Reclaiming The Rainbow — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 9:1–17 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, June 11, 2023 · *Living Right*

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If you have your Bibles, we're going to be in the book of Genesis. You can turn to Genesis chapter 9 as we continue our way through this book of the Bible. We've been in a series entitled "Living Right in a World Gone Wrong," and really exploring, post–Genesis chapter 3, when sin enters into the world, how the world breaks bad. And how bad it actually breaks is so great that God ends up sending a flood to judge the entire world because the thought of every person was only evil continually. He selects one man to save and through that man his family and that man's name is Noah.

And he has Noah build an ark and Noah does so and the flood comes. Rainwaters rise, it floods the earth, destroys every living person, every living animal except for Noah, his family, and the animals that he brought onto the boat. And that agreement that Noah had with the Lord is what the Bible describes as a covenant. And last week we looked at what a covenant is and what the constituent parts of a covenant are, how every covenant has a mediator and conditions laid out for what to do and what not to do, and blessings when you do it and curses when you don't.

There's a covenant community oftentimes and then the covenant promise and the covenant sign. And the promise from God was, "I will never destroy the earth again like I did through the flood. I'll never curse it in that way." And then the sign that was given to commemorate or to remember the promise was the sign of a rainbow. And as I was thinking about that rainbow, especially in light of the day and age in which we live, and especially in light of the month of June, which in the United States of America is celebrated as Pride Month.

It might be celebrated in the West, just generally speaking. I thought it might be good for us to spend a week on this sign of the covenant, the sign of the promise, the rainbow, because the rainbow today does not necessarily mean what the rainbow originally meant in the day of Moses. And so let's read the passage in Genesis chapter 9, verses 13 to 17, reminding

ourselves of why God gave this rainbow and what it originally represented for Noah and his family and the promise that God made not just to Noah but to every generation after him and to literally the entirety of the earth.

So the Lord says in chapter 9, verse 13, "I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

God then said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." And so the rainbow was originally given to us by God to help us remember that God is merciful, that God is kind, that there's a certain degree or level of sin that God has just chosen to tolerate, not because we deserve it or because it does not anger him or incite his wrath, but just because of his mercy and kindness. I'm going to tolerate it for a certain level of time until of course that day comes when Jesus comes again and renews the earth, not through a flood, but through a fire.

But now that rainbow has come to actually represent the opposite. Instead of symbolizing or reminding us of God's mercy, and withholding judgment on our sin and the severity of our sin, it has now come to represent pride. It actually comes to represent sin instead of God's mercy and it's come to represent celebration of sin instead of God's tolerance of it. And so today's rainbow doesn't represent God's mercy in withholding judgment and represents human pride in celebrating sin. And through the rainbow today we really make a mockery of God's patience and God's mercy.

And I want us to examine where that spirit that's in our culture, where did it come from? And a couple of months ago, in fact it might have been last year around this time, I preached a message that really dealt in a lot of historical thinkers and philosophical ideas about our cultural moment and how it came to be what it is today. And it is part of an exercise that the apostle Paul encourages every Christian to participate in and to kind of master. He says in a letter to the Corinthian church, the second letter to the Corinthian church in chapter 10, verses 4 and 5, that "the weapons of our warfare"—talking about Christian people—our weapons "are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds."

And then the apostle Paul says, "We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." The reason I think this is important, the reason we're spending a whole Sunday on this rainbow and God's covenant originally and how that covenant has kind of been poo-pooed on today and we're almost doing the opposite of what the covenant actually represented is because of what Paul says here in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 that there are ideologies at work in our world today.

And that our battle is against not people, it's not against the flesh and blood people, but it's against these godless, unchristian ideologies that oftentimes capture people and kind of wrap them up into their deceptions and lies.

