

# Systematic Theology: The Origin of Man

*Systematic Theology*

By Don Green

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**Preached on:** Tuesday, May 1 2018

**Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, I'm glad to add my voice of welcome to friends new and old to be with us here this evening. I was speaking to someone before the service that has just recently been able to start coming to our church and just seeing the delight that people have to gather around the word of God is a great encouragement to me. When I'm preparing, I often think of your faces. I think of where you sit and as I am preparing alone in my study, I'm thinking of you and picturing you as I do. You know, we preach for the glory of God, of course, but we also preach for those who come and hear and want to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and it's a privilege to be able to do that. And I'm glad that you love the word of God enough to come out on a Tuesday night. There are other things to do, especially on a gorgeous night like tonight, but there is no place I'd rather be on Tuesday evening than right here where we are.

We're going to start a new series sort of here on Tuesday nights. It's a continuation of an old series, a new section of an old series. It has been several months since we last visited our series on systematic theology and if you're new with us, I encourage you to get this series. My friend Will will make up a few albums. There are 16 that we've done so far and just to remind you of where we've been to give you a context for where we're going, we opened with three messages on biblical authority; we followed with five messages on the nature of God; three messages on God's eternal plan; and then we next had two messages on creation and providence; and last when we were here in August, we taught three messages on angels, Satan and demons. So what we're trying to do in this series over a period of a year or two, over a period of time, is to kind of lay a deep foundation for what our theological life is like at Truth Community Church, what is it that we believe, and in going through this series in this systematic way, trying to do our best in some manner or form to teach the full counsel of God. We don't want to simply cherry pick our favorite topics and teach on those over and over again. Paul commended those who would teach the full counsel of God and that's what we want to do. Scripture teaches on a wide variety of subjects and over the course of the years, we want to do our part to speak to those things and to lay a foundation. You could also think about it in terms of building a theological fence around our church where the healthful things are found within those parameters and the things that are unhealthy, that are untrue, are to the best of our ability kept out, and the only way that you can do that is teaching Scripture in a consistent systematic way over time and so this is part of that broader goal.

Those 16 messages really cover foundational themes of theology and tonight we come to the doctrine of man, the study of anthropology, to use the technical theological term from the Greek word "anthropos" for "man," and this series is going to be more crucial, more strategic than you might think just given a general sense of the topic heading, you might say. It is because our society, especially in the Western world, has lost sight of the doctrine of man that we are in the horrible mess that we are in.

I was reminded coming in of kind of a negative illustration of the importance of the doctrine of man that is borne from something in my family. A number a number of years ago, I had a somewhat distant relative that I spent just a little bit of time with who became a drunk, who squandered his life, and eventually in the age of his thirties somewhere, stumbling along a railroad trestle in his intoxicated state, rolled down the trestle and was discovered much later dead and he is buried in my home county, or just outside my home county, and what a tragedy that is. It's a tragedy on so many levels: a wasted life, a man dying in his vomit and dying in such a deplorable undignified state, but even more than that, it's a representative of the horrible loss of humanity as humanity has fallen into sin.

God created man for high and noble purposes. God created man to exist for his glory, to be his appointed agent over creation. God appointed man to be the head of things and to live from this position of dignity and almost majestic royalty as God's uniquely appointed agent, and yet look at what has happened, what Adam and the rest of us have done with it. We have squandered that and we manifest life in such undignified ways, speaking collectively of humanity. It is because man has turned away from God's purpose for him that we have the perverse moral dilemmas that we face as a society. It's because we have turned away from God's purpose for man that men live in foolishness. It's because we've turned away from God's purpose for man that so many ills have come into our society and come into our personal lives. You know, if you watch sporting events, you can't help but see the commercials that portray men in the most foolish and insensible ways and that's meant to be funny, that's meant to be a point of humor and it always disgusts me by contrast, because in portraying men as a foolish simpleton who can only pursue his most basic fundamental urges and not act with any dignity at all, in all of that we are violating the high purpose and the high dignity that God intended man to live on, and you don't understand the realm and the depth of the loss until you come to see what God's original intent was for man.

