* Introduction
  + We could spend weeks unpacking the richness of Psalm 8
  + But this morning, I just want to focus on verses 4-6
  + Because here we have one of the most succinct summaries of the mission of humankind in all of Scripture
  + In verse 6 David stands in awe at the fact that God has made us “*rulers*” of the works of his hands
  + Do you see yourself that way? As a *ruler*? A prince or princess of the Kingdom of God?
  + If not, my prayer is that you will this morning.
  + That is the main point you will see on your handouts.
  + That from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, it is clear that the mission of humankind is to rule over every square inch of creation with God and for him.
  + To see that, we’re going to go on a journey this morning through the five major acts of history and trace this idea of you and I as “rulers” throughout it.
  + We’ve got a lot of ground to cover, and not a lot of time to cover it, so let’s jump right in to Act 1, and the very first verses of *Genesis* 1 that you all likely know by heart.
* Act 1: Creation
  + **God could have finished the first creation all on his own**
    - Genesis 1:1-3: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth…And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.
    - God simply spoke. That’s all. And light was created. The sun was created. Mountains, palm trees, and whatever the heck this thing is was created.
    - And what’s clear as you read Genesis 1 is that it was perfectly within God’s power to finish the first creation all on his own. That’s the fill in there: finished.
    - But turn your Bibles to Genesis 2:4-5 and you’ll see that that was never his intention.
  + **But he chose to fill, subdue, and rule this world in partnership with you and me**
    - Genesis 2:4-5: This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up—WHY—for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth *and there was no one to work the ground.*
    - God didn’t *need* someone to work the ground and garden it. But that was his good and perfect intent!
    - As you see in your handout, God chose to fill, subdue, and rule this world in partnership with you and me
    - We see this even more explicitly in Genesis 1:26-28 in the first words God spoke to humanity.
    - Genesis 1:26-28: Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, *so that they may rule*…God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. *Rule* over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”
    - This is the First Commission God gave to humankind
    - And as we’ll see this morning, it’s the ONLY Commission God never once rescinds.
    - So we better make sure we understand what this commission means.
    - So let’s quickly break down each of the four commands in the First Commission together. You’ll see them on your handouts
      * “Be fruitful and increase in number”
        + This one is straight forward. God is telling us to have a lot of babies.
        + = procreate.That’s the fill in there.
      * “fill the earth”
        + Scholars agree that this is not God reiterating the call for us to fill the maternity ward.
        + While the command to “increase in number” is a call to *pro*creation, the command to “fill the earth” is a call to civilization and *cultural* creation.
        + It’s God’s call to take this largely blank canvas he handed us on the “sixth day,” and fill it with art and architecture, schools and services, tree forts and telescopes.
        + All of this falls under the banner of “fill the earth.”
        + To fill the earth is to create culture. That’s the next fill in.
      * “subdue”
        + Wayne Grudem, the editor of the ESV Bible, translates “subdue” this way: “to make the earth more useful for human beings' benefit and enjoyment.”
        + Sounds a lot like what *you* do when you work as a novelist (Kelli Stuart), or a mechanic (Doug Livermore), or a violinist (Josh Hockmeister).
        + You are subduing the world by making it more useful for other human beings’ benefit and enjoyment. Those are the fill ins there. Benefit and enjoyment.
        + The final piece of the First Commission is this command to *rule*—what David is marveling at in Psalm 8.
      * “rule”
        + The world’s leading NT scholar, N.T. Wright offers the best explanation I’ve heard of this term. He says this: "The creator has a future in mind for creation; and Human—this strange creature, full of mystery and glory—is the means by which the creator is going to take his project forward."
        + Creation was never meant to be a *product* we passively consume. It’s a *project* God has called us to participate in.
        + In the First Commission he is inviting humankind to join him in taking the creation project forward
        + Forward to what exactly?
        + To the entire cosmos being drenched in God's glory. To build for the eternal Kingdom of God, AKA the Kingdom of Heaven.
        + To rule is = partner with God in the advancement of his Kingdom
        + Gold, Pearls, and Onyx

Little poetic detail in Gen 2 that symbolizes this beautifully

Genesis 2:10-12 says, “Now a river flows from Eden to water the orchard, and from there it divides into four headstreams. The name of the first is Pishon; it runs through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is pure; pearls and lapis lazuli are also there).”

