

CREATION SUNDAY

Sermon notes on potential Bible passages

The passages below are read by the so-called 'liturgical Churches' on [Creation Sunday](#) following their [Lectionary Calendar](#). In your Creation Sunday service, please feel free to choose readings as they best suit your context or, if preferred, you could also read those of liturgical Churches. This list is not comprehensive, since many other passages also address the creation theme. The notes below, prepared by Rev Dr Dave Bookless (Lausanne / World Evangelical Alliance CCN), might serve as sermon starters on these passages.

Readings	Old Testament	Psalm	New Testament	Gospel
Year A (2026)	Genesis 1:1-2:3 or Genesis 2:4-25	Psalm 148:1-14	Acts 17:22a, 24-28	John 1:1-5
Year B (2027)	Proverbs 8:22-31 [32-35]	Psalm 104:1-4, 14-24	Colossians 1:15-20	Matthew 6:25-33
Year C (2028)	Job 38:1, 4-11 [12-18]	Psalm 29:3-11 or Psalm 65:5-13	Romans 8:18-25	Luke 8:22-25

OLD TESTAMENT

- **Genesis 1:1-2:3 – Theme: Creation's God-given goodness**
 - *God speaks everything into existence – it is 'ex nihilo', from nothing, except God's imagination. Traditionally, the whole Trinity is involved in creation – God creates using his Word (Christ) and God's Spirit hovers over the waters of chaos (v.2) and breathes life into all creatures (v.30).*
 - *God's repeated delight in material creation – it is 'good' ... 'all very good'*
 - *Three days of giving shape and structure followed by three days of filling with various kinds of creatures*
 - *The 'very good' in 1:31 applies to all that God has made – including humanity but also including all other creatures and aspects of creation.*
 - *Note that humans are created on the same day as all other land creatures (day six), showing we are part of creation.*
 - *Humans are also marked out as created in the 'image of God' (vs.26-28) with a calling to 'rule over' other creatures. This can be seen as a vocation or job description to reflect God's character and purposes towards the rest of creation. It is not permission to dominate or exploit selfishly but rather responsibility to 'rule' as God does – the shepherd King caring for his sheep.*
- **Genesis 2:4-25 – Theme: What it means to be human in God's world**
 - *The Genesis 2 account is complementary to Genesis 1. It focuses particularly on the nature and role of human beings within Eden.*
 - *We are part of creation (v.7) "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." The 'dust of the*

ground' is 'adamah' in Hebrew and the name of the first human, 'Adam', emphasises that we are part of creation, not separate from it.

- Like Genesis 1, Genesis 2 emphasises the beauty and goodness of creation. We learn that Eden contained a great variety of "trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food". Both their aesthetic / cultural importance and their practical usefulness are emphasised. Yet, it's clear that this is God's garden – not ours (cf Psalm 24:1) and we are God's guests within it.
- There are strong links between the imagery of Genesis 2 and Revelation 22 – creation and new creation. Both have rivers and fruit-bearing trees and are harmonious expressions of intimate fellowship between God and all creation. The prohibition on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a hint that, between Eden and the new Jerusalem, there is trouble and disharmony ahead if humans fail to heed God's words. Even within a good world there are risks and dangers, and there will be consequences for going astray.
- The task of the first human is to "work and take care of" the garden (v.15). Our deep connection with the land, with plants and trees, with agriculture and gardening are integral to being human. In urban contexts, we need to ensure that people have access to nature for their mental and physical wellbeing.
- The words translated as 'work' and 'take care' (*abad* and *shamar*) show two sides of our human vocation. 'Work' includes growing crops, harvesting water and wood and helping the land produce what we and other species need. 'Take care' is about how we go about our interactions with the natural world. We are to be caretakers and guardians, not exploiters and destroyers. We are to work with the rhythms and patterns of nature, rather than focusing narrowly on productivity for profit. We are to 'take care' of the whole 'garden' of creation including fellow creatures that also depend on the natural world, as well as the plants and the soil itself. This raises big questions about industrial large-scale agriculture where the relationship between humanity and the land is broken and natural processes are ignored in favour of short-term productivity at the expense of biodiversity and soil health.