One theologian said this in answering the question, "What is man?" He said back in the early seventies, he said, "If man is what the Bible says he is, he cannot know himself meaningfully apart from God." You see, our problem collectively as a society is that we have embraced an evolutionary mindset that divorces man from his Creator; that divorces man from his origin; that plunges him into a whole realm of history that is not true and that cuts the umbilical cord from the very thing that would give him purpose and meaning in life. And as you study the doctrine of man, as we are going to do over these next four weeks including tonight, you'll see how great the loss is but you'll also see something that will draw you out to a sense of worship and meaning, not only for humanity but also for

us as individuals. So I feel like this is very important, although on first glance it might seem to be somewhat of a dry topic to address. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What we want to do tonight is consider the origin of man. That's the title of tonight's message, "Systematic Theology: The Origin of Man," and we're going to look at two different aspects of this: the origin of man and also the purpose of man. Nothing could be more fundamental to our existence than to understand where we came from and why we exist, right? What could be more fundamental than that?

I had another thought as I was driving in tonight and this will help you kind of understand, I think, and appreciate the significance of this broad series on humanity when we think about it from an illustration point in the light of our own personal relationships. You know, we've been together as a church for six years now, some a little less than that as you've come, but whatever, and there is a sense in which we have kind of parachuted into each other's lives, haven't we? We know each other, we are kind of joining each other's lives as a story in progress, but what we sometimes forget is that there are things in our past that shape who we are now but we don't always know about those things; that there are times of loss, times of hurt, times in pain that shape the way people respond to the way that life is now. Or we don't know some of the triumphs that each other, that we've had in the past, triumphs in spirituality or successes in life that show the blessing of God on our lives, and those things are kind of below the surface but they shape who we are and how we respond to things. Well, in like manner, let me just say this, as we get to know each other, I can't tell you how often as I get to know people in ministry and I'll learn something, I'll make an incidental comment about something that happens 20 or 30 years ago and I say, "Well, that explains a whole lot. That explains why this person responds in the way that he does. This explains why this particular woman struggles with sorrow or difficulty or trust." You start to understand things because there is a history behind who they are now that explains a lot of their reactions in the present, that if you don't know that then they seem to be kind of disconnected from reality or disconnected from an understanding. History tells us so much. Well, beloved, so it is as we consider the origin of man. When we trace back our history to what the Bible describes our history to be, we say, "Oh, now I have a sense of purpose. Now I have an understanding of why we exist that is utterly lost on those who reject Scripture," and that's what we want to shore up and address in our understanding.

So let's look at these two points together briefly here this evening and talk about the origin of man. The origin of man. You can only understand man if you understand where he came from. If you miss the question about where he came from, you have no context for understanding his true purpose, and as we'll see at the end of our time tonight, we will make the effort to apply this personally and I think the personal application is going to be rich and profound. Here we're talking more about man as the human race as we start.

Turn in your Bibles to the first chapter of Genesis and we'll be reviewing some familiar ground here tonight, and then getting into things that are perhaps less familiar in the next two or three weeks to come. What is the origin of man? Where did man come from? Our secular society gives an evolutionary answer to that question: a product of chance; a

product of evolution over the course of billions of years; coming from nothing and in the end ultimately going to nothing. Does it surprise anyone that when you cultivate that mindset that people fall into a sense of despair and purposelessness? If you came from nowhere and you're going nowhere, you are no one. That's where our modern philosophy leaves us. Is it any wonder that people are drunks? That people are drug addicts? That people pursue sexual intoxication in utterly bizarre ways, searching for something that would light a fire that would give meaning to their existence, that would give them something to live for even if it is only the temporary intoxication of the moment? Well, we don't need that stuff because we understand that we come from someone for a purpose that is going somewhere, and therefore we don't have to find our meaning ultimately from what happens in this life, but it is only as you understand the questions of origin that you're in a position to begin to draw meaning from what that is.

