

Epic: (Noah, Joseph, Moses, David, Esther, Daniel, Jesus Birth, Calm Water, Cross/rose) – **Today = Creation**

Two guys went fishing...

My mom and dad first met...

The first time I saw Laurie she was playing the piano at church and...

You know, life is a story. Get two people together and soon they'll be telling stories. We all love stories, don't we!

Every morning, every evening, billions of people read a newspaper, read a book, open their bibles, listen to a podcast, watch a movie... Know why? Because we human beings want to know the "*rest of the story*," we have this craving for meaningfulness.

"Tell me your story." Tell me what happened", we say to a friend. Let me help you make sense of it.

We have been doing this with regards to our own stories since we were kids. *How did I get here? Who am I? Why am I here?*

Was this all an accident? Was there a Big Bang? Or was it Intelligent Design?

In **1996**, astronomers focused the powerful Hubble Space Telescope on a small and utterly black patch in space right next to the "Big Dipper" constellation. They left the shutter open for **ten days**. Wow! **3000 more galaxies**, each with **hundreds of billions** of **stars, planets & moons**.

In **2004** they did it again. This time they focused on the constellation Orion and left the lens open for **11 days** and discovered **ten thousand** more galaxies. And here we live on a small blue marble spinning in our own orbit around the Sun.

Incredible – unimaginable. Beyond human comprehension.

Walk into any large mall. On our last trip to the Yucatan we did just that. It was huge. There was a skating rink in the middle of it. There was a movie complex, a grocery store, restaurants, clothes and electronics stores and beauty salons and on and on.

If you couldn't read Spanish you would be totally lost. You had to look for one of those mall maps – all big malls have one. If you took your time and looked you would eventually find a big red star. ***You know what that star meant?***

“You are here.” This is the big picture. **This star is where you are in the big picture. That huge mall had not always existed.** It was put there by someone. A very smart designer came up with the idea and then built it.

(Hold up blue globe) Here we are on this blue marble, spinning in space. It wasn't always that way.

Like the story of an incredibly complex mall, it didn't just accidentally fall into place. It began with a master builder, a Creator, an intelligent designer.

Today's Story in this ten week sermon series entitled “Epic,” belongs to an “Intelligent Designer,” being we refer to as God!

God is an author who has a story to tell.

Genesis, is the first chapter in that story. It tells us about God's plan for mankind and His interaction with them.

The real point of this chapter is to tell us how much God wants to be with us.

In the beginning.....

It is a wonderful phrase. Full of promise. An invitation to listen and learn and find meaning.

Once upon a time.....

A long time ago in a galaxy far away....

Once upon a time a handsome man and a beautiful maiden....

All really good stories start that way, right? It is an Epic story!

The Bible tells us that there is an Author, A good Creator, He is the source of all things good. In Hebrew He is called Elohim! Say that. Elohim!

Elohim means God plural. Not gods – but God Plural. As you read the Bible, you see how He reveals Himself. First as the Spirit of God, Then as God the Father, and ultimately as God the Son. Each of them individually distinct but fully God and there on the day they designed the universe.

Now, before the world was designed and built, there was darkness. Like the darkness you experience in a cave where you cannot see your own hand inches from your face. Suddenly a voice shatters the darkness. A word breaks the silence. Light: And there is light.

Then another word. Sky! And another word, Seas! And another, Land! And it was so! With just a word, the Creator powerfully constructed this place for people to live.

Another word and mangoes laden the branches of trees. Poppies fill the hills. Rain forests. Prairies in full bloom. All in an instant.

God opens his hand and animals spring forth. Birds of every kind fill the skies with flight and song. The seas teeming with fish. Thundering across the plains: Buffalo, horses running like the wind. Elephants. Right down to the smallest detail, Caterpillars, butterflies...

He stepped back and said, "Oh, wow, that is really good!"

Think of the complexity. Step outside this evening. Look at the universe. Wake in the morning with the morning mist that touches the blades of grass.

The perfect and beautiful world God created is good. Butterflies, Hummingbirds. Kangaroos. Tulips. Mangoes.

God has a story. It's a fairytale world ready for romance. Couples can choose to sit beneath a starry night in Yosemite, Hawaii or Tuscany. When we do...

Psalm 8:3-5 says: *"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? 5 You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor."*

After creating this beautiful world and crowning it with a glorious star filled sky, we come to those dramatic words of the Creator. ***"Let us make mankind in our image."***

Elohim the master planner, like a potter scooped out of the ground a clump of clay, molded and made it into the first human, and then breathed into that human the breath of God, giving him a "soul".