● Proverbs 8:22-35 – Theme: God's wisdom in and through creation

- In Proverbs 8, Wisdom is personified as female (vs.1-3) and as God's agent of and partner in creation. Theologians differ as to whether we should interpret 'Lady Wisdom' as either:
 - a literary trope – a poetic way of personifying and illustrating God's wisdom expressed in and through the natural world. Part of the reasoning for this interpretation is that Wisdom is described as the first of God's works (v.22) whom God gave birth to (vs.24-25), whereas all three persons of the Trinity are eternal.
 - the pre-incarnate Christ – described here as God's Wisdom and in John 1:1-3 as God's Word – in both cases as God's agent of creation.
 - The Holy Spirit, present at creation's start and still at work in and through creation. Perhaps it's significant that the Hebrew '*ruach*' or Spirit of God is a feminine noun.
- Whichever interpretation of 'Wisdom' we choose, the significant teaching point is that the created world displays God's Wisdom. There is an ancient Christian tradition of 'God's Two Books' – nature and scripture and how God communicates with us through both (see also Psalm 19, Romans 1:20). Jesus tells us to consider (not just look at but meditate on and learn from) birds and flowers (Matthew 6).
- Preaching on this passage could involve using some familiar examples from nature that teach us about God's wisdom. What can we learn about God and ourselves from, for example, trees, rain, birds and the interaction between species?
- God's delight and joy in creation is powerfully expressed in vs.30-31: "Then I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole

world and delighting in the human race.” Here, Wisdom and, by implication, God is shown as almost playfully revelling in the physical world of mountains and rivers, soil and seas, birds and animals ... and humans. The question for us as adults is, do we still have that childlike joy and delight in nature? The Psalms repeatedly express how joyfully creation worships God. What can we learn from that?

- **Job 38:1, 4-18 – Theme: Putting us in our place**

- *The book of Job is largely about theodicy: the problem of why a good God allows bad things to happen to those who follow Him. Job, having lost everything, is not helped by all the conventional answers and comforts. Then, in chapters 38-41, God takes him on safari – showing him the scale, complexity and wonder of the natural world – landscapes, ecosystems and creatures that are far beyond Job’s understanding. By encountering God in and through creation Job finds resolution to his questions and doubts. God is so much bigger, more mysterious and more complex than Job had thought, and yet he still cares for Job. Job is truly cut down to size and put in his place as one of God’s creatures, realising that God’s work and purposes will always be beyond his understanding.*
- *Verses 4-7 begin with ‘Where?’, ‘Who?’, ‘What?’ questions. God is the cosmic architect, designer and builder of the whole earth.*
- *Note God’s joy and delight in creation v.7 – similar to Proverbs 8:30-31*
- *Verses 8-11 show God as in control of seas and rain. The sea was a symbol of chaos beyond human control, but God has set its boundaries.*
- *Verses 12-15 portray the God of light and darkness using poetic language to describe the dawn and how light makes earth’s features stand out. Yet God is also in charge of darkness, denying light to the wicked.*
- *Verses 16-18 summarise God’s knowledge and control of places far beyond human knowledge or experience: “the recesses of the deep”, “the gates of death”, “the vast expanses of the earth”.*
- *Our response to God’s glory in creation is to repent of human hubris - our arrogance in thinking we have the answers or even understand the natural world - and to worship and trust God.*
- *Today, where we have learned much more about the science of how the universe and our own planet work, we still need humility, realising that, the more we learn, the more we realise we still don’t understand.*

PSALMS

- **Psalm 148:1-14 – Theme: Creation praises God. So should we!**

- *Many Psalms begin with creation worshipping God, as an example and inspiration to us to join in.*
- *In vs.1-6 the whole universe praises God, including angelic beings, celestial bodies (sun, moon and stars) and the ‘heavens’. In ancient Jewish cosmology, the heavens or skies were an inverted disk or bowl through which God sent the rains. All of creation is invited to praise God.*
- *As those with a ‘modern’ view of the universe we may find it strange that inanimate objects such as the sun, moon and stars (and elsewhere mountains, trees, rivers) worship God. However, to worship God is simply to fulfil the function God gave in creating each object or creature. Trees worship by growing, producing fruit and shelter. The sun worships by shining each day.*
- *Our task as humans is to enable and facilitate the worship of all God’s creation. When we pollute and destroy, we silence some of the voices in creation’s orchestra of praise.*