And going back to the question of origin, Genesis 1:26,

26 ... God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Then over at Genesis 2:7, coming in and zeroing in a little bit more, giving more detail about the creation of man,

7 ... the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Now, it's not our purpose tonight to give a full exposition of those verses, simply to remember what the starting point of the Bible is, what the starting point of humanity is. Before time began, God dwelt in Triune glory. God dwelt in the councils of his own being before time began. God was uncreated and always existed and it pleased him to create the heavens and the earth at a point in time. This God of unspeakable unconquerable glory, it is said created the heavens and the earth through six days of 24 hour length, did other aspects of creation, and as the capstone of his creation, the God who created the heavens and the earth also made man.

Scripture teaches that God himself supernaturally fashioned man from ordinary dirt. God made man. God created man. God formed man and this is in direct opposition and contradiction to the modern notion that man is simply a product of natural forces who descended somehow from a prior line of apes. No. No. No. No. Scripture stands against that, contradicts it, and without apology violates every sense of modern scientific sensibilities by asserting that God created man by his own direct work, that he breathed life into man and thus imparted his image to him so that we can say, in a sense, that man belongs to God by right of creation and that in contradistinction, going the other direction, man owes to God a duty of reverence and obedience and love because man is derived from his Creator. This is the way that Scripture presents the doctrine of man.

Now the Bible also goes on and describes the creation of the first woman, Genesis 2:21 and 22.

21 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. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 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."

Now, I realize we may address this in passing in future messages this month, I realize that there are those who call themselves Christians who want nothing to do with this idea of a recent creation and God directly creating man apart from any sense of evolutionary process, so they'll monkey around – you got the pun there, right? I didn't plan that one but it came out and when that comes out, I kind of have to call attention to it. They monkey around with Genesis 1 and 2 with the sense that that doesn't have a domino effect later in Scripture but, beloved, you should know by now that you can't play games like that before you very quickly start to impugn the authority and truthfulness and trustworthiness of Jesus Christ himself, because Jesus Christ himself directly affirmed this statement of Scripture in Matthew 19, this statement of Scripture referring to Genesis' account of the creation of man. He says in Matthew 19:4 as people were asking him about divorce,

4 ... He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'"

Beloved, I just want to help you think in the broadest, clearest, most basic categories of thought with what we're saying here this evening and to recognize the authority upon which we believe what we believe. First of all, we believe this aspect of the creation of man because of the testimony of Genesis. Yes, absolutely without question we accept Genesis as a narrative of history describing it for what really happened. Not an allegory, not symbolic but a narrative of time and space history that is obviously written to be presented that way and we receive it that way, we accept and submit to it that way. Beyond that, beloved, what I want you to see is that for those of us that name the name of Christ, even if we weren't quite sure what to do with the opening chapters of Genesis if they stood alone, for the one who names the name of Christ, his authority is supreme and absolute. What Christ says is our law. It is our truth. It is that which cannot be violated. We believe him above every other testimony because he is supreme to us. He is our Lord, our Redeemer, in addition to being our Creator. Think about it this way, beloved: he is our teacher. He is our supreme and final teacher. It is on the authority of Christ that we receive the authority of Scripture as we discussed in our contemplation of biblical authority earlier in this series back in October of 2016, I believe it was. Here's what I want you to see is that Jesus Christ accepted the account of Genesis as being a description of what actually happened, and so we have the testimony of Genesis affirmed by and

accepted and received and expounded by, our Lord Jesus Christ. Those of us who name the name of Christ and want and desire to live in submission to him, that settles it. That describes for us what happened. We take him at his word because we trust him implicitly for everything. So on the authority of Genesis and on the authority of Christ, two things which cannot be put in opposition or conflict to one another, we receive this account of man being a direct creation by God using ordinary dirt. That's essential for us to understand.