And that one of the jobs of a Christian is to understand those ideas and to be able with the help of God's Holy Spirit to demolish those strongholds. You might think of it as pre-evangelism, as important as preaching the gospel is and sharing the gospel and putting Bibles in hotel rooms are, there is a prior work that comes before that that kind of levels the field and helps you to understand the people with whom you're having that gospel conversation. And we're living in a day and age where an ideology, a big idea that has started a long, long, long time ago and put its roots deep down into Western civilization and our kind of way of thinking.

And the chickens have come home to roost, if you will, and that ideology has really fully manifested itself and we're beginning to see the implications of that. And so it's really important for us as Christian people to understand that ideology, where it came from and how we ought to respond to it. And I want to just say right out front that the approach that we want to take as Christians is, as Paul said, not to attack the people. The battle's not against flesh and blood. In fact, in this room, I promise you, there are people who have loved ones, relatives, maybe even they themselves who have struggled or are struggling with this idea of same-sex attraction, homosexuality and all that that falls under the Pride flag and the rainbow that's celebrated today.

I know that these people are in our church because I've had conversations with them and I've watched them struggle with how to reconcile the people that they love and the ideas that they oppose. So we're not attacking the people, but we are addressing the ideology and comparing it with Christian theology and the Christian worldview. And I think if we can do that, we can speak lovingly but convictionally about what God's Word says and why God's design is ultimately good. And so just to kind of do a quick summary of where we were last year, because I want to kind of unearth this ideology before we respond to it in a Christian way.

Carl Trueman wrote a book I would highly recommend to you called *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*.[1] And he describes this ideology as expressive individualism, and it's a big idea that took root a long, long time ago. The basic idea is that the authority to define the self, the authority to define your identity, is located here in you, and that the essence of your identity is located in your desires. If you'll go to the next screen, there's a phrase that he uses that I think really captures it. He says that we've psychologized the self, we have sexualized our psychology, and we have politicized our sexuality.

And this did not happen overnight. The roots of this took place long, long, long ago. But we moved the authority to define who I actually am from an external source such as God or his

Word or what other people may say about us, our kind of external world, and we said it's all about what I think and what I feel. Then we sexualized our psychology. This came along with Freud and other thinkers that say your identity is fundamentally your sexuality and then to deliver our identity from the oppressors, many times or in many ways in our culture we've politicized sexuality so that for us to be true to ourselves you've got to wield the strong arm of the government to protect us from any naysayers.

And so it elevates this emotional authenticity above everything else. There's a rejection of conformity to any external or absolute standard, and then it's this idea that our true purpose is to discover our true self and to express that true self to the world in defiance to any and all naysayers. And like I said, this didn't happen overnight. There are historical underpinnings of this. I throw up a little chart of some thinkers that we talked about last year. It started with a man named Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He was a French philosopher who said that the authority to identify your true self is not about what other people say.

It's not about what God says. It's about what you think and what you feel. Karl Marx comes along in a similar way and he combines this notion with the idea of materialism and he runs with it. It's his idea that human flourishing is being undermined by the oppressor class, by the bourgeoisie, the rich people, in other words, they're the problem, they're that external standard that's oppressing us, and so we need to dethrone the oppressors and we need to centralize their resources and our resources all together with the state and kind of share it out equally.

That's the economic theory called Marxism, this kind of socialistic theory, but it's also got its roots in our culture now, not just with economics, but with all sorts of oppressor and oppressed classes. Charles Darwin, in a similar way as Marx, an agnostic,[2] committed to this idea that there is no God, there is no traditional religious authority, there is no divine external standard, that the design that we see in nature is just the appearance of design, it's not actual design, and that we have theories that we can appeal to, to kind of remove the God hypothesis from consideration and make sense of it ourselves with macroevolution and things of that nature.

And then Friedrich Nietzsche, who follows all of these thinkers, comes along and kind of sees the result of their work. He sees the result of a culture that is basically materialistic, basically atheistic or agnostic, basically self-identifying—that the identity of the true self is all internal, it's about what you think and what you feel. And Friedrich Nietzsche comes along and says, "God is dead, and we have killed him." And he wasn't necessarily celebrating that fact, even though he himself was a committed atheist. He was begrudging or bemoaning that fact because now Western culture has no roots.