So, underneath this garden that Adam and Eve were asked to cultivate, we see gold, pearls, and lapis lazuli, which for those of us who are not archaeologists, is a beautiful precious stone.

That Indiana Jones reference is my birthday present to you, Chris Adams.

So in the second chapter of Scripture we see gold, pearls, and precious stones at Adam and Eve's work site.

Where else do we see these things in Scripture? Second to *last* chapter of Scripture in the NJ whose streets of gold, gates made of pearls, and walls “decorated with every kind of precious stone” (see Revelation 21:18-21).

I’ve read a lot of commentaries that argue this is God's poetic way of saying, "Hey kids. I created this world for you to explore and cultivate and *rule* with me. To bear my image in every square inch of creation. And somehow I'm going to use all of that work to build our eternal home."

* + - Do you see how *epic* Christian mission is?
    - Purpose of life and work isn’t “self expression” or something as small as your happiness.
    - N.T. Wright: "Forget “happiness” you are called to a throne."
    - Like when Rapunzel looks in the mirror and realizes she's the lost princess.
    - YOU are the lost prince or princess of *the* Kingdom, believer!
    - God could have finished the first creation all on his own
    - But he chose to fill, subdue, and rule this world in partnership with you and me
    - And *this* is what David is awe-struck over in Psalm 8! (don’t read)
    - One more thing before we move on to Act 2 of the biblical narrative. Critically important to see here in Act 1.
  + **God deemed the spiritual *and* material realms “good”**
    - Genesis 1:4: God saw that the ***light*** was ***good.***
    - Genesis 1:10: “***land***,” and “***seas***.”
    - Genesis 1:12: ***plants,*** ***trees***, and ***fruit***
    - Genesis 1:16-18: ***sun and moon***.
    - Genesis 1:21: ***great creatures of the sea*** and ***every winged bird***
    - Genesis 1:25: ***wild animals***
    - Genesis 1:31: God saw ***all that he had made***, and it was ***very good***.
    - Now, some of you are asking yourselves, “What in the world does this have to do with our mission to rule?” Stay tuned. I *promise* this truth will pay off.
    - But now it’s time to move onto Act 2.
    - As we transition from Act 1 to Act 2 of, we go from glorious light to tragic darkness.
    - Within 16 verses of Genesis 3, the shalom of Genesis 1 and 2 is ransacked as Adam and Eve try to be *regents* rather than *vice-regents.* That’s the fill in there. Regents.
    - They want to be *King* instead of prince and princess.
* Act 2: Fall
  + **Adam and Eve tried to be regents rather than vice-regents**
    - That’s really what’s at the heart of the first sin and every sin thereafter
    - DeYoung: “Instead of carrying out his kingly mandate to rule the world under God, Adam joins the Serpent in rebellion against God and attempts to take the crown for himself.”
    - And so, God justly curses Adam and Eve
    - And here’s what I want you to see this morning
  + **The curse broke every square inch of creation—spiritual *and* material**
    - Clearly humanity’s relationship with God is now broken—the *spiritual* realm
    - But notice that the *material* realm is broken and cursed as well
    - God tells Adam, “Cursed is the *ground* because of you” in Genesis 3:17.
    - So the *spiritual* realm is now cursed
    - The *material* realm is now cursed
    - And so is our First Commission to fill, subdue, and rule the world
    - That’s what we see here in this passage
    - Through PAINFUL toil you will…
    - But write this down in your notes because this is a critical distinction
  + **Our First Commission to rule is now cursed, but is not itself *the* curse**
    - The First Commission to work and fill this material earth and make it more useful for other human beings’ benefit and enjoyment was given by God *prior to the Fall*!
    - Declared by God to be good!
    - And so, we can know that even on the days when our work feels like “painful toil”—the First Commission is not *the* curse. It *is* cursed because of sin.
    - But notice this before we move on to Act 3
    - Even though the First Commission is now painful and difficult, God never once retracts it.
    - In fact, he *reiterates* it after the Fall!
    - Take Noah as an example
      * Context of Noah
      * God sends flood to start over
      * When they get off boat, God says
      * Gen 9:1: Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."
      * Re-issuing First Commission, yet again in the context of *blessing.*
      * Says, yeah, you human beings made your rule more difficult. But this is still your mission. This is still the thing I made you to do.
      * But just in case we miss that, we see the goodness of the First Commission on vivid display in Act 3 when Christ the redeemer comes and spends what scholars estimate to be about 80% of his adult life ruling over the works of God’s hands as a craftsman.
      * That’s your fill in there. 80%.
      * And this is what Jesus’s neighbors knew him as (don’t read Mark 6:3).
* Act 3: Redemption
  + **Christ spent roughly 80% of his adult life ruling over a carpenter’s bench**