Now there are implications for that. Man, therefore, is not the highest being in existence. God is. The idea of God did not come from unenlightened men who by evolutionary process can gradually cast off the shackles of what their primitive forebears made up in order to explain the world. No, the truth of the matter is that an uncreated God created man in his image, and the God who created man is the God who rules over all. This defines purpose. This defines the reason that humanity exists. This describes the history of why mankind exists.

These are things at the most fundamental profound level and it's crucial to note, go back to Genesis, if you would, Genesis 1, maybe you're still there. I'm not because I turned to Matthew 19. It's crucial to note that God directly created man by his own act. He did not use intermediate means. This bears on the whole question of evolution. And here's what we mean by the distinction of direct creation versus intermediate means. Earlier in the creation account, God did create things in a mediate way by using other materials. In Genesis 1:11,

11 ... God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. 13 There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

The point here for what we're saying is that God used the existing earth to bring forth vegetation and plants. The earth brought forth vegetation rather than God directly creating the plant itself, directly creating the fruit itself. The earth acted in response to the dictate that God gave to it but, beloved, that is not what is described about the creation of man. This is different. As we saw in chapter 2, verse 7, go back there with me, it's not that the earth brought forth man as we saw happening with plants and vegetation, in Genesis 2:7, subject, verb and direct object, okay? Basic grammar here, "the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground." "God" directly, by his own hand, as it were, "formed," that's the verb, "man," direct object, using "the dust of the ground."

God did it himself and that means that our human race is derived from a direct creative act of the uncreated God. That has consequences. One of the consequences is that this direct creation of dust, using dust to form man, forbids the idea that God used a process of evolution over a period of millions of years in order to make man appear. He did not use a process. He did not wind up a clock and then let it go on its own energy. He did not

work through prior animals. He did this directly himself using the dust of the ground. And we say that God made man from dust, we mean it in this sense: that our bodies are made of the same chemical elements which God had created earlier. God used the material elements he had previously created to fashion man by his own hands. He did not use other animals in order to generate man. This is not what Scripture teaches. And we have here at Truth Community Church, there is a very fundamental principle at stake here in what we are saying. Our professing Christian brethren who try to accommodate evolution and bring it into Genesis 1 and 2, are operating on the principle that Scripture should be interpreted by the modern dictates of science. We believe that that's exactly reversed, that Scripture is the priority and that Scripture informs the way that we understand science. We believe that. We do not apologize for that. We stand on that ground gladly, firmly, and without apology.

Dust is not a prior primate, is it? God formed man from the dust of the ground. S. Lewis Johnson said this, I quote, "It is obvious that the Bible does not support the theory of evolution. The Bible sets forth the fact that man was created by God. He did not evolve. He came directly from the hand of God." He goes on to say, "The Bible does not teach theistic evolution either. It teaches the immediate creation by the hand of God."

So our concern, let's put it this way, beloved, as a church what we believe our responsibility is to the best of our ability is to let the Bible speak for itself; to not impose modern ideas that are based on fallible men and their passing theories; to not impose on the Bible the passing theories of men but rather to let Scripture have the voice, to let Scripture say what it says, to let Scripture teach what it teaches, and in response we believe it and obey it. In response, we believe it and defend it. In response, we believe it and proclaim it. That's what our church is about and this is a defining issue, and if that makes us, you know, people think we're bumpkins, okay. I can live with that. I can live with that wreath on my head from men whose breath is in their nostrils when I remember that Christ wore a wreath of thorns on his head to die as my King. It's not too much for me to bear a little bit of momentary insult from those who reject God's word to be faithful to the one who died for my soul. You agree with that, don't you? That's the way you feel about it too, isn't it?

