

Wk 2 | The Pattern of the Kingdom

Deuteronomy 10:12-14

12-13 So now Israel, what do you think God expects from you? Just this: Live in his presence in holy reverence, follow the road he sets out for you, love him, serve God, your God, with everything you have in you, obey the commandments and regulations of God that I'm commanding you today—live a good life.

14-18 Look around you: Everything you see is God's—the heavens above and beyond, the Earth, and everything on it. But it was your ancestors who God fell in love with; he picked their children—that's *you!*—out of all the other peoples.

(S) How do you know that you are living your life the way God expects you to?

(S) There is an Australian man by the name Hugh MacKay who has written many books over the past 20 years which report on his findings from his social research of Australians.

One of his recent books is called "The Good Life." In this book he writes,

"Australians are obsessively striving toward a Utopian fantasy, they call "The Good Life."

Let's stop for a moment. Close our eyes and think about what image fills your mind when you hear the phrase "The Good Life."

For some of you it might be relaxing on the beach, some playing a game of golf, some relaxing on the couch in a large comfortable home, with a breathtaking water view – for others it will be having time to be surrounded by nature, paint, pursue hobbies.

We really have no problem envisaging our Good Life dream.

Hugh Mackay has found, however, that our efforts to find to determine the meaning of The Good Life is has forced us in an insatiable need to find "havens of happiness" islands of perfection in a choppy sea of imperfection.

Where do we get this idea that such perfection even exists? Where did this image or picture of The Good Life, A Perfect Home, come from?

To answer this question we need to go back to discover the story of our beginning – our origin story.

Remarkably, right at the beginning of our story – or rather God’s story about us - is a picture of The Good Life. It begins with God creating “The Perfect Home.”

(S) Once again, I’d like to tell you a little story about when five-year-old Timmy asks Grandpa – one of those really hard to answer questions,

(S) “Timmy and Grandpa had just been to see the latest Superman movie. One there way to meet Grandma and Phoebe, Timmy’s sister, he says to Grandpa:

“Wasn’t the movie awesome, Grandpa!” He’s from the planet Krypton. Did you know that Grandpa?

“Indeed I did – I used to read about Superman and his adventures from comic books.”

As Timmy was gasping from the shock that Superman was that old – they met up with Phoebe and Grandma who had just been to see the latest Frozen movie.

“We’ve just laughed so much – the funny snowman, kept us in stitches.

As the four sipped their milkshakes, Timmy asked pensively,

“Grandpa, how did people come to be here on earth?”

Grandpa – wisely – took a long sip from his milkshake. Thankfully Timmy continued, “I’ve been thinking about Superman and how he wanted to know why he was different from everyone else. He found out that he was from another planet, and his parents sent him to earth to save him, because their planet was going to be destroyed.”

Before Grandpa could draw breathe Timmy continued, “And Spiderman got his powers a radioactive spider – I know where everyone of the Avengers came from.”

Then Phoebe jumped in and said, “you have to know where someone comes from, otherwise their story doesn’t make sense.”

So, what I want to know is what’s the beginning of our story?

Well, trust a child to ask challenging but important questions.

Timmy had rightly observed that within the plotline of almost every movie there is room dedicated for us to know the character’s origin story.

How did the hero become a hero? Or, why did the villain become so mean? What happened at the beginning that motivates them to continue behaving the way they do?

Origin stories are so important because they tell us WHY something is the way that it is.

They reveal who we are in the context of the world, and reveal our place, our priorities, our purpose and tell us how we are to define the anchors that guide our lives.

Origin stories are concerned with WHY things are the way they are, NOT necessarily defining HOW everything came to be in existence.

Origin stories also make us look into the future and ask how will the story continue? They compel us to ask how we – who own the story – are suppose to prepare for this future.

Well now, the Grandpa in our story is not silly – he wisely responded to Timmy’s question “I think there may be something about that in The Eternal Love Story!”

Indeed there is!