We have no foundation. Everything that we built our civilization upon has now been removed out from underneath us. And so all that's left is this struggle between wills. And

sooner or later there's going to become what he called an *Übermensch*, or this Superman, who's going to come in this big charismatic personality and he's going to enforce his will over the will of everyone else and it's going to result in tyranny and authoritarianism and we certainly saw that with World War II Germany and people like Hitler and we're even starting to see that same basic problem in our world today.

He predicted our cultural moment, the death of external authority, the exaltation of the self above all else. That our hearts and our wills are king and we say what is and what isn't. And what Freud did after all of those thinkers is he sexualized their intellectual tradition. He took all of the foundations, the intellectual foundations that they put forward, and he applied it to sexuality. And Freud basically said that our sex is foundational to our identity. So not only are you the king of defining who you are—it doesn't matter what God says, doesn't matter what some external authority says, doesn't matter what the Bible says, you get to say who you are—but you can't really understand who you are without understanding your sexuality.

And a lot of Freud's ideas have been rejected by our culture. A lot of them have kind of, you know, been seen for the foolishness that they are, but this basic idea that sex is foundational to our identity, that has taken root in our culture. And it is widely accepted as fact. And it's an alternative worldview to the Christian worldview. As we've seen in the book of Genesis, the book of Genesis raises and answers foundational questions such as what is your identity? Who am I? How did I get here? What's wrong with me?

And how do I fix it? These are all questions that the Christian worldview gives answers to, specifically in the book of Genesis, that we are created by God, that we're created in God's image, that our understanding of ourself comes from properly understanding who God is and then understanding ourselves in relationship to him, and that God has revealed himself through his Word and preeminently through the Lord Jesus Christ, the person to whom everything in Scripture points. And so our ultimate authority is God and his word. Our ultimate problem is sin and human depravity, and our ultimate solution is repentance and faith in the gospel so that we can have union or salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the Christian worldview, and Freud comes along and says the opposite of that. He puts forward these counterfeit answers to these foundational questions, and he says that our ultimate authority isn't God or the Bible or external religious tradition. I am. We are. We're the source of truth and goodness and beauty. Moreover, the most essential element of my identity isn't the image of God, it's how I feel about my sexuality. Sin and brokenness are not my ultimate problem. Authority and depression are. And Jesus Christ can't save me or liberate me, so that must come through some other means, whether it be politics or government.

And I don't know that Freud kind of knew what he was doing, just as I don't think Jean-Jacques Rousseau and some of these other thinkers knew the ultimate consequence of some

of their big ideas, but that was the fruit. And we're seeing a lot of the fruit in our world today. And the result of giving counterfeit answers to life's most foundational questions is always going to be chaos and brokenness. And it's not just true as it relates to sexuality and the whole pride discussion. Any counterfeit answer to a legitimate human longing and concern is going to produce brokenness.

And we're seeing sexual brokenness. We're seeing a kind of social brokenness in our world today: elevated rates of depression, elevated rates of anxiety, elevated rates of suicide, because we've given a generation counterfeit answers to their intrinsic human longings. And they're basic human questions. And it is as old as the Garden of Eden. It is as old as the serpent coming to Eve saying, "Did God really say?" And Western culture has essentially said God didn't say and God didn't mean, and we're suffering the consequences of believing that lie. The problem is that the lie was not just to individuals.

Individuals believed the lie, individuals communicated the lie, but individuals have relationships with other individuals, and those individuals form groups, just like we have small groups in our church. And then those groups associate with other groups and they build societies. And those societies cooperate with other societies and they build civilizations. And so what you see is that the consequences of a counterfeit idea or the consequences of a lie don't just affect people, they affect groups of people and societies and civilizations and whole entire generations. And there was a really smart Roman Catholic thinker named Charles Taylor and he talked about this in terms of the social imaginary.

