



SERMON GUIDE 1.23.2022

GENESIS

Mirrors of GOd

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 1:26-27

RECAP:

- Upwards to 4 million black people were once slaves in the United States, many of them stolen from their homes in Africa and shipped away on boats with harsh conditions.
- There were anywhere between 3-7 million Native Americans (Indians) living on this land that would become the United States before European settlement. Their land was systematically taken and many of those tribes extinguished.
- Over 6 million Jews died in the Holocaust under the direction of Adolf Hitler.
- At least 20 million people died under communist-ruled USSR by Joseph Stalin.
- 45 million people died under the dictator Mao Zedong in China as he executed and systematically starved his people to death.
- These are just stories from the last couple of hundred years of human history, and don't even account for the countless atrocities throughout the last several thousand in cultures across the globe.

Why are these events viewed as being tragic? Why do these stories and the numbers of people associated with them move our hearts and cause us to shake our heads in disbelief? Similar stories about the number of mosquitoes that will be exterminated by humans slapping them or spraying them dead won't produce the same response. Learning that 15 Billion trees are cut down each year doesn't have the same effect. Why is that? Because there is something different about human beings from every other created thing. Humans are different from mosquitoes and trees.

We know this inherently, but not every worldview can ground that claim. Naturalism believes there is no God, and the world is a product of random chance events that brought about this world, each step unguided and meaningless. We are just evolved creatures from lower life forms. Friends, if that is true, then none of the numbers I shared really matter. If survival of the fittest is how we got here, then mass murder, enslavement, and genocide are all just evidence of the strong eating the weak. We shouldn't assign any moral judgments to it. That's just the way the world works. In fact, it's how the world **MUST** work. That's progress!

But our feelings betray us. They show us that we know that storyline isn't true. We know human beings matter, and that murder, enslavement, and genocide are morally wrong and unjust. There is a reason we have fought wars to overturn slavery, and fought wars to defeat dictators. Because people matter and are worthy of dignity and humane treatment.

Where do we get this idea? Did we just make it up for ourselves? No. We find it in the Bible. We get it from God Himself.

Scripture Exegesis: **Genesis 1:26-27**

To understand why humans matter, it is vital to understand our origins. We see from Genesis 1 the unfolding of the creation narrative. We discussed in the first week that the length of time is irrelevant, and whether they are normal 6, 24 hour days is not the focus. The focus is that God is the One creating all that is in the universe. The earth and the fullness thereof comes from Him. And it is on the 6th and final day of creation, that the crown jewel emerges.

Genesis 1:26-27 -- gives the generic description of God making man in His image and likeness, male and female He created us. Then Genesis 2 gives specific descriptions of when man was created and when woman was created.

Genesis 2:7 -- *then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*

Genesis 2:21-23 -- *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought*

her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

So man is formed from the dust. The first human comes from the ground, from the creation. Then the woman is formed from the man. We are going to look at the distinctions between man and woman in a few weeks, but for now, I want us to see man and woman are created by God, as image bearers, just as Genesis 1:26-27 outlines.

God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." We see here the complexity of God we highlighted in the first week of Genesis. We do not get an explicit description of the Trinity, but as the revelation of God unfolds over the years, progressively through the Scriptures, we do learn that God is One, but in Three Persons. So when we read Genesis 1:26-27 we catch the "us" in the statement. Elohim says "let us." The "us" in the text is not God and angels or any other created thing. The "us" is God. There is an us-ness in the Godhead. That us-ness is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, each active in the work of creation. Each present eternally. These three persons of the Trinity are One, and share in the same divine substance. Yet each is different in person, role, and function. So when it says "let us make man in our image and likeness" we are getting not into a reflection of their individual roles and distinctions, but in their sameness. That sameness is their character and nature, or attributes.

It is important to realize that when the Scriptures say that God made man in His image, that doesn't mean that God has a head, a mouth, arms, two ears, etc. The eternal God is a Spirit and does not have a body like us (the exception is when God became a man in the person of Jesus). But that is not what is talked about when it says man is made in the image of God. It is not our bodies that make us like God, it is something unique about our nature. In fact, that nature and essence is what separates us from the rest of creation. We are different from animals or nature.