    - I love how my friend and fellow author Dave Hataj put it: “Jesus spent a couple of decades hammering, sawing, and figuring out solutions to building problems, while the world was going to hell in a handbasket.”
    - Given the trajectory of Jesus’s life, this truth should stop us in our tracks
    - God could have chosen for Jesus to grow up in anybody’s home.
    - He could have placed Jesus in a priestly household like John the Baptist where he could have devoted his days to prayer.
    - He could have chosen for Jesus to grow up in the home of a Pharisee like the Apostle Paul where he could have spent hours upon end studying the Scriptures.
    - But instead, God placed Jesus in the household of a carpenter, where he would spend his days doing what?
    - Psalm 8: Ruling over the works of God’s hands—ruling over the trees and wood that he called good in Act 1 of this narrative.
    - But of course, Jesus didn’t just come to earth to make Nazareth’s finest kitchenettes.
    - He came to redeem every square inch of creation that the curse broke in Act 2.
  + **Christ redeemed all of creation—spiritual *and* material**
    - That’s your next fill in. Christ redeemed **all** of creation. Every square inch.
    - And yes that certainly *includes* the spiritual realm
    - Luke 19:10: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.
    - But he didn’t *just* come to seek and save the lost.
    - Colossians 1:19-20: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself *all things*.”
    - In the words of LOTR, *everything* sad about Act 2 is going to come untrue.
    - Not just our souls that Christ is redeeming.
    - And this is exactly what we see in Jesus’s miracles
    - Yes, he performed “spiritual” miracles by driving out demons
    - But he also performed miracles in the material world.
    - He calmed violent storms, created miraculous catches of fish, and turned water into wine.
    - By the way, it’s interesting that John refers to that particular miracle—of Jesus turning water into wine—not just as a “miracle” but as the first *sign.*
    - A sign of what? Sign that he was the Messiah promised in Act 2 that would redeem and reclaim every square inch of God’s good world
    - That he had come to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.
    - Some of you are wondering why I’m hammering this point so hard—that Jesus came to redeem and rule over the spiritual *and* the material.
    - Let me give you two reasons why this is so important.
      * First and most importantly, **If Jesus didn’t redeem both the spiritual and material realms then his victory is at best a partial one.** 
        + That’s the fill in there. Partial.
        + Can I be real a second? When I hear someone say that “the only things that last for eternity are God’s Word and people,” it makes me feel like this. It drives me absolutely nuts.
        + Because, as we just saw in Act 1, God deemed “all of creation” spiritual AND material to be good.
        + Then in Act 2 we saw that Satan broke every part of God’s good creation—spiritual *and* material. And God promised in Genesis 3 that a Redeemer would crush Satan’s head and win back everything that was lost in Genesis 3.
        + And thus, in the words of theologian Steven Lawson, “If redemption does not go as far as the curse of sin, then God has failed.”
        + Do you see how dangerous it is to say that only God’s Word and people will last forever?
        + To say that is to accuse Jesus of being a loser rather than Lord.
        + But he’s NOT a loser. *Satan* is the loser. Because at the resurrection, Jesus Christ rose from the grave as the indisputable Victor, Redeemer, and KING over every square inch of creation.
        + That’s the first reason why it matters so much that Christ redeemed the spiritual and material worlds.
        + Here’s the second.
      * Because Jesus *redeemed* the spiritual and material world, we can be confident that our **ruling**over and**work** *with* the spiritual and material world matters to God.
      * Those are the fill ins there. Ruling and work.
      * But just in case we miss that, the Apostle Paul makes this abundantly clear in Ephesians 2:8-10.
      * In other words…
  + **While Christ has not saved us by our works, he *has* saved us for the “good works which he prepared in advance for us to do.”**
    - Easy to assume that when Paul says “good works” he means exclusively *spiritual* work like “evangelism” and “prayer”
    - But guess what? Paul had Greek words at his disposal that we would translate to mean evangelism and prayer today. But those aren’t the words he chose here.
    - The Greek word we translate to mean “good works” is *ergon* which according to ever Biblical concordance I’ve ever read literally means…
    - In other words, Paul’s saying that part of the purpose of our salvation is to rule over the works of God’s hands! The First Commission! The thing we were originally *created* to do is the very thing Christ has *redeemed* us to do!
    - Only now, we will have a *dual* vocation as we move into Act 4 of history—where we all stand today.