He said that there's this collective intelligence or this hive mind that kind of surfaces when people get together in these groups, and that you might call that the social imaginary of those people, and that our culture has a social imaginary. And what he means by that is that our culture has a set of collective beliefs, values, symbols, and practices that fundamentally shape the basic narrative and framework for living. So it's not just that individuals have beliefs, but those collections of individuals create this hive mind that operates off of certain convictions, and our culture has that.

Our culture has a hive mind that kind of shapes us and molds us, whether we're thinking it is or isn't, it is there pressing in on us: believe this, think this, act this way. And that's why the vast majority of people in any culture live the way that they do. Western culture is no exception. And our cultural social imaginary is at war with the Christian worldview and it's becoming increasingly evident. You can see this in our artwork, you can see this in our movies, you can see this in our politics and even in our economic theories.

Every Disney movie—the main point of every Disney movie is listen to your heart, right? In fact, Disney movies have become so blatant now I almost have to like pre-screen what my kids are watching or just not let them watch it at all because now it's be true to yourself even if your mom and dad say otherwise. You know, Moana runs away. She partners with other

people in her family in defiance of her God-given ultimate authority because the thing that matters most is being true to you. And it's a message that stems from that expressive individualism.

There is no external authority more important than me. And I define what's right and what's wrong. So long as it's authentic, it's okay. The greatest and highest good is to be true to yourself and express that to the world in defiance of any and all inhibitions. I can't really understand myself outside of my sexuality. It's core to my identity. And so we've got whole concepts like sexual orientation and gender identity that have been invented to bolster this claim and advance and serve this basic idea. And there is an irreconcilable conflict between that worldview and the Christian worldview.

There's an irreconcilable conflict between the answers that our cultural social imaginary gives to life's most foundational questions and what God and his Word and Christian theology give to those foundational questions. The Christian vision is to look up, to not look in, but to look up or even out to God and his word, who are a fixed standard by which we come to know and understand ourselves. Christianity says that our identity is in Christ Jesus, that it's not located in our sexual preferences. Our sexual preferences are part of who we are, but they are not the foundation of who we are.

Our identity is not inextricably linked to our sexuality. It's inextricably linked to the image of God and God's word of who he says that we are. Our culture says any opposition to self-expression is coercive and oppression, whereas Christianity says opposition to your self-expression is actually a gift of the Holy Spirit to pull you out of your brokenness into God's original design. It is not oppressive. It is not an invitation to slavery. It's an invitation to liberty and freedom in Christ. And so those two worlds war and we're caught in the middle.

And even if you're not careful, all of us kind of slip into and begin to adopt the thinking of our culture. Especially when we have people in our lives whom we love that are wrapped up into those same ideologies and we try to form a kind of syncretistic or a compromise between the two. We kind of take a little bit of the culture and a little bit of God's word and Christianity and we say maybe we can blend it together and keep the peace and move along. But when those little lies and those little deceptions get in there and that compromise begins to take place, there are consequences.

And those consequences will begin to surface sooner or later. The most difficult thing for Christians, and the reason why I think it's important for us to think about today is because this thinking has been around since the book of Genesis, since the beginning of time. This idea of "Did God really say?" has been happening since human beings have been on the planet. And so it's not like this is new and the alarmism and stuff like that can kind of get a little bit out of hand. We're not fighting a new enemy.

It's not some kind of new problem. It's just a new expression of the same old problem. But what is a little bit different today, at least in terms of our culture, is that the culture used to say tolerance was sufficient. We're a free nation. You believe what you want to believe, I believe what I want to believe, and let's just go along to get along. And that's actually a great contribution, even of Southern Baptist or Baptist theology to, I think, our great nation, is this idea of separation of church and state, you know, give people freedom of their conscience, freedom to think what they want to think.

