

Created, Commanded, Provided, Genesis 2:4-25

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Introduction

Good morning, my name is Brad and I'm one of the pastors here. I heard through the grapevine that last week my sermon clocked in at a solid hour and fifteen minutes—new world record! I've also had several people tell me it didn't feel like an hour and fifteen minutes at all. So, based on their encouraged, from now on my sermons are gonna be about an hour and a half....kidding! I'll keep them at an hour and fifteen, promise.

Today we're continuing on in the story of Genesis in our sermon series subtitled, "Creating Culture". Through Genesis, not only is God creating culture for the entire world, but he's also creating culture still today, here at Antioch Church. That's part of why Antioch artists fashioned these beautiful new sermon guides (which there are more at the table in front of the sound booth). They're not just for your notes, they're for your soul. They're a subtle way to help you encounter God not only with your head or your hands, but with your heart as whole person, a soulful person.

With that said, please open your Bibles with me to Genesis 2:4-25, which you can find on page 2 if you're using one of the Bibles in the chairs. Since last week's sermon had God primarily in view, we rolled with the title, "Creator, Lord, Savior". This week, since the sermon has humanity primarily in view, I'm going with the parallel title, "Created, Commanded, Provided". Although there are so many themes present in today's passage, if you boil them all down to an overarching main idea, I think it's this: Everything that God requires, he provides. Here's how that will break down:

- 1) Humanity is created for life with God - vv. 4-9a
- 2) Humanity is commanded to live under the rule of God - vv. 9b-17
- 3) Humanity is provided with everything needed for both - vv. 18-25

Since today's passage is so long, and we'll be walking through it one verse at a time, I'm not going to ask you to stand. Instead, I'm going to ask you to posture your heart to receive the preaching of God's word, even if it goes a bit longer than usual. And yet still we offer this blessing:

May the Word preached here today echo in our hearts and among the nations. And all God's people said, *Amen*.

Exposition

Anyone excited about season three of *Stranger Things* coming out on the fourth of July? Get ready! There are so many captivating things about how this show has been made, but one of the unsung reasons for its success I think is its soundtrack. Not just the creepy theme song, but a song from the 70s or 80s that attaches itself to a particular season of the show. Anyone know what that song is for season three? It's a song by The Who titled "Baba O'Riley," more widely known as "Teenage Wasteland". The song was originally written about "the absolute desolation of teenagers at Woodstock, where audience members were strung out on acid and 20 people had brain damage."¹ Youth in the room could probably speak to this well, but when you've got all the raw, concentrated desire of teenage life inside you, and healthy expressions of that desire are oppressed, it feels like a wasteland—like you might as well get strung out on something to release it.

Or to put it another way, when you have a deep sense that something is required of you, and you know you can't live up to it, it feels like a wasteland. You're treated as though you're only a head and hands—only cognition and volition. Your head is being told "This is what you're supposed to do," and your hands are being told "Now go do it". But what is left unaddressed is the heart, the soul, the source of all that raw, concentrated desire.² What a waste!

The connection to Genesis isn't just that God is revealed in chapter 1 as the Creator who takes a chaotic, watery wasteland and turns it into a beautiful, orderly promised land. The connection is chapter 2, where God takes a man and a woman full of good, raw, concentrated desire and he requires something of them in order to be in a soulful relationship with him. But what keeps this from becoming a wasteland, at least here in chapter 2, however, is that everything God requires of the man and woman, he provides.

¹ Wikipedia, "Baba O'Riley," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baba_O%27Riley

² James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), Kindle Edition; Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 57

If Genesis 1 was written to show God's Old Testament people who they belonged to, then Genesis 2 was written to show them who they were *responsible* to.³ Remember what we learned last week, Genesis wasn't written primarily to be a biological book, but a theological book. If we forget that, then another place people get hung up on is chapter 2 as a whole—is it a second of creation? If so, why? And why does it seem to contradict the order and emphases of creation in chapter 1?⁴ So we have to remember, as a theological book, the author isn't concerned so much with the fine scientific order of things, but with what statement he is making about God and humanity.

