

Day Two

Scripture:

Genesis 1 (Alternatively: Genesis 1:1-2)

Reflection:

Every painting begins with the same thing: a blank canvas. Before the brush's first touch, the art does not exist. There is the canvas, the paints, the brush, and, of course, the artist. There may even be a beautiful landscape or a photograph or some objects carefully arranged on a table. But, there is not yet any painting. All of the materials are present, but the composition is still only in the mind of the artist.

The magnificent painting of the story of Christmas does not begin with a stable or shepherds or a bright star shining over a sleeping town. The painting starts with a blank canvas. The painting is first only in the mind of the divine artist, who calls into being the canvas upon which He will call forth light and sky and land and sea, all under the canopy of the sun, the moon, and the countless stars.

It is important to remember that this is the painting of home. That is one reason we like paintings and pictures of fields and flowers and beautiful mountains. When we see them, something deep inside us is moved. It is like stirring up some deep memory of home. We have been created to be homesick for a place we have never actually been. But, we know when we see the beauty and grandeur of the world around us, it is exactly where we want to be.

The composition may be damaged by evil and distorted by the fiendish work of the Devil. But, even if we now only see it in its marred and damaged condition, it is still beautiful beyond description and grander than our minds can begin to grasp. That is why, even in this fallen world, we can always proclaim, 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies make clear the work of His hands.' (Psalm 19:1) This is God's perfect painting of our ideal home. That is why the end of the story, when we finally arrive at Revelation 21-22, is all about a new earth in a renewed universe where we all be truly home.

Family

Have everyone make their own drawing or painting of the whole world. Before they begin, talk about the materials they will need to make their individual piece of art. Point out that the paper is blank. This blank page is just like what the Bible described in Genesis 1:1-2. God gets everything ready, but He still has not started to make the world.

Now, have everyone make their drawing. As everyone is drawing (including the adults), stop and ask people what they are putting in their picture and why? What do they think the world needs to have in it? Do they need it to be daytime? Do they need to make something to eat and drink? Do they need to make animals? Do they need to make some place for people to live?

Now, help them think about what God has put in the world and why they think God might have created it? Why are there flowers? Birds? The sun? The stars? The clouds? Does the world have just the things we need so that we can have

food and water and a place to sleep? Why would God make so much more than we need?

The world around us tells us how much God loves us. He did not just make a dull world with only enough food for us to eat and water for us to drink. He made a beautiful world. It is much bigger than we actually need. It is much more beautiful than we actually need. This is all because God loves us.

The Jesse Tree ornament for today is about God creating the world. It is round since God made the world a sphere. He also made the sun look round. God must really like circles. It also shows us a picture of stars and has part of Genesis 1:1 written on it. This is because God created the world to be our home and to remind us of Him and His love. Someone once put it in these words:

This is my Father's world:
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world:
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.

Prayer:

For a few minutes, try to think of as many beautiful things in the world around us that we can stop and thank God for creating. Start big (stars, sky, clouds) and work your way down to small (flowers, grass, and maybe even bugs). Keep saying over and over, "You made all this for me."

Thank God for letting us know when something is beautiful. Great theologians, such as David Bentley Hart, believe that

our ability to see and appreciate beauty is one of the best pieces of evidence that God is real and that we are created “in His image.” Take a few moments in your prayers to thank God for your ability to see and be moved by beauty.

The story of Christmas begins with God making a perfect home for human beings. The rest of the story will be about God showing us how to get back to this ideal world.