And you think what you want to think and allow freedom for people to do that. That was generally the American way for decades and decades, but now we're getting to a place where tolerance is no longer enough. Affirmation and celebration are required. Even the idea of tolerance suggests that you believe someone else's view is inferior or in error compared to your view, and that disapproval from an outside force is unacceptable. Why? Because of the expressive individualism that our culture has adopted as its primary way of thinking. You got to think of it this way.

If the ultimate authority for defining who you are is the self, then other people saying that you are wrong is not just disagreement, it's violence. Because they're attacking your identity. Just like if someone said you're not made in the image of God, you can't believe the word of God anymore, you must begin to worship Allah or you must begin to do religious behaviors that you know are sinful. It would be as if someone else came at us and said, "I'm going to force you to do those kinds of things." That's how it's heard from people in our culture when Christians disagree with them.

Not because it actually is them saying that, but because of the big ideas undergirding their self-understanding. If I'm the ultimate authority defining myself, then any and all opposition to that is not just disagreement, it's violence. And then if my sexuality is core and fundamental to my identity, it's not who God says I am or who I might have been born or what my body says that I am. Then opposition is violence. Disagreement is violence, and that violence must be silenced. This is actually a picture from just yesterday, the official Twitter of the President of the United States of America.

And the line is, "Today, the People's House—your house—sends a clear message to the country and to the world: America is a nation of pride." Now it is one thing, as I said, to say that we're going to be a nation of freedom, a nation of tolerance, and we're going to allow individuals to live as they want to live. That was an old American tradition, but this is going beyond that in many ways. It's really not a question of, does everyone get to express their ideas? That ship has sailed. The real question is who gets to express their ideas.

The big fight in our culture is not whether or not all people are allowed the freedom to express themselves. The real question is which people get to express themselves freely, and whose authority is ultimately enforced. And there is increasingly becoming the trend that

Christians are being asked to affirm as true what we believe to be false. We're being asked to celebrate as helpful that which we believe to be harmful. And if you refuse to do either, it will be interpreted as violence because you're hindering self-expression, which is the highest and most noble goal of Christian culture or Western culture.

It explains our culture's attack on the family. It explains why evangelical Christians are not just unpopular but despised and violently excised from institutional power structures, and it explains the hostility to authority and tradition, whether it's Christian or any other authority or tradition. It's in our music, it's in our arts, it's in our entertainment, and it's in our politics. And if you just pay attention, you'll begin to see it. And just the other day I was talking with a family member who went to Fort Worth, and they were in a used bookstore, and everything in the bookstore that was put front and center wasn't—I'm not just talking about LGBTQ sexuality ideas—this basic idea undergirding that, this expressive individualism, that was front and center.

And then there was a stack of Christian books, which were not just kind of put out to the side, but they were taken off of the shelves and they were being packed up in boxes, the whole section being removed from the bookstore. That's an outlandish example. I'm not saying that's happening in every single bookstore, but it is increasingly becoming the case because our worldview is fundamentally at odds with this expressive individualism. There are Christians—LGBTQ—there are same-sex-attracted Christians who do not necessarily buy into this expressive individualism. They're struggling, many of them struggling, trying to follow God and wrestle with their sexual desires.

But there's a difference between that type of person and a person and a culture who has just gone totally the other side of that and saying it's not just that my sexuality is taboo or at odds with what God's word says or what the cultural tradition has been. But that everything else and everyone else is absolutely wrong, and the authority for determining who is and who is not wrong is me and me alone. And a culture cannot sustain itself with that approach to understanding reality. And so how are we to respond?

How should Christians respond? Well, a couple of ways not to respond: You don't respond by attacking the people. You respond by attacking the ideas, particularly when the people who are often wrapped up in this way of thinking are your children or your grandchildren or people that you love. You will not get anywhere by attacking them or kind of having that surface level of "I disagree with what you're doing," but you've got to get up underneath it. And the second thing is to, I think, form a counterculture in Christian communities that surfaces the goodness and beauty and contentment and joy that we will find in God's original design.