    - Before we get to the nuances of that dual vocation, I want you to consider this: Just as God could have finished the *first* creation all on his own in Act 1, clearly he could have finished the *final* creation—the eternal Kingdom of God—all on his own that first Easter Sunday.
* Act 4: Renewal
  + **God could have finished the final creation all on his own**
    - What disciples were expecting
    - See Acts 1
    - The disciples were giddy
    - Because they *knew* that God was perfectly capable of finishing the final creation all on his own
  + **But he chose to do that work in partnership with you and me**
    - Just like he chose to do in Act 1
    - See this in Jesus’s words to disciples
    - Like many Christians today, the disciples were obsessed with knowing exactly how and when God’s kingdom would be revealed in full.
    - But in his final words before his ascension, Jesus turned the disciples’ attention away from the *timing* of the kingdom and towards a *task*—specifically the task of serving as Jesus’s “witnesses.”
    - Expounding upon the original Greek of this passage, the late great Tim Keller explains that the word “witnesses” means
      * more than simply winning people to Christ...the church is to be an agent of the kingdom. It is not only to model the healing of God’s rule but it is to spread it....ordering lives and relationships and institutions and communities according to God’s authority to bring in the blessedness of the kingdom.
    - “Authority” is the keyword there, because here in Act 4, Jesus is fully restoring us to the First Commission to rule the earth on God’s behalf.
    - While “All authority in heaven and on earth—spiritual and material—has been given to [Christ],” (see Matthew 28:18), our King is choosing to delegate that authority to his princes and princesses.
    - Which is exactly how God has been working since Act 1 of this drama.
    - Jesus the Gardener
      * Most beautiful picture of this comes at the Garden of the Tomb
      * John 20:13-15
      * Now Jesus had just defeated death
      * Clearly he could have chosen to be mistaken as *anything*
      * Could have appeared to be a King, a carpenter, whatever
      * But instead, he *chose* to be mistaken as a gardener
      * Why?
      * Some people have suggested that it’s simply because Jesus was buried in a garden. So it was merely a coincidence that Mary mistook Jesus as a gardener.
      * Maybe.
      * But I think the God who created more than 6,000 species of mammals including this creature is a bit more creative than that
      * Some theologians think—and I agree—that John is intentionally contrasting Jesus, the “Last Adam” at the Garden of the Tomb with the *First* Adam in the Garden of Eden.
      * Think about it: In the beginning, God inaugurated the world, but he didn’t finish it.
      * He called Adam and Eve to help him fill, subdue, and rule over the first creation
      * The First Adam failed, ensuring our need for a Redeemer.
      * Fast forward thousands of years, and here, at the resurrection, God is inaugurating a whole *new* world.
      * And the Last Adam is choosing to appear as a gardener as a symbolic way of saying that he is planting heaven on earth once again.
      * And just as the FIRST Adam had his bride Eve to help him cultivate the first creation, Jesus, the LAST Adam has *HIS* bride, the Church, to help him cultivate the final one.
      * Don’t know about you, but the first time someone connected those dots for me, my mind was BLOWN
    - And don’t miss this: Because God’s eternal Kingdom is spiritual *and* material on a renewed *physical* earth, you and I are called to a **dual** vocation in the present—that’s the fill in. Today we are called to a dual vocation, the Great AND First Commissions, to implement Christ’s authority over the spiritual AND material realms.
  + **Today we are called to a dual vocation, the Great *and* First Commissions, to implement Christ’s authority over the spiritual *and* material realms**
    - Listen: The Great Commission is indeed great. Non-optional command for EVERY follower of Jesus.
    - But don’t make the mistake of forgetting the First Commission
    - Because God never once retracted the First Commission for you and I to rule over *everything* he put under our feet as David says in Psalm 8.
    - Kevin DeYoung is right: “It flattens the New Testament beyond recognition to make it one large tract about saving souls from hell.”
    - Which is why we see the Apostle Paul making disciples *and* making tents.
    - It’s why we see Peter catching people *and* catching fish after the resurrection.
    - And it’s why we see Jesus mending tables *and* mending souls during his time on earth.
  + One final act before we get painfully practical about what this all means for us as we go back to work and camps and our communities tomorrow.
  + Lest we get too big a head on ourselves, we must remember this: While you and I are called to partner with Jesus to garden heaven on earth, He alone is going to finish that work when he consummates the marriage between heaven and earth.
* Act 5: Consummation
  + **God alone will consummate the marriage between heaven and earth**
    - That’s the fill in there. Consummates.
  + **The Kingdom of Heaven will be spiritual *and* material**
