

The God of Creation, Days 5&6, part 2

Genesis 1:20-31

(preached Pine Grove 2/25/18; Sunday PM)

Introduction

The Mona Lisa is considered a masterpiece in the art world.

Leonardo da Vinci painted the Mona Lisa in the early 1500s, and it now hangs at Louvre Museum in Paris France..

Interestingly, the Mona Lisa was not considered a masterpiece of da Vinci until the 20th century, when a study of history revealed that the artistic techniques of da Vinci seen in the Mona Lisa were way ahead of their time.

In fact, the Mona Lisa wasn't even highly recognized in the art world until its theft created a world wide search for it and made it recognizable to people around the world..

However, that notoriety caused those in the art world to study it closer and see that it is the masterpiece of da Vinci.

A masterpiece is typically defined as a artist's greatest work...

Da Vinci has the Mona Lisa.

Van Gogh has Starry Night.

Michaelangelo has the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Strangely enough, the word masterpiece was not originally associated with the art world..

Instead, a masterpiece was simply the title given to a work by an apprentice wanting to become a master craftsman at his trade..

For instance, a young carpenter would create a masterpiece at the end of his training in hopes of becoming a recognized carpenter..

The same would be true for a knife maker or baker or a blacksmith...

However, the apprentice system eventually died out, and the art world used the term masterpiece to describe the grandest creation of an artist's career...

If we consider God an artist, the creation of man in Genesis 1:26-31 would be the masterpiece of God's creation...

Now, that is saying a lot, considering the fact that God has made some incredible works of art during this week of creation..

On day 1, God created a world of water and made light...

On day 2, God made the earth's atmosphere and outer space.

On day 3, God made the oceans and dry land and trees and plants.

On day 4, God made the sun, moon, and the stars.

On day 5, God made the sea animals and birds.

On day 6, God made the land animals..

But now in the second half of day 6, God creates his masterpiece in man and woman...

Though the sun is incredible, its creation is not as great as the creation of man...

Though the ocean is large and deep, its creation is not as great as the creation of man...

Though the stars are bright and numerous and beautiful in the sky, their creation does not compare to the creation of man..

Human beings are the masterpiece of God's creation...

Now, that strikes us as odd in a couple of ways..

First, we are shocked to hear that considering how sinful humans are..

We see the evil that man is capable of...

We see the hurt and injury that man can cause..

And that prevents us from seeing man as the masterpiece of God's creation...

Yet we quickly forget that God didn't create man and woman to sin..

We were created to worship and obey and serve God, and when man does that, it is easy to see that he or she is the masterpiece of God's creation...

Thinking of man as the masterpiece of God's creation also strikes us as odd in a second way..

Namely, isn't it arrogant and prideful to see ourselves as the height of God's creation?

And the answer to that is no...

We don't set ourselves as the masterpiece of creation.

If that were the case, that would be arrogant...

Instead, God sets us and defines us as the masterpiece of his creation, and since God does it, it isn't the result of our pride but simply the plan and purpose of God..

So, how can we see ourselves as the masterpiece of creation?

Well, the evidence of that is found in Genesis 1:26-31...

And I want to offer 3 reasons why man is set apart from all of creation as the masterpiece of God..

The first bit of evidence is found in verse 26...

We will call this...

I. A Masterpiece of Design

When we arrive at verse 26, we are in day 6 of creation...

The universe and this planet are now ready for God's most important creation...

New parents can understand where we are at..

The nursery has been painted...

The carpet has been put down.

The crib, changing table, and glider rocker have been assembled.

The toys are in place.

The diapers are on the shelf..

All you are waiting on is the baby to be born and brought home..

Well, the last of day 6 of creation is that day for the Lord.

Man's nursery is ready..

The planet is in the correct position in outer space.

The atmosphere is filled with oxygen.

Food is growing all around the planet for him to eat.

Animals have filled the seas, air, and land for his use...

It is now time to bring man to his home...

Verse 26..

***26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image,
according to Our likeness;***

Lots of things to take note of in the first half of verse 26..

First, this is the first time that God has created anything with this comment...

When God created the earth, outer space, land, sun, moon, stars, it was simply noted that God spoke them into existence..

In verse 26, God speaks but then he adds comment to what he is about to create...

Let Us make man...

This simple comment alerts the reader to something special that is about to take place...

When God created the fish, he simply said “let the waters teem”....

When God created the birds, he simply said “let the birds fly”....

When God created the land animals, he simply said let the earth bring forth creatures..

But now, when he is about to create man, God lets us know that this creation will be different than the others...

In a sense, this act of creating man was very personal to God..

