

**Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:24-31**

**“24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. 25 And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30 Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. 31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”**

# **"God Creates Man in His Image"**

**With the Supreme Court decisions this week and the heat, it might seem like a good time for a hell fire & brimstone sermon:**

- **But we have not yet reached the fall of man in this Book of Beginnings, so I need to save some of that for a bit later!**

**However, what we now come to on the Sixth Day of Creation is certainly very relevant to the issues of marriage and sexuality. As I mentioned last week, we will see that almost the entirety of chapter two will be an expansive look at what we have here this morning in verses 26-28.**

**So for today, we will touch only on the highpoints:**

- **We will consider what we learn about God.**
- **We will consider what we learn about man.**
- **We will consider how it relates to Jesus and our worship of God today.**

**Verses 26 to 28 bring us to the third great creative act by God that we have discussed and these are once again simple but profound verses that have drawn much attention throughout Church history. Intervarsity Press's new commentary that summarizes the thoughts of the early Church Fathers says this about them in the introduction: "These verses are perhaps the verses of the Old Testament most commented on by the Church Fathers."**

**Verse 26 begins by saying, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to our likeness...'" These few words tell us much about God and about man. First it brings us back to what we saw in verse one where we read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."**

- **There we asked the simple question: 'How do we know this is true?'**

**Our answer was also simple saying that we know it is true because the Triune God who has always existed has told us these truths! Here is verse 26, we learn much more about the God who created all that we can see or know when it says, "And God said 'let Us make man in Our image.'"**

**Here again, we trust the one who was there to give us an accurate and informative account of what happened, & what is revealed about His nature.**

We have talked about the importance of God being a personal Triune God because this gives real meaning and purpose to love and relationships. In other words, love was not something that had to be created to fill some need in God. Our Triune God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in whose name we baptized little Phineas today has always existed, and has always existed in perfection or holiness.

This is what dramatically sets the truth revealed in the Christian Scriptures apart from any other world view. We believe that love, and reason and communication and intelligence and relationships and all the other human qualities we know are important, are part of the eternal nature of God! There is a reason that all men strive to achieve these things in some way because even in our fallen state we know something of them from our conscience and the created order around us.

- So what does it mean for man to be made in the image of God?

Again we stand in stark contrast to any other philosophical thinking at this point: With all other religions or philosophies their god is made in their image... This was certainly true of the Greek and Romans and carries down to our day with what the Mormons believe. They believe that God the Father has a body just like man's!

Even the mystics of the East and atheists of the West are really doing nothing more than extending their heart felt sinful desires into their image of what god should or should not be. In the east, man is looking for the final peace and thus their god in the end is a state of nirvana where all is peaceful because all is in the end nothing. Even the devout atheist has his or her own god, though that may come as a bit of a shock to some of them who have not thought this through... What the modern atheist is demanding is total autonomy so they are accountable to NO higher power, and thus they make the non-existence of god their god or ultimate truth.

- In the end what they are actually saying is that there are absolutely no absolutes...

So coming back to our text, it is important to remember that being made in God's image cannot be just what we would like it to be!

- The Triune God who has always existed has now said He would create man in His image...
- So what does that mean?

To better understand this, we should look again at God's three great creative acts: In verse one, He created all of time, matter and energy so being in the image of God is not just our existence nor our material make-up.

- In that sense we are part of the creation along with everything else that God has made.

On the Fifth Day of Creation we saw the second great act of creation by God when He brought forth living things: The fish of the sea, the birds of the air and on Day Six the land animals.

- So again, it is not the fact that man is alive that accounts for his being made in the image of God!

We share this quality with all the other living creatures in God's universe.

There are some who argue that our ability to communicate or our tool making or our opposable thumbs are the results of being made in the image of God. The problem here is that again some animals use primitive tools, they certainly have some ability to communicate [*example of the mourning doves caring for their young*]

- And we also know that the Triune God of eternity does not have thumbs, though they are very handy for us!
- So what does it mean for man to be made in God's image?

Well obviously I am not going to be able to exhaust this subject in a single sermon and as I mentioned we will return too much of this in chapter two. In fact I will leave the entire discussion of male and female in verse 27 for when we get to the creation of Eve in Chapter two.

- However, I will offer a bit of a challenge for those who like such things...

There are many commentators who try to argue that what Paul teaches in the first part of I Corinthians chapter eleven is in conflict with this part of the creation account so take a look at these two portions in the coming weeks and see if you can see what they think the problem is and how it is to be resolved.

- You may find that it has much to do with our current struggles over sexuality.