- Verse 6 says that God established the universe ‘for ever and ever’ and His decree will ‘never pass away’. This challenges theologies that speak about creation as temporary and see our eternal destiny as purely spiritual.
 - Verses 7-12 Moves from the cosmic to planet earth, listing how habitats and creatures of every type worship God, including marine ecosystems (v.7), the weather and climate (v.8), mountains and trees (v.9), animals and birds (v.10, and human beings of all ages, gender and ranks (vs.11-12).
 - In verses 13-14, the Psalm concludes with how God’s splendour is greater than all the aspects of creation and yet how God also focuses his love on “the people close to his heart”. We can be comforted by this, but also challenged to grasp God as both personal and caring for us individually and also as the God of all creation – vast, mysterious and powerful.
- **Psalm 104:1-4, 14-24 – Theme: What a wildly, wonderful world God has made!**
 - In ‘The Message’, Psalm 104:24 is paraphrased as “What a wildly, wonderful world, God! You made it all, with Wisdom at your side, made earth overflow with your wonderful creations.” This summarises the message of this Psalm. God’s world is diverse, awe-inspiring and abundant. We should be inspired to enjoy it, study it and protect it.
 - Psalm 104 is sometimes called ‘the biodiversity Psalm’ due to the sheer variety of creatures described.
 - Verses 1-4 portray God’s majesty and royal power. The imagery is that of a powerful and good ruler, totally in control of creation, and to whom the whole created order gives respect and worship. This is God’s world, not ours!
 - Verses 14-18 describe how God provides ‘natural resources’ for each of his creatures. Again, it is clear the world is not just for humanity. God does provide for us, including plants, wine, oil and bread (vs.14-15) but He also provides grass for cattle, water for trees, homes for birds, mountain tops for wild goats and hyrax. Whereas some passages, such as Genesis 1:26-28 and Psalm 8, portray humanity as given responsible power within creation, here it is clear that God is the steward, caretaker, provider and ruler – both for humans and all other creatures.
 - Verses 19-23 describe how night and day belong to different creatures. ‘The beasts of the forest prowl’ and lions hunt at night but after sunrise humans can go out to farm and work until evening. There is a place for all God’s creatures, human and nonhuman. The challenge to us today, in a world so dominated by our human footprint, is to allow God’s other creatures the space to fulfil their God-given destinies.
- **Psalm 29:3-11 – Theme: God’s glory in creation**
 - God is King! This is a royal Psalm but the attention is not on King David or human power but on God’s majesty, power and glory displayed in creation.
 - God’s power includes aspects that we may experience as terrifying or even destructive – breaking large trees (v.5), shaking the land (v.6, 8), and speaking with flashes of lightning. Sometimes our picture of God is too small and domesticated. Here we see that God is far bigger – and perhaps more mysterious – than we have imagined.
 - Many people seek to experience nature’s majesty and power even when danger is involved, whether through chasing tornadoes, climbing mountains or sailing rough seas. Could this, in some way, be part of a search for the God whose majesty and power are displayed in creation?
 - Yet, God’s purpose is ultimately good. His Kingship is unchallenged, but it is also benevolent. He gives strength to His people and blesses them with peace.

- **Psalm 65:5-13 – Theme: God is the hope of the ends of the earth**

- *This Psalm is often used at Harvest time, so if you're in the Northern hemisphere and harvest is in September, it fits well.*
- *Verse 5 speaks of "God our Saviour, the hope of all the ends of the earth." Today, there is a crisis of hope due to the climate and nature crises. Climate anxiety and future despair are real and growing. Although this Psalm portrays a world of abundance, provision and blessing, life in ancient Israel was often harsh, brief and surrounded by threats from powerful neighbours. What gave the Psalmist hope in such a context? In the end, it was the nature and character of God as revealed in creation (vs.6-7). If God is committed to creation, we can have hope and find the motivation to work for a better world.*
- *Verse 8 is a beautiful stand-out sentence. It could be displayed on a screen and people invited to speak out the 'wonders' in creation that bring them joy and point them to God's glory: "The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy."*
- *Verses 9-13 portray an idyllic pastoral and agricultural scene. This is how God created the world to be, when he made it 'very good' (Genesis 1:31). Sadly, it's not the reality many people experience today. So, alongside thanksgiving for God's goodness in creation, we need lament and repentance at how we have destroyed, corrupted and polluted the fruitfulness of the earth. Yet, the Psalm also gives us a vision of how things could be in a world of 'shalom' – restored relationships with God, neighbour, self and creation.*

GOSPEL

- **John 1:1-5 – Theme: Jesus and creation**

- *John's Gospel consciously echoes the Genesis 1 creation account in starting with 'In the beginning'. However, the focus is on Jesus as God's creative Word.*
- *It's worth reflecting on the astonishing claim that the Word, Jesus, was "with God, and the Word was God". These words were written within the lifetime of people who knew the earthly Jesus, yet here He is described as eternal and co-creator of all that exists.*
- *We live in a Jesus-shaped universe! All things were made 'through Him' and thus His fingerprints are scattered throughout the whole created order. You could ask people to reflect on aspects of Jesus' character and power that they see in parts of creation.*
- *"In him was life" (v.4). The immediate context is that of Jesus being light to all humanity, but it's worth pausing to reflect on how diverse and extraordinary the variety of life on earth is. In a sense all this was 'in' Jesus. As creator, He gave form and substance to all forms of life.*
- *Today, with increasing ecological dysfunction and chaos, we can find hope in the assurance that the light of Christ continues to shine in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it (v.5).*