Thus, chapter 2 isn't a second account of creation, but more of a rehearsal of creation. Let me put it this way, it's like chapter 1 places us in the stands like spectators to watch God create, while chapter 2 brings us out of the stands and down onto the stage to see from the actors' eyes.⁵ Chapter 1 began with God and showed how everything in heaven and earth pivoted on him. Chapter 2 now begins with humanity and shows how everything pivots on them, which makes sense in light of humanity being created in his image to rule the earth as his little princes and princesses. And in emphasizing humanity's responsibility to God, and their God-given capacity to fulfill their responsibility, it's the perfect setup to clearly show who's actually responsible for messing it all up in chapter 3.⁶

1) Humanity is Created For Life with God - vv. 4-9a

This brings us to our first point in the passage: that humanity is created for life with God. Read with me beginning in verse 4:

⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. [Let me pause here long enough to say, just like the opening lines of chapter 1 served as a title for the rest of that chapter, these words are a title for the next three chapters, which record what happened to God's creation through the first generations of humanity.⁷]

³ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), Kindle Edition, Loc 1296-1299

⁴ Kass, 55

⁵ Kass, 56

⁶ Ross, Loc 1291-1295; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1967), 63

⁷ Ross, Loc 1314-1315, 1329; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 128

⁵ When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— Genesis 2:4-6

One of the first things that stands out here is the fascinating similarity to the beginning of chapter 1. There's a clear sense in this description that the things that are already present aren't being fruitful and multiplying. Life and fertility hasn't really kicked off yet—they seem to be waiting. You could even use the language from chapter 1, that this desert-y space is “without form and void,” and that “God was hovering over” this misty earth with eagerness to bring it to life. Although not evil, it was less-than-good; a waste of God's time unless he did something further. What's the problem? The hold-up it seems is that “there was no man to work the ground”. The key to the flourishing of God's world, then, is the flourishing of God's image-bearers.⁸

And the key to the flourishing of God's image-bearers, then, is life with God—or we might say in this instance, life *from* God (in verse 7):

⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. Genesis 2:7

Notice how deeply personal, intimate, relational this is. First of all, God isn't just referred to as Elohim like in chapter 1, with the emphasis on his sovereignty and power. No, here he is referred to Yahweh Elohim, with the emphasis on his personal and relational nature.⁹

Second, this relational God personally forms, or shapes, the man out of dust, like a potter.¹⁰ Our church actually has a potter in our midst, Rebekah Flint, who made our communion chalices. Yesterday I asked her what she's learned about God from being a potter, and she said this: “I oddly remember most pieces of pottery I've made; when I see a picture of a pot I made ten years ago, I can usually remember making it, even if it is one out of 100 similar items made. They are all still so familiar. That gives me the tiniest picture of the immense love and interest God has for each of his creations.” Wow.

The third observation of verse 7 is perhaps the most relational: the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. As one scholar says, it's “the face-to-face intimacy of a

⁸ Ross, Loc 1344-1350

⁹ Ross, Loc 1353-1355

¹⁰ Ross, Loc 1356-1362; Wenham, 135

kiss[,] and the significance [is] that this was an act of giving as well as making; and self-giving at that...[so] Even at our making, then, [we see this familiar] pattern[: For] ‘God so loved [the world] that he gave...”¹¹ What does he give? Himself—he gave us life with God.