But for today I want to argue that we can clearly see at least three things in mankind that reflect the image of God:

- His ability to love.
- His ability to reason.
- His ability to rule or have autonomy.

As I briefly go through these three we must remember that we only see them today in our fallen state, but that was not the case here at the beginning. When we come to the end of chapter one God not only says that what He has done is good, He says it is very good. So as we think about these three qualities in man we must try to think of love without selfishness, reason without making excuses and autonomy without rebellion.

- That is how mankind was created!

It is also interesting to note that love, reason and autonomy are the very things that the modern humanists have made into their idols. Their entire goal is to have a reasonable, independent and loving group of people without all the hindrances religion has placed upon us. [*just take another look at the humanist manifesto*] If you look at the nations or peoples who have come under the thinking of our modern humanists who reject God, you will not find much love, reason nor independence... This is true whether you begin with the guillotines of France, go to the gulags of Russia or come down to the abortion clinics of America.

- Ironically it is we as Christians who take God's Word seriously who can provide the real meaning for all three!

And thus just as I argued that we as Christians should be the true environmentalists, we can also argue that we are the true humanists in the proper sense: Understanding what it means to be truly human.

- We know why man is, and should strive to be, loving, reasonable and free...
- Because he was made in the image of God.

Love should be the easy one: The Apostle John warns us to be careful of false teachers in I John 4 and then says: "7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him."

- **John declares that God is love because the persons of the Trinity have existed from all eternity in their loving relationship.**
- **And the greatest demonstration of that love is Jesus coming in history to save His people from their sins.**

**Next comes reason: Many of our modern skeptics would be shocked to learn that the concept of reason is used dozens of times in the Scriptures, The Prophet Isaiah gives us some insight into this as he opens his book: Isaiah 1:18: "'Come now, and let us reason together," Says Jehovah, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."**

**As Dr. Schaeffer would often point out our saving faith is not a blind leap into the dark, it is a reasonable gift from our loving and reasonable God. We can see how our reason is part of what sets us apart from the other living things in the judgment of King Nebuchadnezzar when he is made like one of the animals for seven years, When he is restored we read: Daniel 4:36: "At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me."**

- **And finally we are called upon to be reasonable in our evangelism:**

**I Peter 3:14: "14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.' 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed."**

**The final characteristic that we see in man as God's image bearers that I want mention today is autonomy or independence or rule.**

- **Again, because we have only known man in rebellion this is difficult for us to grasp and may escape the notice of many.**

**However, it is seen immediately in the text when God says, "let them have dominion..."**

**Man was created to rule or have dominion over the earth and as such his choices were very significant, and independently made, as we shall see as we move on in Genesis. Sadly today, the people who want man to have significant choices, within and without the Church, do so for all the wrong reasons...**

**Secular humanism wants man's choices to be the only choices which means that man determines what is right or wrong and again the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has shown us how badly this turns out.**

**Many within the church today want man to have the ultimate choice when it comes to salvation: As Mike and others have heard said in many places, 'God votes for you and Satan votes against you so the deciding vote is yours!' Now we know this would not work out very well since man is born dead in his trespasses and sins and can only choose to rebel and turn from God.**

- **This is why Jesus had to come to save His people from their sins & we will talk much more about this when we come to the fall of man.**

**What I will point out today is the fact that BOTH those within & without the church who want man to have more ability to choose than he has in his fallen state, refuse to accept the consequences of Adam's decision when he DID have the real power of choice. So I would argue that we see a significant part of what it means to be made in the image of God when we consider man's ability to love, his ability to reason and his ability to rule. Even seeing these through a glass darkly in our fallen state it should be obvious to those with eyes to see that this sets us apart in a very significant way from the rest of God's creation.**

- **So go ahead and have a bit of fun with your modern humanistic friends by arguing that we are the true humanists!**

**But do so only if your heart felt desire is for them to meet the Savior who has come to set right what is wrong with the human race!**

➤ **It is Jesus who came as a man to restore man: To once again make his image right!**

**In II Corinthians chapter three the Apostle Paul is comparing the glory that Christ brings with the veiled glory in the time of Moses and then he says, “16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**

**The writer of Hebrews begins by telling us that God, “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”**

**The Jesus whom we love and serve and share is the one who is the true image bearer of God today and being in Him should change how we act toward each other and the world!**

**I want to conclude with the words from the Apostle Paul to the Church at Colossi in chapter three of that Epistle: As I read this passage, and perhaps as you study this chapter later this week, listen carefully and hear the love, reason and rule that we are to share and exhibit in our lives...**

**Colossians 3: “1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”**

**Communion Meditation: John 1**

**“9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace & truth.”**