(S) Now, before we delve into reading Chapter 2 of The Eternal Love Story, I’m going to assume that most of you are already familiar with the creation story in the first two chapters of Genesis – The Beginnings book.

The more familiar with the Bible’s creation story, the more you will be able to discern the teaching that is woven through my transliterated version, I’m about to share.

That’s the beauty of story – biblical truth and doctrine are woven through – but the plot allows what’s important to slip under our mental radar, into our hearts.

So, what follows is like a transliterated version of Genesis 1-2. Of course, I can’t retell the whole story – I’ve promised to keep to my 10 minute limit – but it will highlight the main points of the story

(S) The Eternal Author leaned forward in his celestial throne, his eyes sparkled with vitality. He started to talk to all the angels who were gathered,

“Long before all of you were even a twinkling in my eye, there was a great expanse of dark nothingness.

Nothing to feel, nothing to see, nothing to hear There was nothing.

I was there, of course, my presence is everywhere. AND my heart beat with a wondrous story.

The time had finally arrived for me to create my ultimate gift.”

“Who is the gift for?” asked a confident seraph.

“The gift is for my Son, whom I love with every beat of my heart.”

The Eternal Author stood to his feet, creative vitality bubbling effervescently in all directions.

Then he spoke – The King orders and separates:

- Sky from waters
- Land from Sea
- Earth to produce Life
- Sun and Moon to shine
- Oceans to burst forth with life
- Earth to bring forth land creatures

The Eternal Author looked at everything, what joy it brought to his heart.

(S) “Now I will make my family, unique creatures just like me.”

From the earth I will mould their bodies, from my own breath I will implant my seed of life.

Their purpose is to reflect my nature, as male and female they will be blessed and empowered to manage all my hands have made.”

(S) Then the Author created a Perfect Home for his new family – a garden sanctuary. In the centre of the Garden stood the King’s majestic throne, the garden was a temple for the presence of God on the earth. Two trees grew from the throne. The Garden was on a mountain top, a high place, where there was no divide between the heavenly realms and the earthly.

One of the angels, gasped when she saw the home the King had created for his family.

“Why it is just like the Garden City in which we worship you here in the heavenlies.”

(S) Within this garden sanctuary, the King dwelt with his people. There were three types of perfect relationships: A perfect union between God and humanity, Perfect union between humanity and creation, and perfect unity between the man and the woman.

(S) The King sat with his new family on the afternoon of the sixth day and admired with them one of his greatest masterpieces – a spectacular sunset.

Then he said, “Although everything I have made in this majestic land is yours, this garden is not my greatest gift. I have saved the best for last. It is the gift of a day – the Seventh Day – it will be called the Sabbath.”

The climax of each week is the Seventh Day – a day for you to draw close to the Tree of Life and fellowship with us.

(S) And Grandpa closed the book.

(S) I’d like to just recap on some of the main points of our summarised version of Genesis 1 and 2. Notice that humanity is not the pinnacle of creation.

Genesis 1 outlines a pattern of God’s Kingdom. Creation was brought to completion on the Seventh Day. If we look closely at the pattern of how Genesis 1 was structured, we notice that there was no evening and morning on the Seventh day. Even now, creation sits in a place of God’s perpetual rest.

(S) God commands that his representatives perpetually recall God’s rest – every Seventh Day they are to STOP and come and worship him.

God’s pattern for humanity is to rest in God’s rule and blessing in God’s Word.

This adds greater meaning to today’s OT reading: “Live in his presence in holy reverence, follow the road he sets out for you, love him, serve God, your God, with everything you have in you, obey the commandments and regulations of God that I’m commanding you today — live God’s pattern of The Good Life.

Let’s return to our story and see how this lesson impacts the lives of Timmy and Phoebe, Grandpa and Grandma:

(S) As Grandpa showed Timmy his old comic collection – the Superman comics he read when he was just a boy – a wave of nostalgia swept over Grandpa’s eyes.