So not just pointing the finger, but inviting people to something better. And so I want to give you three things real quick just to consider, and then we will wrap it up. I'm going to put

them under the headings of embracing conviction instead of compromise, celebration instead of just criticizing, and creating a compelling counterculture. So the traditional headings are of truth and goodness and beauty. That's the basic worldview categories. Our ultimate truth is God and his Word. Our ultimate goodness is God's design. It is wonderful. And the beauty of creating a counterculture that doesn't just believe God's design, but embraces it and lives it out and invites others to experience the same freedom and joy in Christ.

And so the first is choosing conviction over compromise, make an intentional choice to reject compromise and choose the Lord no matter what. I'm taking each of these ideas from Noah's life. You might think of from Noah, or Genesis chapter 5, all the way to Genesis chapter 9. You're going to see these three themes of this counterculture. So Noah lived in a cultural climate where the thought of every person was only evil continually. Noah himself was a man with big flaws and lots of brokenness, but that's not what made him stand out from his contemporaries.

What made him stand out was a commitment to turn from his former set of beliefs and actions and begin trusting and obeying the Lord. So the first question and the ultimate question is a question of authority and truth, whose word will carry the greatest weight in your life? When it came to Noah's life, you remember God comes to Noah, says, "I'm going to flood the earth, but I will save you if you will believe me and do what I say." And what does Noah do? He does everything that the Lord asks him to do.

The Lord comes to him and says, "I want you to build an ark." This is Genesis chapter 6, verse 14. The Lord comes to Noah and says, "Make yourself an ark," and Noah did this. Verse 22: he did all that the Lord commanded him. The word of the Lord comes again to Noah a little bit later and says, "I want you to get into the ark, you and all your household." And so Noah did everything that the Lord commanded him to do. The word of the Lord comes to Noah a little bit later after the rain and the floods come, and he says, "I want you to get out of the ark."

And Noah hears what God asked him to do, and he goes out, him and his sons, with him. Every time God's word comes, Noah hears God's word, listens to it, and does exactly what the Lord asks him to do. That is a template for us today of hearing God's word, reading God's word, understanding God's word, and holding to it. Putting it into practice, living by it, choosing to follow the Lord no matter what. You cannot live in this world and escape a time of choosing. You will either choose one or choose the other.

It's the consequence of living in a world of sin. A world of sin is always going to eventually surface ideologies and worldviews that are in contrast or contradictory to the Christian worldview. And when those times come and you can no longer go along to get along and syncretize and compromise, you've got to make a choice and live for the Lord or not. And

we're living in one of those cultural moments. I was speaking just the other day with somebody about the comments they were seeing on their social media feed, their Facebook, someone who was a very close friend of theirs and they were posting things about "you either affirm"—they were living a lifestyle that was contradictory to traditional Christian understandings of sexuality.

But it wasn't just, "Hey, you can disagree with me and we can be friends." The comment was basically, "If you disagree with me or if you don't affirm, I don't want anything to do with you. You have no place in my life." And that person was confronted with a choice. "What do I do with this? Everything in me wants to compromise. Everything in me wants to save my friend, to save my relationship with that person." But there may come a time where that other person won't allow you to preserve their relationship if you don't absolutely affirm what you believe to be false.

And in that situation, as difficult as it is, in the words of Jesus, sometimes you're going to have to hate your father, mother, brother, sister, even your own life. Sometimes you've got to take up your cross and follow me. Sometimes you've got to renounce all that you have to be my disciple. And in those days you make a choice to elevate and prioritize Jesus Christ over any other competitor for your heart's affection. We can't live in this world and escape a time of choosing. There's this word culture that we use all the time.

We throw it around. It actually comes from the same root as the word cult,[3] and you know what cults are. Cults are people who worship a certain kind of thing. And that's what our culture is. Our culture is not just thinking a different kind of way. Our culture is worshiping a different set of gods. It's worshiping an alternative system of ultimate reality. And you can't be in the culture and be in Christianity at the same time. You've got to make a choice because they're two fundamentally different systems. And if you don't worship Christ, if you don't make that intentional choice, you will eventually and inevitably begin to worship what the culture worships.

