Author Mick Finch / General Adult

Kingdom of God Series / The Kingdom of God / Genesis 1:26–28; Genesis 2:15

“This Was God’s Idea All Along”

Text: Genesis 1:26–28; Genesis 2:15 (NRSVue)

Opening (Humorous Attention-Getter)

Let me begin with a confession.

I have discovered something about myself over the years…
I am really good at accumulating things, it runs in my family.

Not organizing them. Not using them.
Accumulating them, storing them.

I’ve got boxes of stuff that I haven’t opened since 2007.
I’ve got cords in a drawer that—if we’re honest—don’t belong to anything I own anymore.
And somewhere in my house… there is a remote control that goes to absolutely nothing.
But I keep it. Just in case.

Because you never know when the Kingdom of God might need a mystery remote.

(Light pause)

Now here’s the problem…

We don't just accumulate stuff.
We accumulate ways of living.

Ways of thinking.
Ways of relating.
Ways of surviving.

And over time, we start to believe—
this is just how life works.

But what if I told you…

This is not how it started.
This is not what God intended.
This is not the foundation.

Scripture Reading

Genesis 1:26–28 (NRSVue)

Genesis 1:26–28 NRSVue

26 Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness,
and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air
and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every
creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." 27 So God created humans in his
image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the
earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the
birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

"Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image… and let them have dominion…'"

Genesis 2:15 (NRSVue)

Genesis 2:15 NRSVue

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

This is the Word of God.

Movement 1: The Kingdom Begins in a Garden

Before there were churches…
Before there were governments…
Before there were denominations…

There was a garden.

Not a battlefield.
Not a marketplace.
Not a competition.

A garden.

And in that garden, everything we need to know about the Kingdom of God is already there.

- God creates with intention
- God declares it "good"
- Humanity is placed within creation—not above it
- And humanity is given a role…

Not to dominate.
Not to exploit.
But to **tend and keep**

Teaching Insight (Scholarly Integration)

Walter Brueggemann reminds us that Genesis presents creation as a place of *"ordered, relational abundance"*—not scarcity, not fear, not competition.

N. T. Wright often says that the biblical story is about **"God putting the world right"**—but here's the key:

Before God puts anything right…
God shows us what *right* looks like.

And it looks like a garden.
Shared. Sustained. With enough to go around.

Pastoral Reflection

In other words…

God's first vision for humanity was not about just survival.
It was **flourishing together**.

Let me say that again:

God's original plan was not that some would thrive while others struggle…
but that all would live within the goodness of God's provision.

Movement 2: Dominion Misunderstood

Now let's talk about that word—*dominion.*

Because we've done some creative things with that word over the years.

Dominion has often been interpreted as:

- Control
- Power
- and Ownership

- “It’s mine, and I’ll do what I want”

But the Hebrew context suggests something much closer to:

- Stewardship
- Responsibility
- Care
- Participation in God’s work

Illustration (Garden vs. Storage Unit)

Let me put it this way…

God created a garden.

But somewhere along the way…
we turned it into a storage unit.

And you know how storage units work.

You don’t go there to give things away.
You go there to hold onto things.

More stuff. More boxes. More “just in case.”

And eventually…
you don’t even remember what you have.

Now here’s the uncomfortable question:

Are we living in God’s garden…
or are we managing our own storage unit?

(Light pause)

Because the Kingdom of God looks like a garden.
And our world often looks like a warehouse.

Movement 3: The Fracture (Genesis 3)

And then comes Genesis 3.

The turning point.

The moment humanity begins to believe:

"There might not be enough."
"I need to take care of myself."
"I need more."

And just like that…

Trust becomes fear.
Sharing becomes grasping.
Community becomes competition.

Scholarly Reflection

Augustine of Hippo described sin as *"curved inward on oneself."*

And you can see it right there in Genesis.

Everything turns inward.

And when everything turns inward…
the garden starts to break.

Pastoral Connection

And here's where it gets real for us.

Because we don't just read Genesis 3…

We live it.

- We live in systems that reward accumulation

- We live in a culture that tells us “more is better”
- We live with the quiet fear that there might not be enough

And so we hold on tighter.
We protect what’s ours.
We build bigger barns… (Luke 12 echo)

And all the while…

God is still whispering:
“This is not how it started.”

Movement 4: The Kingdom as Restoration

Now here’s the good news.

The Kingdom of God is not a brand-new idea.

It is a **restoration project**.

It is God saying:

“Let’s go back… and move forward at the same time.”

Theological Insight

Dallas Willard described the Kingdom of God as
“the range of God’s effective will, where what God wants done is done.”

And in Genesis…

What God wants is clear:

- Life
- Relationship
- Shared abundance

- Care for creation
- Care for one another

Pastoral Line (Your Voice)

The Kingdom of God is not about escaping the world…

It's about learning how to live in the world
the way God intended from the beginning.

Movement 5: What This Means for Us (Howard Park)

So what does this mean for us?

Right here.
At Howard Park Christian Church.

It means…

We are not just here to attend church.
We are here to **become a Kingdom community.**

Concrete Applications

- Where there is loneliness → we create personal connections
- Where there is need → we share
- Where there is division → we build bridges
- Where there is fear → we embody trust

Because the Kingdom of God is not theoretical.

It is lived.

Gentle Humor Re-Entry

Now I know what some of you are thinking:

“Pastor… this sounds great.
But are you saying I have to give away my storage unit?”

(Light smile)

No.

I’m just saying…

Let’s take a look inside it.

Bible Study Invitation (Strong, Warm Call)

And this is where I want to invite you deeper.

Because we cannot live this kind of life on Sunday alone.

We need space to:

- Ask questions
- Wrestle with Scripture
- Learn together
- Grow together

So I want to personally invite you…

To join a Bible Study.

Not as a requirement.
But as an opportunity.

“If you’ve ever wondered what God really intended…
if you’ve ever felt like there has to be more…
this is where we begin to discover it—together.”

Closing (Pastoral, Visionary)

Let me leave you with this…

The Kingdom of God did not begin with us.

But it is being revealed **through us.**

And maybe—just maybe—

God is doing something new here.

Not by inventing something new…
But by returning us
to something very, very old.

A garden.
A people.
A shared life.

Final Line (Signature Close)

"The Kingdom of God is not someday…
it's breaking in today.
And we get to live it together."

Optional Benediction Tag

"Go now…
not as owners, but as stewards…
not as strangers, but as neighbors…
and not as individuals alone,
but as a people learning to live the Kingdom of God—together."