The result is that the man became a living creature. He’s not just head, and he’s not just hands. But when you combine them, the breath of heaven with the dust of earth, what you get is a heart, a soul; a creature with everything he needs to have an intimate relationship with God.¹²

What did that life with God look like? Verse 8 begins to define it:

⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Genesis 2:8-9a

We might as well admit it, this is another one of those places in Genesis where we can easily get distracted: the infamous garden of Eden enters the scene. Was it a real place or mythical? If it was real, then where was it actually located? And so we must return to the purpose of the author. He’s writing to teach God’s Old Testament people how they became a people, and what they’re beginning means for how they should live life with their Creator God. So the point here isn’t to pindrop Eden onto Google Maps, but to show that life with God is the good life, the *abundant* life.¹³ As its name infers, life with God is paradise. Combine it with the phrase “in the east” and you’ve got a fertile, well-watered oasis full of the pure light of the revelation of God.¹⁴

But not only is this paradise because the man can feast on the knowledge of God. The Lord also causes beauty and fertility to explode around him so he can literally feast to his belly’s content. So life with God isn’t just an endless worship service; nor is it just a bottomless buffet. It’s both heavenly and earth-y; once again, it’s both head and hands, tethered by the heart. It’s living very normal, everyday life in the very abnormal, eternal presence of God. This joy is what we were made for. This is life with God.

¹¹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1967), 65

¹² Ross, Loc 1366-1372; Wenham, 135-136

¹³ John 10:10

¹⁴ Wenham, 138

2) Humanity is Commanded to Live Under the Rule of God - vv. 9b-17

And yet humanity isn't just created for life with God. Humanity, and this is our second point this morning, is commanded to live under the rule of God. Some people think of Eden as this eternal, innocent childhood where your only worry in the world is what toy to play with. No—the responsibility of childhood has two parts: to play and to *obey*.¹⁵ And so it was in Eden. We read in second half of verse 9:

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:9b

And here enters the scene the mysterious objects by which God makes the man both free to choose and responsible for his choice: two special trees, it seems—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life, according to the next chapter, appears to have fruit that can keep the man's body alive forever. Does that mean the man wasn't created immortal? It doesn't necessarily tell us here. But what *is* clear is that God intended for man not just to have life with him, but life with him forever—and he provided the means for it to be possible.¹⁶

This forever life, however, would depend on the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What exactly is this dangerous knowledge? Well, typically knowing between good and evil is referred to in the Bible as wisdom. It's a good thing, so far as it leads us to dependence on God; as reflected in the wisdom literature called Proverbs:

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7

But the tree here clearly doesn't offer the kind of wisdom or knowledge that leads to God. To grab hold of the fruit of this tree is to let go of the man's childhood innocence, to choose life on his own apart from God, to despise wisdom. And though it will become clearer in just a few verses, for now all we have to go on is the nature of a tree. Think about it: tall, strong, and freestanding, an ecosystem in itself. A tree has all appearances of independence (even though it's not independent). And that's the

¹⁵ Kass, 61

¹⁶ Ross, Loc 1375-1380; Kidner, 69-70

principle being introduced here: because this tree is here, the man is then *free* to obey or disobey God, dependent on or independent of God.¹⁷
In addition to these trees, we read in verse 10 that

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. Genesis 2:10-14

So is this meant to be the dramatic moment in the story where the camera is attached to a drone so it can give us this breathtaking view of the world? It kinda has that effect, doesn't it? Especially if you've ever seen the modern expression of any of these massive, ancient rivers in real life. I remember the moment I first arrived at the Nile River in Egypt and I literally could not comprehend what I was seeing—and what I was feeling. And yet here are *four of them*, pictured as all flowing to bless the world from the same incomprehensible spring: Eden.

Were we to be reading Genesis primarily as biology, things might get a little tricky here, since the world as we know it today doesn't exactly fit this description. But we are reading it with an eye toward theology and the purpose of the writer. So imagine the impact of God's Old Testament people, living in the dry, desert-like spaces of Mesopotamia, meditating on the reality that where God dwells with his people, where life with God happens, there is an oasis of never-ending rivers flowing from there to the ends of the earth. That wouldn't have just translated, 'Get close to God and you'll have a killer garden this year,' but more like the psalmist who said, "those who are far from you shall perish...But for me it is good to be near God".¹⁸