You look at throughout the Old Testament, every time God's people, Israel, denied God and tried to kind of go along to get along, what ends up happening is that they compromise, they become just like the culture that they originally meant to stand out in, and then God sends judgment and God destroys the culture and delivers the people, but not without consequence and price. Joshua chapter 24, verse 15 says, "If it's evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The conflict is irreconcilable. You've got to choose who you're going to serve. That's number one. Number two, the second thing that Noah does that is instructive is that he celebrates and he pursues God's original design, namely God's original design for sex marriage and family. As we saw in Genesis chapter 1,

God's design for the family matters because the family acts as this fundamental building block for all civilization. That's why Satan's chief vector of attack to destroy what God's wanting to build is by destroying sexuality, gender, marriage and family.

He does it in every single generation. You go right back to the book of Genesis. He does it with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. He does it with Cain and Abel in Genesis chapter 4. He does it with the line of Seth, or he attempts to do it in the line of Seth in Genesis chapter 5. And then when you get to Genesis chapter 6, you've got the Nephilim and the angels who are having relations with the sons of God who are having relation with the daughters of men. And you see an attempt to kind of corrupt the godly lineage or the seed of the promise, every single generation, Satan's primary vector of attack is sexuality, gender, marriage, and family.

We're going to see this in Genesis chapter 10 and 11 with the Tower of Babel. It's what Satan always does. But it's not sufficient to just criticize Satan's methods. It's not enough to just say that's wrong and that's bad and Christians shouldn't believe that or Christians shouldn't do that. I think that's what's easy to do. I think that's what Christians have historically been pretty good at. But what we have not been as good at is promoting and celebrating God's original design. Celebrating and promoting the goodness and joy of God's design for sexuality.

That our culture says the only way to be happy is to go down this route. But how many of us as Christians don't just say we oppose that, but we actually promote and celebrate God's original design for self-understanding and sexual identity and gender conformity? How many times do we promote the goodness of the differences between gender and the idea that biological sex and gender are inextricably linked? How often do we, among young people, especially young people who are single say that marriage, it is difficult, marriage, there are complications, but it's actually one of the greatest blessings that God may give you in your life?

That children are actually a blessing. Instead of just complaining about how difficult they are and how they never listen and all of the other things. Actually promoting that it's not just that God's design for building a civilization is marriage and the family, but it's actually a good thing and it's one of the greatest gifts that you'll ever receive from the Lord. We're living in a culture where young people are distancing themselves from the idea of marriage. They're distancing themselves from the idea of children. They're distancing themselves from Christian approaches to sexuality and gender because Christians are not illustrating with their life, they're not preaching from their pulpits the beauty and the goodness and the sufficiency of God's original design.

So marriage rates are tanking. Young people are waiting longer and longer to get married. I talked to Christian men who cannot find a Christian woman who will want to date, much less marry. Because we're in a culture where those things are on the decline. What's the Christian

response? The Christian response is not just to say that's wrong and that's bad. The Christian response is to say this is God's design and this is great. This is good. Let's talk about it. Let's celebrate it. Sex shouldn't be taboo. Talking from a pulpit, the idea of marriage and promoting that shouldn't be taboo.

I love what G. K. Chesterton said. He says it's not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting; it's been found difficult and left untried. And then the last thing I can see from the story of Noah is the creation of a compelling counterculture, a counter-community of Christian people who create an environment in which, when other people come into it, they say, "Wow, this is what I've been looking for. This is the acceptance I've been looking for. This is the love I've been looking for." Rosaria Butterfield, who was herself a lesbian before she became a Christian, she was kind of wrapped up in that way of living.

