here what if we took work from that angle what if we took work from the place where actually if this is my worship i'm going to walk into this office and it's a terrible terrible dark place but i'm going to find that one little glimmer of light light that god wants me to shine i'm here to find that colleague that is the hardest to love hardest to work with i'm going to love them i'm going to love them to the point where they feel sick because they hate me what if that was what it was about what if work wasn't actually about us what if work wasn't actually about our own satisfaction what if it wasn't about our own ambitions what if it wasn't about our own pay packet what if there was more to work than just that if we are to flourish as humans we must have a better relationship with work not we must have better work we must have a better relationship with the work that lord has called us to and that comes down to our first one which is we have to have a good relationship with him keller carries on and says if you have jesus you have everything if you don't have jesus you have nothing when you realize this you stop looking at your career as the place where you must find yourself you stop asking the job to be your savior what if our work was a place where we could work out our salvation what if our work was a place where we can love our enemies what if our work was the place where we actually go to worship and so you



come on a sabbath on your sabbath and you're ready to worship but as long as this is the first time you're worshipping you've been worshipping all week through your work relationship with him the vertical axis relationship with work the vocational axis and finally there are relationship with others and so we carry on and we've got the last bit here sorry it is warm uh we're going to talk to the building about increasing the air con it seems to be on but not really um then the lord god said in verse 18 it is god that it is not good that the man should be alone i will make a helper fit for him so this is again before the fall work is not evil work exists before the fall but there is one thing that isn't good the man would be alone 126 says let us make man in our image don't you find that interesting if you just come from a completely fresh you don't even know about christianity or you haven't been to sunday school this is interesting that from the very beginning it says god says let us make man in our image wait i always thought god was just this god zeus-like character on the throne why is he us and why is he our it's because there is the godhead it's because there is a community that we were made from relationship and we were made for relationship it is not good for man to be alone i will make a helper fit for him something else that's interesting and i joke about blaming eve because if you look at the account here there was only one person that was told about the tree adam it was his job it was his job to go and one cultivate the land and we get and also his job to then put tell everything to eve as well but adam doesn't do his job properly so we can't actually blame the guy when it comes to the sin of mankind and how we are all were doomed to death because the man didn't listen and what we see here is that actually he does work and keep it and he does something that's really interesting and actually really cute he goes and he names the animals you ra lion you pig pig isn't that cute because in chapter one god speaks life into existence god speaks creation into existence chapter two he lets man do it why don't you name the animals and of course the context here is there is authority when you give something a name and so isn't it cute honestly that's the only one i can come up with isn't it cute that man got a chance to do this isn't it cute that you get to work isn't it cute that you get to do whatever it is that you do when actually your job and your targets and your kpis they are there and they're real they're very very real but they are just secondary to the primary goal of work which is to glorify him that god gave you this that you would have dominion over your work that you would have dominion over creation that you will be able to name things but instead what happens is not only do we not have dominion over our work we get dominated by our work instead but adam here he goes around and it would have been really interesting for him because he's naming all these animals and he's like huh wait a minute these animals are all two by two it's like oh these animals are all a little bit different and then he must look at himself and go but i'm on i'm the only one of my kind i'm the only one that looks like i do and it's funny uh verse 20 says the man gave names to all livestock into the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field but for adam there was not found a helper fit for him why do we see this from the very beginning it's because we were made for community we were made from community it is not good for us to be alone so god creates a helper for just in case you think a helper is someone who is inferior someone who is weak someone who has no control no the helper here is the same word used to describe god himself later in scripture god uses that word to describe himself it is a strength that is complementary what it is what it means a strength that is complementary to adam it is a woman who will complement adam's strengths and together they will be even stronger is what it's saying here and so he creates a helper for him so the man falls asleep and so man comes from dust but woman comes from man and what we have then is the beginning of the most sacred relationship between two human beings and that is the one of marriage the sacred covenant where a man leaves his father and mother and goes to be with another person and they would become one flesh the sacred covenant is the one that we see later much later where christ has this relationship with his own church this relationship this marriage those of us who are married will tell you marriage when you think about your marriage the first thing you think of is not warm fuzzy feelings the first thing you think of is sacrifice and giving and hurt when we get in relationship with other people we will get hurt and we will also hurt we are a fallen race because of genesis chapter three because of the choices that we made but it's interesting some of those wounds that were created if we were to let light in if we were to give people the chance it is through those wounds if we let light in is what henry now and says is that's where we get the healing it's funny we get hurt by humans so we retract from humans sometimes well knowingly that actually the way we get healed is through relationships with humans we were relational communal mutual beings now there is the sanctity of the marriage here that i don't have too much time that's another whole another sermon to talk about but one thing here that is the very