The origin of man is explained by the direct creation by the hand of God. That has implications that we'll try to explain in the weeks to come. For tonight, for our second point, we go to the purpose of man. The purpose of man. We've already somewhat alluded to this but here's what I want you to see, beloved. I absolutely love the way that these basic principles give rise to defining principles that shape the entire way that we live, the entire way that we think about life. The origin of man gives rise to the purpose of man. Let me say that again because that's so very important: the origin of humanity gives rise to the purpose of humanity. It gives rise to the purpose of the human race. It gives rise to the individual members of the human race. The famous first question of the Westminster Catechism reads as follows, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer being, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." That purpose of man to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, is a direct result of, is a direct consequence of the fact that God created man. We would have no existence, we would not be here were it

not for a creative act of God. Since our existence is derivative of our God, therefore it is the obligation of man, it is the duty of man, it is his responsibility, it is his prerogative, it is what he should do is to go back and give glory and honor to him. You can kind of see this paralleled a little bit in the scriptural picture of the family. Children, you derive your existence from your parents. You would not be here were it not for your parents. Scripture tells you to honor your father and your mother. In that little microcosm, we get a picture of the reflection which should be true of all of us toward our God. We give honor to him because he made us. Our existence is owed to him and, therefore, man should give glory to him. That is only right.

Look at Psalm 100, which we will come to eventually again, as we continue through the Psalms down the road. Psalm 100 speaks of God, speaks of creation, and it does so stripped away from the fall of man and the sin of man. It just presents the purpose of man and the glory of God in what we could call a pure form, and here's what I want you to see, the purpose of man, Christian and non-Christian alike, the duty of man, Christian and non-Christian alike, is to honor the God who made them. Honoring God is the duty and responsibility of every man who has ever lived and whoever will live and who does live now. Not only that, we say, it is the responsibility of every non-Christian to give honor to the one true God who is revealed in the 66 books of the Bible whose revelation was culminated in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every man has a duty to honor Christ and that duty is not lessened by their refusal to do so.

Psalm 100. You say, "Wow, really? You're asserting that God is asserting this duty over everyone, not just his people who have been redeemed by Christ?" Yes, absolutely. That's exactly what we're saying. Psalm 100:1,

1 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. 2 [All the earth] Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. 3 [And here it is] Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

All the earth called to glorify God, all the earth told that it is the Lord God, Yahweh himself, who has made them, and that principle of origin, that principle of creation, gives rise to a duty to render joyful worship to him. "God, I would not be here without you. Apart from you, I would not exist. I owe my existence to your creation. I owe my existence to your mercy." And therefore it is the responsibility of man everywhere to give glory to God.

Look at verse 4,

4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.

The testimony of Scripture is " God made you therefore glorify him with your life. And this biblical explanation of man explains what atheism could never do, what brilliant but

godless scientists could never do. It explains that which gives us purpose. The biblical account of the origin of man establishes his reason for existing, it establishes his history, and it implies a destination for man. God created man with a purpose in mind in the end. There is origin, there is destination, and in between there is purpose, a reason to exist. Oh, what I would give to say these words in the hearing of those who feel the sense of desperation and futility in life, to breathe in words of life, to pour water on that dead and thirsty soul, that you are created by God with a reason to exist of the highest magnitude, and that this life is not all that there is, that your window of time, 70 years, is not all there is, there is a prior history, there is a future history that informs the purpose of your existence. And what this does, beloved, that evolution can never do, that science can never do, is to elevate man to a place of purpose in the universe that is majestic, that is noble, and that defines the reason that he exists. Monkeys can't do that.

Honestly, is it any wonder when we tell people that they are no different than animals that they act like animals? Is it any wonder that they dishonor their bodies in sexual immorality? Is it any wonder that it is becoming commonplace for people to just go into a room and shoot up a room full of strangers? Why not? Survival of the fittest. No purpose in existence here. Nothing being lost here.

The origin and the purpose of man is a bulwark against that hopeless mindset and what I want you to see, that's kind of a positive presentation of it from Psalm 100, the purpose of man. I could have gone to a lot of different Scriptures: Isaiah 46; 1 Corinthians 10:31. But beloved, here's what I want you to see as you continue to read and study Scripture, that it is at precisely this point of purpose, this high exalted purpose for man, that he is to honor God and to give thanks to him, it is precisely at this very point where man has failed and incurred his guilt.