And she said in her book, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, that the thing that was most compelling for the LGBTQ community was their community. It was their hospitality, it was their love, it was their acceptance, it was their understanding, it was their genuine interest in who I was and how I was doing. And that when I would go to a church, I would not find anything close to what I found in the LGBTQ community. And what an indictment on God's people, who should have the richest community, the most accepting, the most affirming in the sense of affirming God's will for you, affirming God's design for you, and affirming our love and commitment to help you arrive at his original design.

We should have grace-based cultures, cultures of love, cultures of support. And when that kind of community begins to form, it will counter the culture, it will change the culture, because that is ultimately what people are looking for. What people are looking for is God. It is Christian community. It's just that sometimes our churches are not creating those kind of communities. A community that recognizes sin and human depravity is universal, which means every single member is a sinner in need of grace. A community that grieves over and protests the ugliness and destructive nature of sin while simultaneously loving the sinful people made in God's image and worthy of dignity and respect.

A community that exalts and champions the finished work of Christ as our only hope in life and death. A community that joyfully sings about God's power to save and continually prays for the needs of the saints and generously gives to meet those needs as well. A community that isn't timid, but is courageous. It isn't proud, but it is humble. It isn't mean-spirited, but it is firm in their convictions. And a community that welcomes everyone and exalts no one other than the Lord Jesus Christ. A community that says it's okay to not be okay, but it's not okay to stay that way, and a community that champions God's design and does whatever it takes to help the members of that community arrive as close to that design as they possibly can.

That's the kind of community the Holy Spirit can create if we will allow him, but it's going to require a commitment from us to choose to serve the Lord even when it's difficult. A commitment to go all in, our investment into the local church and into Christian community and be present and say the things that need to be said and don't say the things that shouldn't be said. It's contingent on the Holy Spirit who lives in us having the freedom to express the mind of Christ and the words of Christ and the Spirit of Christ through our actions and through the words that we say.

And when we allow that Spirit to fill us and to flow through us, then we will begin to form in small measure a counter-community that celebrates and joyfully displays the good design of God and invites others to participate in the same. And so instead of just criticizing and pointing out what's wrong, we must also celebrate God's design and promote what's right. And so, as we close, I know there's a lot of ways that you can think about this message, but if you're a member of our church, I want to encourage you to pray for our church, to pray for yourself in relationship to this local church, and to pray that God would begin to form in us a convictional but also beautiful community that invites others to experience God's original design.

And would you also, if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian and maybe a lot of what I've said has been angering to you and frustrating and you don't understand, and you think I'm just kind of stuck in the mud and old-fashioned, but there's something about that idea of Christ loving you, giving you a new identity, giving you a new hope and a new future. You may disagree with everything else that I said, but that's the most important thing that I've said. And though you may disagree with me, I bet you'll find you won't always disagree with him.

He has a way of winning you over to his way of thinking. And it begins with repenting of your sin and starting a relationship with him as your Savior and Lord. And if you've never confessed your sin and believed in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, then this morning is an opportunity for you to do that as Mary plays. If you're watching online, you can scan the QR code that's on your screen. But let's respond to the Lord now as he leads. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this morning and this passage.

I know it's a difficult issue to talk about, but we pray that we would be people who understand our cultural moment and as Paul said, we try to take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ. Would you help us to do that in a way that glorifies you but also loves people and invites them to deliverance through the salvation that's in Jesus' name. And we pray these things.

1. Transcript note: spoken as "pride in the Modern Self"; Carl Trueman's book is titled *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Crossway, 2020). Source: Crossway book page. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "an atheist"; Darwin wrote in 1879, "In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God," and that "an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind." Source: Darwin to John Fordyce, May 7, 1879, Darwin Correspondence Project (DCP-LETT-12041). ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "comes from the French word cult or cult"; English *culture* comes from Latin *cultura* ("cultivating"), from *colere* ("to tend, till, cultivate"), the same Latin root behind *cult*. Source: Online Etymology Dictionary, "culture." ↩