Because to be near him, or dependent on him, is to be adorned by him with priceless beauty. That's why you see the mention of gold and onyx stone and another precious substance I can't pronounce. God wanted to cover his world with his people, and his people with his beauty. A prophet named Ezekiel would later use mythological language to describe it:

*Thus says the Lord God:
"You were the signet of perfection,*

¹⁷ Kass, 63-65; Wenham, 139-141

¹⁸ Psalm 73:27-28; Wenham, 141-142; Ross, Loc 1380-1385

*full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
sardius, topaz, and diamond,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle;
and crafted in gold were your settings
and your engravings.
On the day that you were created
they were prepared. Ezekiel 28:12-13¹⁹*

And so, provisioned and adorned with presence of God,

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. [Let me pause here just long enough to note that, before the world ever fell apart, God's good intent for human dignity was work; and that work, as described here, to be seen as soulful, delightful, earthy service to God. And that is why we want to continue emphasizing the importance of all vocation as sacred and purposeful to the mission of God.²⁰ To continue.] *16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* Genesis 2:15-17

The man can't just play, he must obey. And this was clear in Genesis 1, right? Although we may not have noticed it as clearly. There, God commanded from the positive: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it".²¹ Here, he commanded from the negative: "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat".²² The result was the same: now this guy is responsible.

And it's not God's way to hold humanity back, or to hold out on something good. No, it's the opposite. In keeping his dirty paws off the tree of knowledge, here's what he gains: the freedom to choose God out of love and childlike need.²³ What's on the table here is the deepest part of humanity, the part which God aims for in order to capture the rest: not just the head to believe the right thing, and not just the hands to do the right thing, but the heart to *desire* the right thing. As the Proverbs says ironically,

¹⁹ Wenham, 142

²⁰ Ross, Loc 1388-1391; Wenham, 144; Kass, 58

²¹ Genesis 1:28

²² Kass, 55

²³ Ross, Loc 1398-1402; Kidner, 66

a desire fulfilled is a tree of life. Proverbs 13:12

Will the man desire to be tall, freestanding, and independent as he gropes for the tree of knowledge? Or will he desire to live under the rule of God? Here is the most confronting question of humanity, both back then and right now.

3) Humanity is Provided with Everything Needed For Both - vv. 18-25

This brings us to the third point from the text: not only is humanity created for life with God, and commanded to live under the rule of God, we are also provided with everything needed for both. We read in verse 18:

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. Genesis 2:18-20

Ok, so not only have we encountered something that is just *not good*, it’s also downright sad. Tell me you don’t get a glimpse into the loneliness of an orphan or widow and feel some compassion. Here, despite the endless resources that God has provided the man with, what’s their worth if he’s still alone. “It is not good to be alone,” says this relational God. It’s not evil—it’s not as though if you’re alone *you’re* not good. It’s that being alone is less than the good God intends. This is similar to how we can look at the watery chaos from which God creates in chapter 1 and say, you know, even though evil and sin hasn’t entered this scene, this state is not good. Just like life is found in order in chapter 1, in chapter 2 life is found in community.²⁴

And God is very specific in what community the man needs most. He needs a “*helper* fit for him”. Although this term may sound demeaning to modern ears, it’s actually most commonly a term God uses in the rest of the Bible to describe himself. It basically describes a perfect complement, different and equal; someone who provides what is lacking in the man, and vice-versa.²⁵

²⁴ Ross, Loc 1410-1414

²⁵ Ross, Loc 1414-1424

And yet it seems like God, as the patient teacher he is, allows the man to come to this realization himself. He does so by having the man inspect and name every living creature. And just like we saw last week in God's naming of the parts of creation to show his (capital L) Lordship over it, this week we see the man naming the animals to show his (lower case l) lordship over them. But guess what—cue the U2 song: "I still haven't found what I'm lookin' for". Among the endless animals, ain't a helper there. So, if nothing else that means sexual companionship as God intends isn't found between man and beast—which might sound silly, but would be important for God's agricultural people to know as they too seek companionship in a world that was exploring bestiality.