Turn over to Romans 1. You can see this point of purpose to glorify God and enjoy him forever, you can see it reinforced from a negative perspective by what Paul says in the foundational first chapter of the book of Romans. Verse 18,

18 ... the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

Watch how he ties it to creation, verse 20,

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

And here we go, verse 21. Remember we said the purpose was to honor God, to glorify him. That's the purpose of man determined by his origin at creation. Verse 21,

21 For [they are guilty, they are under the wrath of God] even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Psalm 100 says, "Shout joyfully to the Lord. Give thanks to him. It is he who made us and not we ourselves." Romans 1 says that universally man has refused and rejected that purpose, does not honor God, does not give thanks, and as a result of that heart response to his Creator, is under the judgment and wrath of God. This question of origin and purpose has far-reaching consequences, doesn't it? This is the foundation for judgment for those who rebel and Scripture says that all men have participated in the rebellion.

Verse 22,

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

So painful. so sad, so tragic in the most cosmic of ways to realize what has been lost in the fall. God creating man in his own image, appointing him as the head over his creation, designed to honor God, to walk in fellowship with him, to give glory to him, and man chucks, throws out, despises in a way worse than Esau despising his birthright, despising his purpose says, "I want to be my own independent agent," and trades what would be his glory and instead dwells in the trash heap of existence because he refuses the God who made him and does it willfully, does it suppressing the testimony of his own conscience. You see, Scripture shows us, teaches us, that God created man and that he created him to serve his Creator and to give him thanks. Beloved, humanity was created for a place of high dignity and high purpose and yet squandered it when Adam, our father, sinned against God and cast the rest of us into a fallen state which we have all embraced and we share in the fallen nature and we participate in it by choice as well. Sinners by nature and by choice.

Now, that's a great loss but we want to keep in mind for this evening the origin and the purpose of man. It's in that context, two things that I would say here, going with the greater glory and then the lesser glory, I suppose. It's in that context, beloved, where you see the glory of Jesus Christ displayed all the more because the second person of the Godhead became a man in order to redeem man. Not only is the purpose of man and the dignity of man vindicated by the fact that God created him, the purpose and the role of man is vindicated and validated by the fact that Jesus Christ himself became a man. The highest dignity bestowed on man came when the Lord Jesus Christ took on human flesh in order to redeem us from sin, and the purpose and the dignity of man will be exalted even further when Christ comes from heaven as a man to reign on earth as a man, ultimately to fulfill that role for humanity that Adam forfeited and lost. Christ in the fullness of his redemption will redeem the purpose of man and rule on earth as a man and thus fulfill the purpose that God had created for humanity in the beginning. So beloved, would you understand who man is, who he is really, what reality is? You must see him as created by God for the glory of God.

Now I promised you a word of personal application for this and I want to suggest to you that what is true of humanity in general in origin and purpose, Scripture teaches us to think that way about our own individual lives as well. Would you understand your own existence, would you understand your own purpose? You must see your origin as being from God himself and you must see your purpose as the glory of God.

Look at Psalm 139 as we close here. Psalm 139 as David writes in worship and in meditation. Would you understand your own existence? Would you understand your own purpose? First of all, you must see yourself as created by God; that that is fundamental to your worldview; that that is fundamental to your self-assessment, you might say. Psalm 139:13,

13 ... You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.

David is saying, "God, you made me. You made me. You formed me. You fashioned me in my mother's womb." This is not the direct creation of Adam in the same way, God using the procreative process in order to direct it and to accomplish his purposes of the formation of each one, but God forming our inward parts in our mother's womb. I take a lot of comfort in that.

David goes on and expresses the purpose, expresses for us our response to being made by God and that purpose being the glory of God. Look at verse 14. Having just come off, "You wove me in my mother's womb," there is a response for that. Verse 14,

14 I will give thanks to You.

The same language of Psalm 100. "I will respond to your work in making me by giving you my thanks, by honoring you as my God."

for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.

