

In the Beginning God Created...

Gustaf Wingren

Genesis 1:26–28 · 1982

Text: Genesis 1:26–28

Professor Gustaf Wingren, who is speaking in Betlehems kyrkan on Sunday, 25 April, both at the morning service and at the theme evening, has written this meditation. It is taken from the book *I begynnelsen skapade Gud...* [In the Beginning God Created...].

And God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that moves on the earth.” And God created the human being in his image; male and female he created them. And God blessed them; God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...” (Genesis 1:27–28).

The human being is created last in the line of everything on earth. The story is naive and unmodern. And at the same time it is so incredibly modern: we have not got there yet. For the human being is created to rule and govern on earth, and this human being is “male and female,” side by side, hand in hand — it is not the man alone. “And God created the human being in his image... male and female he created them... and said” — to them both — “Subdue the earth.”

In the Orient it was common for a ruler, when he had conquered a piece of land, to set up an image of himself in the territory to mark, “Here I rule.” There the human couple now walks about on the earth, the man and the woman. They are “images” of another, images of him who is not visible but who is the real ruler over grass, birds, and cattle. The human being is to behave as God behaves.

So it is in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount as well: Be in your life on earth the way God is on earth. What God is like, one can see, after all: “He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and he sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” Can you draw the

conclusions? Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. That is to “rule.” That is sovereignty.

This human majesty can take unexpected forms that do not look like power at all to the eye. Three words are enough (or only two, by the way, in Greek) — for example, when they set out in the night “with torches, lanterns, and weapons” to capture the dangerous man and have him executed. He steps out between the trees in Gethsemane, still sweating after the struggle of anguish in there: “Whom are you looking for?” “We are looking for Jesus of Nazareth.” “*Ego eimi*” — “It is I.” “Then they drew back and fell to the ground,” it says (John 18:6). Or when he turns and looks at Peter, who has already managed to deny him three times, in the middle of the confusion and the uproar. He only turns and looks. He says nothing. “And Peter goes out and wept bitterly.”

Of him, Jesus, the first chapter of Colossians says in its fifteenth verse: “...he who is the image of the invisible God and the firstborn before all creation...” This statement means one thing without the slightest doubt: “ruling,” the right behavior on earth that was God’s intention when the human being came into being — the ruling, or, the royal dominion — is realized for the first time in history in Jesus of Nazareth, trampled down and crucified.

Gustaf Wingren

Translator’s notes. This short meditation was printed on the front page (continued on p. 10) of the April–May 1982 newsletter of the Karlstad Mission Congregation, ahead of Wingren’s visit; the italic lead paragraph is the editor’s, and the newsletter says the meditation is taken from Wingren’s book *I begynnelsen skapade Gud...* It is included as a devotion; the sermon he preached that Sunday is not in the scans. The Bible text is quoted in the old 1917 Swedish wording, which we render in plain modern English, and Wingren’s heading reference reads “1 Mos 1:27 f.” although the quotation begins with verse 26. Peter’s weeping keeps the Swedish shift of tense (“goes out and wept”). The misprint “utan minska tvekan” is read as “utan minsta tvekan” (“without the slightest doubt”).

Gustaf Wingren · draft translation ·

SOURCE

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