    - And contrary to the American caricature of heaven as an immaterial gathering of disembodied souls, Scripture makes *crystal* clear that God’s final creation—just like the first creation—is spiritual *and* material.
    - Revelation 21:1-2: Then I saw “a new heaven and a new ***earth***,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.
    - God never intended to “fit us for heaven, to live with [him] *there*.”
    - He promised heaven on earth and to dwell with us *here*.
    - And what will we be doing on this renewed earth for all eternity?
    - Revelation 22 answers that question directly
  + **And we will “reign” with him and for him “forever and ever”**
    - Revelation 22:3-5: No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.
    - Not “they will recline in hammocks for ever and ever.”
    - Not “they will sing Lord I Lift Your Name on High for ever and ever.”
    - We will *reign* for ever and ever. Which is exactly what God created us to do from the beginning: filling, subduing, and ruling over the works of God’s hands with him and for him.
    - If you had to pick a single movie line to sum up the mission of humankind that we see from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, it’s this: Once a king or queen of Narnia, *always* a king or queen of Narnia.
    - The True Aslan is *perfectly* capable of ruling this world all on his own. But he has drafted you and I into service for his greater glory.
    - I hope that brings you as much awe and wonder as it did David thousands of years ago.
  + Before we close, let me suggest 3 practical responses to this truth that God has created you to rule with him and for him.
* Your Response
  + **Embrace your role in the First Commission to rule your corner of creation with excellence, love, and in accordance with our King’s commands**
    - Don’t fall for the lie that your role as an executive (Terry), teacher (Christy), athlete (Landon) is “secular.”
    - Because Christ has redeemed all of creation—spiritual and material—you can be confident that your work *with* the material world is sacred.
    - I love how one theologian summed it up: “There is simply no biblical support for the notion that while we are on earth we should spend our time in ‘spiritual’ tasks rather than ‘material’ ones. There is no divorce of the spiritual from the material in God’s good world....a Christian can dig wells, walk on the moon, or plant crops to the glory of God.”
    - So let that encourage you
    - But let it also challenge you to rule over your small corner of creation in accordance with your King’s commands.
    - Work *heartily* as unto the Lord in the courts, Brian Sarabia
    - Rule over the soccer field with *love*, Karina Adams
    - Heal the sick per Christ’s command, Megan Klakring
    - Master and subdue your subjects at school, students
    - Seek primarily to serve, not to *be* served by your employer, employees
    - And do it *all* with a holy confidence that this is exactly what God made you to do
  + **Embrace your role in the Great Commission to make disciples as you are going about the First Commission**
    - We don’t have time to really get into it today, but “go” is *not* the command in “go and make disciples”
    - When you study the Greek, a far more accurate translation of this is “as you are going” make disciples
    - As you are going about what?
    - The good works God prepared in advance for you to do!
    - And oh by the way, you and I are *far* more likely to make disciples than Pastor Chris or Pastor Dylan or Pastor Jeff are.
    - There’s a great old book by Dr. Michael Green that found that 80% of evangelism in the first few centuries—when Christianity *exploded*—was not done by pastors or religious professionals.
    - It was done by mere Christians like you and me
    - Listen to what he says.
    - He writes: “In contrast to the present day, when Christianity is highly...dispensed by a professional clergy...in the early days the faith was spontaneously spread by informal evangelists,” who shared the gospel “in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls.”
    - True then, true now when nonbelievers are less likely than ever to darken the door of a church before they commit their life to Christ.
    - Embrace your role.
  + **Let your hope be fueled by the promise of reigning with Christ forever and ever** 
    - Alcorn: Satan need not convince us that Heaven doesn’t exist. He need only convince us that Heaven is a place of boring, unearthly existence. If we believe that lie, we’ll be robbed of our joy and anticipation, we’ll set our minds on this life and not the next, and we won’t be motivated to share our faith.
    - **Time Permitting**
      * Lord willing, next year I will be publishing my second children’s book to help kids (and frankly, you and me) catch a vision for what Revelation 22:5—this promise of ruling and reigning with Christ forever and ever—will look like
      * I want to close by sharing an excerpt of it with you
      * Don’t worry, not selling you a book. You actually can’t even pre-order it.
      * And we don’t even have final artwork. Just black and white sketches. But my prayer is that this will serve as the perfect benediction to this sermon on Psalm 8.
      * Read TRIY