The origin of man. The purpose of man. The origin of you. The purpose of you. These are cosmic issues that redefine life as we know it.

You see, beloved and you young people especially, to understand on the front end of your life that, these things inform everything that you do. This informs all of the choices that you make. "What will I do with my life? What will I do as a career? Who do I want to marry? Who do I want to spend my life with? What am I going to give my time to? Where do I want to be 30 years from now?" All of those major issues are informed by your response to who it is that made you and what is your purpose in living. If your purpose in living is the glory of God because you realize you are fearfully and wonderfully made by him, then all of a sudden everything in life is determined. Career choices. Spousal choices. Where you live. Why you live. It's all determined by that.

Those of us that are a little further in life, it's still the same for us. Here you are tonight in May 1, 2018, and we each have a life that God has given to us. He has providentially shaped you and positioned you to the very point in life that you're at right now, even taking into account for some of us the sins that we committed that have shaped us and hurt us and we still carry the consequences of it. Whatever the past may be, God has providentially placed you in this exact point right now, some in riches, some in poverty; some in joy, some in sorrow. And the purpose of which we have been speaking, to find your reason for existence right now. You are a wealthy Christian, great, show us how you glorify God as a wealthy Christian. You are in poverty, you are in sorrow, what does the glory of God look like? It defines everything. It is no longer simply about you. It's no longer simply about your feelings or what you want. This elevates you and ennoble the whole nature of life. This is the life that God has given to you right now and your purpose in it is to glorify him. "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do," 1 Corinthians 10:31, "do all to the glory of God." And the harshest of circumstances suddenly become the canvas upon which you will paint the glory of God with how you live in response. That's why I say these are cosmic issues that redefine life as we know it. It's cosmic, it's wonderful, it's glorious, and yet it's humbling too, isn't it, because we fall short of our purpose, we forget our reason for existence, we stumble in sin.

So how do we bring all of that together? I think David shows us at the end of Psalm 139. We respond in humility. We respond in prayer. Look at verse 23. We'll close with this. In light of these magnificent truths, David says,

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

"O God, you made me. O God, you have appointed these circumstances that I'm in today. O God, my purpose is to glorify you in these circumstances. Search my heart and lead me in a way so that my life would be a fitting response and give glory and thanks to my Maker."

Let us pray.

*Our Father, we understand that there are times when men perhaps wish that they had never been born, Job certainly cursed the day of his birth in the midst of his trials, and sometimes life is hard and sad and difficult and even grievous. Help us to look beyond the immediate circumstances, Father, to the more transcendent realities that define our existence. You have made us and you have made us for your glory and, Father, that gives us purpose even when life collapses all around us. I pray for each one here, Father, that they might have an exalted sense of what it means, first of all, to be created by God and to owe you worship as Creator, but then for those of us that are in Christ, to owe a response of even more glory, of more thanks to you as our Redeemer from sin. It is a noble thing to be a man, to be a woman, created in the image of God. It is even more noble to be redeemed by Christ and to be a part of the family of God.*

*Father, for our young people here, O God, O God I just pray that somehow your Spirit would work in their hearts to be done with lesser things and to rise up and to live for the glory of the God who made them and of the Christ that many of them profess, to live for his glory and not for the passing futility of this world.*

*Father, for those of us that are further along in life and perhaps more in the rearview mirror than in the windshield for us, Father, we thank you for where you have brought us. We give ourselves afresh to you this evening and ask you to invigorate us, to renew us, to refresh us so that we might all individually and corporately in this local church body, to embrace our God-given privilege and our God-given responsibility to bring glory to our Maker and help us to do that as we proclaim your word and as we love one another in the fellowship and, Father, as we proclaim Christ to a lost and desperately wicked world. We pray these things to the glory of Christ our Savior. Amen.*

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