- **Matthew 6:25-33 – Theme: Learn not to worry from nature!**

- *Much of Jesus' teaching, particularly his parables, is drawn from the natural world. He continues the Old Testament Wisdom tradition of teaching about God through close observation of nature (like King Solomon in 1 Kings 4:33).*
- *Nature therapy: today there's increasing evidence of the mental health benefits of time in nature and, conversely, of the damaging impacts of nature deprivation. Jesus' teaching about worry – feeling overwhelmed by the pressures of daily life – predates this by 2000 years. He encourages us to look at birds and flowers.*

- o *The words for 'look at' and 'see how' in verses 26-28 are not about casually glancing at birds and flowers. They encourage earnest, sustained study. Martin Luther translated v.26 as 'Let the birds be your schoolmasters'. So, there is encouragement here for scientific study and observation, but also for contemplative meditation on the lives of wild birds and wildflowers. Challenge people about how many local wildflowers and bird species they can identify and name. Perhaps we could all do with some more nature therapy.*
- o *Verse 33 – "Seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well" is about getting our priorities right. Worrying about clothes, money, personal appearance get us nowhere. Focussing on God's Kingdom – which, earlier in Matthew 6 is described as "on earth as in heaven" – is far more productive. Perhaps the birds and the flowers can teach us about Kingdom living? After all, they live in the moment, trusting God for each day and not worrying about tomorrow.*
- **Luke 8:22-25 – Theme: Jesus calms the storm**
 - o *The calming of the storm is all three synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke.*
 - o *Jesus demonstrates his power over the forces of nature. The sea and its storms symbolised the forces of chaos outside human control, but Jesus has quiet authority over them.*
 - o *The disciples ask, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." The implied answer is that only God the creator can control the wind and waves. The man Jesus is also the almighty Creator (see John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-16).*
 - o *Today, in an era of climate chaos, we need to turn to Christ. To put it in simplistic terms: the one who made it is the only one who can fix it. However, today's storms are not simply natural but caused by sinful selfish human behaviour. We need to come to Christ with humility and repentance.*
 - o *Turning to Christ in our current ecological storm does not mean our role is to fall asleep or lie back in the boat and do nothing! Another boat story, that of Noah, is important at this point. God's saving plans at the time of the flood included human response and action. Noah had to listen and obey and then build the ark, despite opposition. God provides the inspiration and means, but calls human beings to act today, just as in the time of Noah.*

NEW TESTAMENT

- **Acts 17:22a, 24-28**
 - o *Paul's speech in Athens is remarkable because, rather than quoting Old Testament scriptures as he usually does, he quotes pagan Greek poetry. His audience is Gentile and intellectual, so he chooses suitable material to connect with them and teach about God as creator and saviour,*
 - o *God is Creator of everything: he "made the world and everything in it" (v.24). This is very similar to Psalm 24:1 which reminds us that God not only made everything. The whole earth also belongs to God.*
 - o *God is generous: he gives life and breath to everybody and all creatures.*
 - o *God is active in the created world. He does not need Temples / Churches or religious acts. The Old Testament speaks of creation itself as God's Temple (Isaiah 66:1-2 and implied in Genesis 1-2). Is that an encouragement to worshipping outdoors?*
 - o *God is revealed in and through creation: "God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us" (v.27). Just as Paul suggests in Romans 1:20, creation is God's first evangelist – pointing to God's glory, character and power. That also means destroying the environment reduces God's witness through creation.*

- **Colossians 1:15-20**

- *Jesus is the Source of Creation: v.16 "In him all things were created."*
- *Jesus makes Sense of Creation: v.16 "all things have been created through him and for him."*
- *Jesus is the Sustainer of Creation: v.17 "in him all things hold together."*
- *Jesus is the Saviour of Creation: vv.19-20 "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."*

- **Romans 8:18-25**

- *Creation is groaning (v.22): give examples of how human behaviour is making that worse.*
- *Creation's groaning is linked to our groaning as we pray (v.23) and the Spirit's groaning through us (v.26)*
- *Creation is waiting for the Church! v.19 "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed." The original command in Genesis to reflect God's image in caring for his creation has been distorted through sin and the fall, but now God's children are invited to take up that call again.*
- *Creation will be set free through Christ: v.21 "The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God."*