²⁶

Ok, so Adam has struck out—where's this helper gonna come from? Here's what happens next, in verse 21:

²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Genesis 2:21-22

Ok, what's going on here? A woman made out of a rib? This sounds about as crazy as pagan stories surrounding the people of Israel. Shall we talk biology or theology? How about both, with a little poetry thrown in too?

If you grew up hearing this story, then you've probably never thought abstractly about the rib. So let me help you for moment: why a rib? Kinda random, huh? Why not crack open his chest, pull out his heart, and split it in two? After that image, a rib definitely seems boring. Well, the best answer I have found comes from the old Bible commentator, Matthew Henry. He writes this:

Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved. Matthew Henry²⁷

I don't know how to say it better than that!

What it reminds me of is the moment I saw Katie for the first time on our wedding day. We did one of those first-looks where my best man brought Katie up behind me and I

²⁶ Kass, 77

²⁷ Matthew Henry, Volume 1: Genesis to Deuteronomy, Commentary on the Whole Bible (McLean, VA: MacDonald: 1985) via Wenham, 146-147

turned around and—of course—the photographers are capturing it all. There was nothing like it, to see the bride God has graciously prepared for me there in all her beauty. My heart fell out and my mouth dropped open, and then I just hugged her and cried.

That has to be something of the grace of this moment in Genesis. I say that because the man responded with the first words he is recorded as saying—and it's poetry.

²³ Then the man said,

*“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”*

At first sight it smacks a little bit of caveman poetry. But the depth of what he's expressing is profound. It's like, as she stands before him, he also sees himself for the first time. And what comes forth isn't just a name for this perfect companion, but also for himself. It's like the relational God has helped his creatures awaken to their relational selves.²⁸

So the author interprets the scene for us:

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Thus God established his ideal for marriage—obviously a companionship between one man and one woman, but even more than that: a relationship so deeply bound together that the two individuals are actually made one. This is sealing them into one kinship that nothing is to separate. And in so doing it makes clear what *isn't* God's good intent for his creation: homosexual marriage, incestual marriage, polygamous marriage, polygynous marriage, husbands domineering wives, wives domineering husbands, divorce, adultery, premarital sex, spouses withholding sex from one another, spouses more devoted to their parents than the marriage, spouses more devoted to children than their marriage, to name a few.

And this may just seem like I'm getting in Baptist preacher mode, but think about the importance of this to God's Old Testament people. Their survival and health as a people depended on healthy marriages, which are the communal building blocks of a society.

²⁸ Kass, 78

But they were surrounded by the chaotic mess of pagan relationships that shouted, 'There's an easier, more natural, more fun way of getting what you need—come try it!' They needed an unforgettable vision of what could be, paired with the conviction that it must be.

And so here it is. And yes, it meant making babies, and the practice that goes with it. In fact, sex is probably the most soulful way in the context of marriage to obey the Great Mandate, a meeting of heaven and earth. But even more than that, this gift of companionship facilitated the humbling reality to the man and the women that neither of them were self-sufficient. It reinforced to them at the point of deepest desire that they were needy and dependent, a reality without which would lead them straight to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What is God doing here? He's providing them with exactly what they needed for life with God under the rule of God.²⁹ Therefore,

the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:4-25

They were created, they were commanded, and they were provided for in every way. Free to choose and responsible for their choice.

Conclusion

And with the conclusion of expositing that passage, we stand ominously on the edge of a dark pit of death: it's Genesis 3. Although I have tried to show Genesis 3 is given too much power without being tied to Genesis 1 and 2, it's also true that Genesis 1 and 2 only make sense in our world if they are tied to Genesis 3. Without ruining the story, or preaching next week's sermon, we at least need to acknowledge that the perfect beauty and order of Genesis 1 and 2 doesn't last very long. Although we were created for life with God, commanded to live under the rule of God, and provided with everything needed for both...we don't! The Bible tells us that every one of us has turned to our own way.³⁰ Just like the first man and woman did in the next few verses, we have chosen life without God, outside the rule of God. *Their* blood runs in *our* veins.