In theology this being made in the image and likeness of God is called the **Imago Dei**. We're going to look at man's role in creation in a few weeks, but it is vital we grasp what it means to be made in the image of God. Because Scripture's testimony means that we are different from every other created thing.

How so? We share many of the same attributes that God has. We obviously do not share his omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, eternality, immutability, aseity, etc. But we do share in things like His love, justice, mercy, wisdom, and the like. Think about it. Other creatures don't share these capacities. We are creative beings. We design things, build, invent. We are conscious, self-aware beings. We have the capacity for reasoning and rationale.

And these are not just components located within our material bodies. No, we are creatures with a duality: body and soul. We have physical bodies and we have spiritual souls. The soul is not a material thing you can hold, weigh, or cut open the body to locate. The soul is the combination of three faculties: the mind, the will, and the affections. These three components make up the soul. With our minds we reason, create, do philosophy, encounter truth, perceive things, etc. With our wills we act, choose, and exercise volition. With our affections we feel joy, love, anger, sorrow, passion, and other affections. Our soul distinguishes us from the rest of creation. Because even after our bodies die, our souls continue. There is a continuity between our lives lived in the flesh and our dying to be with God. The reason you will retain memories, and a sense of yourself is because it is housed in the soul (in the mind), not purely in our brain.

So we are made by God, in His image and likeness, for what purpose? To reflect the beauty, greatness, and glory of God back to creation. We are to serve as mirrors of God to the creation. We have a high and lofty calling as image bearers. Adam and Eve were made to reflect God, and produce offspring to multiply into the world to keep producing the image of God out.

This is why our obedience and holiness matter. God's commands to humans are not arbitrary. When God tells us how to live there is a reason: we reflect Him! I remember having this conversation with Kaleb once. I asked him, "Kaleb, why shouldn't we tell a lie?" He said, "Because God told us not to." I said, "That's right. But why did God tell us not to?" He replied, "Because He doesn't want us to do it." I said, "Yeah, but why not? If He is God, He could have chosen to let us lie, right? He could have commanded us to always tell lies, right?" Kaleb sensed the trap and just looked at me like, "I don't know, you tell me." The answer to that question is "no." He couldn't have commanded us to do that and here's why: if we tell lies, and we are made in the image of God, then we are misrepresenting who God is. The reason God commands us not to lie is because God is not a liar, and we are His image bearers. Do you see? None of God's commands are arbitrary. They are rooted in His character and nature, and we are to obey because we reflect Him back to the world.

But as you know how the story goes in Genesis 3, we sinned and rebelled against God's commands. We went against Him. And this did not remove the image of God from us, but it certainly marred it. We tarnish the image of God through our sin. We sin and fall short of the glory of God. Notice that sin is called falling short of the glory of God because that is our unique role is to glorify God and image Him to the world. Sin is falling short of that role.

George Whitefield, the English preacher from the Great Awakening, was preaching once and said to the crowds: "Do you know why the dogs bark at you, why the birds screech at you, and why the reptiles hiss at you?" It's because they know that your sin is the source of all of creation's problems. We were made as the image bearers with the job of showing the rest of creation who God is and we have marred it by sin. The rest of creation hisses at us because we're the source of all the problems.

We did not lose the image of God because of sin, but we need it restored and renewed. And this is what the message of the gospel brings. Jesus came as the perfect image of God (Hebrews 1:3) to save and redeem us. He came to pay the penalty for our sins, and to supply us the power to be transformed. Jesus now becomes the standard we are imitating. He is the true Adam, the true man that we all strive to reflect in our quest to reflect the image of God. In theology, there are three works of salvation discussed that this touches:

- **justification** - our one-time declaration of innocence and righteousness with God, our natures are changed
- **sanctification** - our ongoing transformation of character to become Christlike and holy
- **glorification** - the completion of our transformation into complete Christlikeness for eternity

In **justification** we were saved. In sanctification we are being saved. And in glorification we will be saved. There is a past, present, and future tense of it all. And all of this work touches on the image of God. In justification the image of God is renewed.

2 Corinthians 5:17 -- *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!*

Colossians 3:10 -- *and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

Ephesians 4:24 -- *and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

In **sanctification** the image matures by the power of the Holy Spirit in us and bears fruit that reflects God.

Galatians 5:22-23 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Notice that these are ways we bear the image of God in distinction from the rest of creation.