“It’s truly remarkable Superman still lives on I suppose there is still a world that needs to be saved.”

The next day Timmy and Phoebe went off to school. Later, Grandpa picked them up and as they drove home, they discussed what had happened at school.

“We learnt about dinosaurs,” began Timmy.

“We started a unit called the Big History Project,” interjected Phoebe.

They continued chatting.

“One thing Mrs Able did say that I’m not so sure about is that people are actually just clever animals.”

“Hmm!” exclaimed Grandpa, “People may be clever, but we are certainly not animals.”

Grandma met them as soon as they climbed out of the car. She was keen for them all to experience the most beautiful garden she had seen on her garden tour.

Everyone agreed that their neighbour’s beautifully landscaped garden was indeed a magnificent sight.

As the children walked into the kitchen, Phoebe noticed Grandma’s big book sitting on the kitchen table. She commented:

I think the story we read together last night by the Eternal Author makes the most sense.”

After all, the garden we have just seen reminds me of the garden the Eternal King created all those years ago. The King created people to be responsible for taking care of his garden. When people know the beginning of the King’s story and how he designed them to live, the world will become the beautiful garden the King created it to be.

What Phoebe said is very similar to what we read in the first verse of Psalm 119:

Joyful are people of integrity, who follow the instructions of the LORD.

BUT, we know there is another story being broadcast and rehearsed day after day, hour-by-hour in our world.

It is a different origin story from the one we’ve just heard.

When we bring to mind the importance of knowing our origin story and allowing God’s origin story to shape our lives – we recognise the significant consequence of rejecting God’s origin story.

Without God’s origin story it is easy to become confused:

Confusion arises over WHO we are as humans

– we think we are just clever animals.

Confusion revolves around WHERE we are in the world

– if we are so clever, then our needs and wants are what is most important, so there is nothing to stop us from abusing nature to get it.

Confusion arises on WHAT our purpose for existing is

– if we are so clever then we should be the ones who define what the Good Life should be.

Lastly, confusion abounds on WHAT our future will hold

– as the world becomes hotter, we think it is all just going to explode into nothingness.

(S) So, what does God's origin story define for us?

1. God is the Author and Organiser of our origin story
 - He created everything and set the pattern for everything that exists.
2. God's pattern provides the pathway for the whole Bible story.
 - It is essential we know God's origin story, otherwise we will not understand the rest of the story.
3. God's origin story paves our identity, and how we understand our place, our priority and our purpose in the world.
 - we know that our identity is dependant upon God, and we were made to live according to the pattern God has revealed.

In our NT reading today, Jesus gave a message on a mountain side to those who had decided to live in his kingdom.

What was he doing?

When he said, "Blessed are those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God," he was reminding humanity of the pattern of God's Kingdom which God designed for us to live - the qualities and characteristics of his Father's pattern of His Perfect Kingdom.

Take home truth:

1. We do well to read, meditate and learn God's pattern - because our lives are the advertising of The Good Life which the community here at Southlakes are so passionately striving to obtain.
2. If we FAIL to share how Jesus has obtained The Good Life for us – we leave our neighbours in a desperate cycle of striving after a life they can never find on their own.
3. Our lives tell the story of Jesus taking us by the hand - walking with us across the bridge giving us access to The Good Life and the promise of living in The Perfect Home forever.

4. Let us ask Jesus to show us how we may take our neighbour's hand and introduce them to Jesus – so they may cross that same bridge we have walked.

Prayer:

Thank you, Father God, for reminding us today of the beginning of our story. We all long to live The Good Life that you promised for each and every one of us. Thank you for creating an organised world, a pattern of how your perfect kingdom is designed to function. May we shape our thoughts, our speech, our relationships on the pattern that you established – living within your rule and blessing. Fill our hearts and minds with the hope of The Perfect Home – and teach us to live that way now. May our lives be living letters of testimony to our neighbours. As we pray for our community, reveal to us who is the person, we know, who is ready to be introduced to Jesus.

Amen.