This is what we call *sin*. The heart of sin is actually the heart of humanity, the soul; it's desire gone wrong because it's gone away from its Creator; it's the crown of a well-ordered creation that has returned to chaotic wasteland. Listen to how God describes sin in his Old Testament people:

²⁹ Kass, 73; Wenham, 148-150; Ross, Loc 1424-1438

³⁰ Isaiah 53:6

“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart...”⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:1, 9

And he continues to describe sin and its effects, listen to how much it sound like a wasteland:

⁵ Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. ⁶ He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. Jeremiah 17:5-6

And so we as humanity just carry on with deceived hearts, totally convincing ourselves we’re good people because we do more good than bad, or that we’re not as bad as the next guy. But Genesis 2 teaches us that the standard isn’t being better than the next guy. Our responsibility is delighted submission to the rule of God. That’s what we were made for! And God *still* requires this of us.

And this is why we don’t naturally flock to hear the message of the Bible—we have all this raw, concentrated desire that compels us to live under our *own* rule. Then the Bible comes along and tells us we’re actually *required* to live under God’s rule. Who wants to religiously sign up for coming and being told they’re a failure and disappointment each week? What king is gonna roll in here and gladly be told he’s a fraud! What a waste! To give in to the reality that something is required of us, and yet we can’t live up to it—might as well get strung out on something to distract ourselves from it all.

But here’s the good news in this wasteland: everything that God still requires, *he still supplies*. He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.³¹ He knows we can no longer fulfill our responsibility. But rather than just waving off the responsibility, he has made a way for us to live up to it. How? By sending—not a man of dust—but a man of heaven to save us. Jesus Christ, *the Creator himself*, he comes, not just to get dust on his feet, but to be made of dust too. And what he does, is he shows us life with God under the rule of God; he lives up to all that God requires. And in his dying and rising, he offers to exchange your dust for his heaven. For the person who trusts in him and makes Jesus his strength, whose hearts turns to the Lord, he will breath into them the breath of life that has gone out.

³¹ Psalm 103:14

What do you think is happening in this exchange between the last breath taken on the cross and the first breath taken from the grave? One musician writes,

*He breathes in
His living lungs expand
The heavy air surrounding death turns to breath again
He breathes out
He is word and flesh once more
The Lamb of God slain for us is a Lion ready to roar³²*

Ready to give us what we deserve, right? No! He goes straight away to his disciples, the picture of failed humanity, and does what?

he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:22

Jesus was Genesis 2 breathing into his disciples the breath of life! And take this to Pentecost—Jesus was breathing into his church the breath of life! And take this to you—Jesus is willing to breath into your nostrils the breath of life! And so the wasteland of the human heart, can become the promised land of life with God again. The hope filling our lungs is this as we come to the table of God's provision again:

⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:49

On the night that he was betrayed, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, broke it and said to his disciples, "This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me." (end previous slide) He also took a cup of wine, and after blessing it, gave it to his disciples and said, "This cup is the new covenant marked by the shedding of my blood. For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you announce the Lord's death until he returns." **Today we are announcing that through Jesus Christ, all that God requires of us, he provides.**

Our tradition here at Antioch is to come forward and break off a piece of bread and dip it in the juice. There will be stations here in the front; gluten-free bread will be available to your right. If you're a baptized believer, come and remember who you are and whose you are. If you're a believer but not yet baptized, before coming to the table, we would love to help you first come and declare your faith publicly through baptism. If you're not

³² Andrew Peterson, "His Heart Beats," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaU3C5a2VUY>

a Christian, this sacred symbol is not for you, but rather than taking communion, we encourage you to take Christ. He has made himself available to you this very moment. There will be pastors in the back to talk and pray with you about any need you have. Let's pray.

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