In **glorification**, we will see the work finished. When Christ returns, or we go to Him, the work will be completed and we will forever image God to the New Heavens and New Earth.

Philippians 1:6 -- And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Application:

1. Every human being is endowed with dignity, worth, and value because of the Imago Dei.

The reason slavery, the Holocaust, abortion, sex-trafficking, and any other number of atrocities committed against people is terrible is because every person, regardless of color, class, or education (or size in the case of an unborn child) are imager bearers of God. The inmate on death row for murder is still an image bearer of God, even if we call him a monster for his crime. We stand on God's Word as the authority of sex and gender, and we do not believe it's morally upright or good for human flourishing for people to violate God's design for sex. We don't think it's morally upright or leads to flourishing to deny your God-given gender to adopt whatever gender you want. But regardless of how sinful we think it is, the people who do these things and/or celebrate them are still image bearers of God. In other words, we cannot qualify this. Every person has worth, value, and dignity because they are made by God. But this is also why our sins tarnish that image.

2. The purpose and meaning of our lives cannot be grasped apart from understanding the Imago Dei.

There are so many things we can give our time and energy to. But at the core of what it means to be a human being is that our mandate is to image God back to the world. So regardless of your occupation, hobbies, or trade, the purpose and meaning of your life is to bring glory to God by imaging Him back into the world.

3. All morals and values are rooted in our creation by God and the task of imaging Him.

This goes back to my story with Kaleb. You don't lie, not just because God commanded it, but because you reflect Him, and He's not a liar. He's not a thief. He doesn't deceive. We are called to be holy as the Lord our God is holy. Our holiness is supposed to display to the world who God is.

4. Each of us is to exhibit the Imago Dei in the unique way God created us.

This gets to the heart of not only sanctification, but the uniqueness of each person. Not only do human beings bear the Imago Dei, but you as an individual are made with your unique personality, gifting, traits, and experiences for the purpose of imaging God in the unique way He designed you. So I'm not a construction guy. It will be hard for me to image God through building something. I need to showcase the Imago Dei in the unique ways that He made me. The same is true for you. I'm not being sanctified to look like Brandon, and Brandon is not being sanctified to look like Nick, we are each being sanctified into progressively better versions of ourselves. We are becoming more and more like the imager bearers we are created to be.

5. All the beauty and enjoyment that comes from art, technology, and culture are fruits of common grace from the Imago Dei.

Because of the Imago Dei in each person, there is a common grace at work that allows for people who don't even acknowledge God to bear fruits. Because Steve Jobs was made in the image of God, he was a creator and innovator, developing not only the Apple products we enjoy, but Pixar movies. We can enjoy the music of Billy Joel, Adele, or Mozart, even if they didn't profess Christ. Because there is something about the image of God in them that will produce the fruits of common grace. Innovations in medicine, technology, literature, and endless things stem from this reality.

6. The foundation stone of our identity is that we are made in the image of God.

Every human being at some point asks the question, in some form or fashion, "who am I?" This is an existential question. Are we just animals that have evolved from lower life forms? No. We are not cosmic accidents or simply bags of chemicals. We are uniquely made creatures of God. We are the crown jewel of the creation, made to be lords over the creation, ruling as mirrors of the Creator. We will talk more about what that means specifically next week, but the key today is understanding who you are.

And while we have strayed far from where we are supposed to be, because of Christ, we can recover that mantle once again. We are made to live forever before the face of God, and it is that face we are called to reflect in how we live in the world. One day in the New Heavens and New Earth we will once again perfectly reflect God's glory to the rest of creation, for now we keep striving to tell the truth with our lives and become more like Him.

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to be created in the image of God or the *imago dei* (Ephesians 2:10)?
2. How are man and woman different from the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26)?
3. What 3 components make up the soul? Discuss how each of them is different but also how they each inform the others.
4. What are God's commands rooted in (Psalm 33:5)? Why must we obey them (Genesis 1:26)?
5. Discuss the differences between justification (2 Corinthians 5:17, Colossians 3:10, Ephesians 4:24), sanctification (Galatians 5:22-23), and glorification (Philippians 1:6).
6. Why is it important that our morals and values be rooted in the Word of God (John 17:17, Psalm 119:160)?