end of this is that the man and his wife were both naked and unashamed uh our son micah two years old now has picked up a hobby recently and this hobby apparently does not include clothes at all so what he does uh unknowingly to us we'll be doing our own thing and suddenly he'll be like now's my chance and then he starts to take off his top and then he takes off his pants and his so i mean socks are already gone already and then and now he's discovered that he actually has the strength to take off his nappy uh and then he's discovered the genius of putting his nappy on his head uh yeah christine is mortified i find it hilarious and then he runs around the house telling each of us his great accomplishment of the day which is that he got naked and he has no shame whatsoever he loves it and he'll run and show one person and then he'll like look at me and then we kind of make a like a weird oh we're a little bit freaked okay okay that's cute and then and then we laugh and then he runs to the next person he does the same and then he's so excited he forgets that he's already come to me so he comes back to me and shows me the same thing again and on one hand i'm like oh this is so like let's i mean it's cute but it's like we've got the air conditioning on put your clothes back on um but on the other hand actually i get a little bit sad this is what humans were created to be like to be naked and unashamed and yet the moment we make that wrong decision the moment we respond to the question did god really say can you really trust god can you imagine just a two-year-old saying that and asking that question about their own parents oh can i really trust my parents do they really love me still even though they see every part of me that's essentially the lie that we bought in the next chapter and from that moment shame is introduced into mankind from that moment we are no longer naked and unashamed if you think about what that means to be naked and unashamed what it means is that we are fully known and fully loved that is the deepest cry of cry of our hearts that is what we were created for that we will be fully known by the people around us that we will be fully known by god and that we are fully loved regardless and yet one moment changes everything one moment causes humanity to not only not trust themselves but not trust god and not trust each other the relationship with him the relationship with work the relationship with others all of it is fractured and so now we are left with the low grade hum of anxiety and not the shalom that we're after i've got so much more to say next week in chapter three but for now if you're in a place where yep i'm not there i'm not flourishing these three axes of relationships i don't have things are not going well what hope do i have and i can answer you this without even knowing you very well there is only one answer because there is only one person that came who actually did flourish who actually did have this relationship with the father where he would be able to say the father and i are one they would be united together there is only one who knew exactly why he was created why he exactly why he came to the earth and he said for this purpose i was sent to share the good news of the kingdom of god there is only one who had this perfect relationship and loved people and knew people and that person is jesus and whilst we were given a blueprint to humanity that we have then failed miserably he comes to restore the blueprint he comes to show us that actually this is how you do it and how do you do it not just watch me and then try and copy me and try and imitate me and try your best to get to be like me no it's just invite me into your life and let me do it for you you will have this mind among yourselves which is yours in christ jesus let jesus come into you and then you can say i can do all things in christ who strengthens me that is how we get hope when we look at the lack of shalom around the world as we look at the lack of shalom in our own hearts in our own lives the goal then is to look back to him the one who actually shows us our new identity who breaks down every wall that stands between all of us he himself is that peace that's our hope he says i am that peace you will be whole if you are with me and that is what we hold on to we were designed for community uh dietrich bonhoeffer who himself had so much suffering in his life said this christianity means community through jesus christ and in jesus christ no christian community is more or less than this we belong to one another only through and

[53:48] in jesus christ we need each other blaze pascal calls this god-shaped vacuum that we have inside us can only be fulfilled through him and other people this is the question i'll finish with whatever you're struggling with whatever you are wrestling with what's your relationship like with him with work with others and whatever answer you have then say jesus can you come into that relationship can you come and help me i can't do this on my own i need you and only you and then we look at each other and go okay i really want to love god but i can't do it on my own can you help me can you help me practice my love on you and in doing so i actually can then be created for what i was created do what i was created for so all jokes aside i need alex lee in my life for me to love god more it's a non-negotiable i think that's why you're gathering here otherwise we don't need to

be called the gathering to be with each other and i'll finish with this final quote from martin luther king i can never be what i ought to be until you are what you ought to be and you can never be what you ought to be until i am what i ought to be this is the way our world is made no individual or nation can stand out boasting or being independent we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality we were created for this for a relationship with god with work with each other and we can only do it through christ who strengthens us let us pray lord we spend a moment now just to respond or maybe just to rest in your presence to not already forget what was taught last week that we start on this journey from rest that we pursue relationship with you knowing that you are the one who pursues us we pursue what it means to have purpose in work knowing that the work is already done we pursue others and love others in the way that you loved us we desire shalom we desire peace we desire wholeness we desire you we need you bring us back bring us back to the garden bring us back to that place where we could just walk with you freely naked and unashamed thank you lord that you see us that in you we are fully known and yet fully loved this sunday we start there hand. And from there, Lord, would you give us the confidence to go to the places you have called us, the places that are difficult, the places that we may feel like we lack meaning and purpose, whether it's in work or the different relationships you have called us to, God, there is purpose in all that you have called us to. And we just pray for Lord, your spirit to awaken us to see what that may be. So we humble ourselves, Lord, in obedience, God, to what you may call us to in this week to come, in this season to come. Would you have it all? So thank you, Jesus. We pray this in your marvelous name. Amen.