On a day coming soon, though nobody knows when,

We’ll look up at the sky and see heaven descend.

Jesus said He won’t stay in the clouds way up there.

He’ll bring heaven to Earth, and He’ll live with us here.

When we long at last reach our final destination,

We’ll hug long-lost loved ones from every nation.

There will be no more sin, no more sickness or sadness

Just the best things made perfect, bringing God and us gladness.

But the best part by far is King Jesuswill be there!

Making everything new with His peace, love, and care.

And now you might think that our story is ending,

But in fact, this is just the beginning.

Because Jesus wants you to *rule* with Him—

to explore and fill the kingdom of heaven with Him.

For kingdoms have more than just people and kings.

They have art and bakeries, campfires and swings.

God says He won’t rule this world all on His own,

He’ll send princes and princesses out from His throne.

To ride without fear on the backs of great lions

And blaze brand-new trails through the middle of Zion.

To master the flute, piano, or timpani

As Jesus applauds your brilliant symphony.

Maybe you’ll explore galaxies far, far away

And marvel at what God once made in a day.

So don’t think for one second that Heaven is boring,

because we’ll be reigning, creating, and exploring!

Not just for our joy, and surely not for our glory

But to love and to worship the One who is worthy.

It’ll be so much better than your wildest dreams—

ruling heaven on earth next to Jesus our King.

* + - * But here’s the thing friends.
      * We don’t have to wait for Christ’s return to begin ruling with him.
      * All of what we just read is an extension of what we’re supposed to be doing RIGHT NOW.
      * Jesus Christ—the one who has all authority in heaven and earth—all authority over the material and the spiritual realms—has delegated that authority to you and me. To “rule over the works of his hands” now and for evermore.
      * Pray
    - **No Time Permitting**
      * Look forward expectantly to the day when we will reign forever and ever *with* Christ on the New Earth
      * But I hope you see that that’s simply an extension of what Christ has called us to do in the present.
      * We don’t have to wait for Christ’s return to begin ruling with him.
      * Jesus Christ—the one who has all authority in heaven and earth—all authority over the material and the spiritual realms—has delegated that authority to you and me. To “rule over the works of his hands” now and for evermore.
      * Pray