So Genesis 1:27 says, *"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."*

We were created in His image. ***What does that mean?***

Let's give him the intelligence and ability to reason. We'll give mankind the ability to be creative, to love, and to share intimacy. We will give him the

responsibility and authority to manage and care for this world and its resources and all the inhabitants of it.

We will even give them the ability to live forever by eating of a special tree we will call the tree of life that we will place there in a special garden that they will tend to.

But we will also give them just one rule to live by. Don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil! It will rob you of your innocence and trust in me as God. Period!

If you eat from that, you will walk away from our relationship and follow your own baser instincts and you will die!

You see, God wants to be in relationship with His creation. He wants them to be good like He is good and live in love with Him and each other.

After they did what they were warned not to do, they became afraid and hid from God. Even still, God went searching for the wayward couple.

Genesis 3:8-9 says, *“They hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”*

God still wanted them to invite Him into their story. And He wants to be involved in your personal history and mine too.

We talked about this last week a bit. That one of the deepest human longings is the longing to belong.

We are relational to the core. We want to be invited into “family”. We want to be accepted. This is the harmony and peace our soul longs for.

Once upon a time... all was well with Adam and Eve.

Once upon a time... all was well and the animals eat grass.

Once upon a time... there was no stress, no tears, no sadness.

That my friends is how God wanted it to be. He didn't want just a good life for us, but a perfect one. A beautiful garden. An abundance of food. No disease. No sadness. He made it all and said....”***This is very good.***”

Like any parent, he wants the absolute best for you. God never intended for human beings to suffer. But someday we feel we are living in a nightmare.

Remember, when God created Adam and Eve, he gave them “freedom.”

Rather than force them to love him in return they could choose to be with Him or go it alone. I’m afraid they listened to the voice of a ‘**creature**’ rather than their **Creator**.

John Eldredge in his book “**Epic**” writes:

“There is evil all around us. War. Famine. Betrayal. Murder. Surely we know there is evil in our world. Where does it come from? I am staggered by the level of naiveté that most people live with regarding evil. They don’t take it seriously... or it will stay over there. They live as if the “Story”, their “story” has no villain. Every story has a villain. The Big Bad Wolf. Darth Vader. The Wicked Witch of the West.

We do not know how much time passed between God’s conversation with Adam, the creation of Eve but we know that in their freedom they listened to the voice of a creature rather than the Creator. Satan the fallen angel, told them that “they could be like God”... “God was holding out on them. I can imagine a conversation.... “If God really loved you wouldn’t he let you touch and eat?”

Haven’t you heard the same voice? If God really loved you wouldn’t he answer your prayer? If God really loved you why would he let your loved one suffer so much?

Satan gained power over Adam and Eve the same way he gains power over us. Satan creates **Doubt**. In Adam and Eve. In you and me.

The tree lived up to its name. Evil was deposited alongside truth in the DNA of Adam and Eve....and in every human being. The core of this evil, which the Bible calls sin is empowered by **selfishness**.

Before that fateful day, God’s favorite thing to do was to walk in the garden with them. But knowing they had done wrong. They tried to hide.

You know the conversation they had with Him when He found them... “**It’s not my fault.**” They seek to **avoid responsibility**... Sounds **like us**, doesn’t it. Let’s be honest... *do you like to take responsibility when something you did wrong becomes known? No... so we are no different.*

Their relationship with God was broken. Their relationship with each other was broken. Today, people’s lives are shattered by divorce (spouses & kids).

In the Bible we find the rest of the story tough. Despite the brokenness, God wants them back.

He takes the steps to repair their love. He initiates redemption, but the price is high.

Genesis 3:21 God gives hope. God offers forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22

Remember God tried everything. That's part of the Story.

He warned Cain that sin was crouching at his door.

He chose not to listen.

God tried a flood.

God tried a covenant with Moses at Sinai.

God tried prophets.

God tried kings.

God even tried a temple.

Nothing worked perfectly. Finally, God literally stepped into His own creation. His name was Jesus. The Apostle Paul calls him the **2nd Adam**. His mission was to bring us back into harmony and into peace with himself.

John writes this in 1:1-4, 14: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

The Word became flesh... We saw him. We walked with Him. He healed the blind. He accepted the “outcasts” - The leper - The lame - The Samaritan. He raised the Dead. Yes, we saw Him die on the cross. We saw them lay Him in a tomb. The tomb was sealed. Death could not hold Him. He rose from the death and grave and defeated that old evil foe, Satan, who holds people in the grip and fear of death.

Forgiveness was offered to Adam and Eve and it is offered to you and me. His blood was shed on the cross. But the Cross stands empty. The grave is empty. He rose and is alive and He offers to walk with you in Your Story. But he will let you choose. Do you want to do that today? **Then pray with me.**