It sins that the rest of creation wasn't personal to God...

It was personal to him because He did it..

But now, the creation of man is even more personal because God is going to create something that most resembles Him...

And notice that God refers to Himself as Us here...

“Let US make man in OUR image..”

Now, we looked at the word Elohim in the Genesis 1:1, and we noted that it was plural, which helps us understand that God from the very first verse of the Bible wanted us to understand his triune...

God is one God but there are three persons of the Godhead, -Father, Son, and Spirit...

And we also noted that all these persons are at work in creation week...

The Spirit hovered over creation from the very beginning as His person cared for God's creation..

We also know from later revelation that the Son was responsible for creation...

The book of Colossians tells us that all things were created by Him and for Him..

And we must assume that the Father was the overseer of all that was happening in creation week..

So as creation week reaches its climax with the creation of man, it should come as no surprise that all the persons of the Godhead are taking part in man's creation...

God is at work here as Father, Son, and Spirit in the creation of man...

Let US (Father, Son, and Spirit) make man in OUR (Father, Son, and Spirit)...

In a very real sense, man is going to be made in the image of all the persons of the Godhead...

So, what does that mean?

What does it mean for man to be made in God's image?

Well, there is debate about this since Genesis doesn't give us further details here..

Some say that being made in God's image is a reference to physical to the physical appearance of man...

They say that man's ability to walk upright is a reflection of the image of God..

Others say that the image of God is seen in our ability to have relationships...

Others say that the image of God is seen in our ability to rule the earth as God rules the universe..

Others say that the image of God is seen in our ability to think, to rationalize, to communicate, to learn...

What is the proper view of the image of God in man?

Simply put, the image of God is more of who we are rather than what we do...

We are God's image bearers and because of that, it affects what we do...

Let me give some ways in which man is made in God's image..

#1 - Physically.

Now you may say, "well how can man reflect the image of God physically since God is spirit?"

And that is true.

God is spirit, yet there are times that God expresses himself in physical ways..

In the OT, God was seen in the fire of a bush..

God was seen in the cloud and the fire that led Israel...

But then, we get to the NT and the arrival of Christ..

Who is fully God in human flesh..

There are even times in the Scripture where God is describes or even describes himself with bodily features like eyes and ears and a nose that smells..

Though the essence of God is spirit, we see physical characteristics of God as well....

The same is true of all of us...

The essence of who we are is unseen...

We have a body but that body is simply a covering to the eternal spirit or soul which is truly who we are...

For instance, at death, the soul moves to eternity and the body heads to the ground...

So, there is clearly a connection between our physical appearance and the image of God...

But even beyond the body, we are physically like God in that we are alive like God...

We have personalities that reflect our personal makeup...

A second way we are made in God's image is *intellectually..*

We have a rational mind.

We are aware of ourselves.

WE are aware of others around us.

We are aware of environment...

WE are even aware of the God who created us.

We can think, be creative, communicate with one another, think, imagine and remember things...

A third way we bear the image of God is *volitionally*...

In other words, we have the capacity to make decisions and choices like the God who created us.

Animals act on instinct and reward..

We have the will to act in ways that are opposite of our instincts...

A fourth aspect of the image of God seen in mankind is the *emotional* makeup of man..

We can be filled with joy, sadness, fear, anxiety, guilt, shame...

There are numerous places in the Scripture where we see the emotions of God..

A fifth way we reflect the image of God is *morally*..

Humans have a God given conscience and God's law written on their heart that tells them there is a right and wrong in the world..

Humans also know there is truth and lies in the world because of this God-given morality...

A 6th way man reflects the image of God is *relationally*..

In other words, man is made to interact with others and with God..

We are relationship oriented creatures.

God did not intend for man to be alone in the world and live as a hermit...

God has relationships in the God head between Father, Son and Spirit and we are made to have relationships as well..

A 7th way that man is made in the image of God is *functionally*...

In other words, we, like God, have a purpose in the world..

We are called to reproduce and exercise dominion over the world..

Now, why are all these ways that man reflects the image of God important for us?

First off, it separates man from the animals..

Yes, animals can have relationships and even communicate in some ways, they lack an awareness of themselves and more importantly an awareness of God..

Animals do not possess a conscience that alerts them to right and wrong...

They can be trained to know right from wrong, but it is not because they have that sense hard-wired in them..

Also, animals lack an eternal soul...

You can throw your tomatoes later but God did not breath a soul into the land animals but He did breath life into man, which we will see in chapter 2..

This is why any movement to give animals the same rights as man is contrary to Scripture..

Animals don't rule man...

Animals aren't even equal to man..

Instead, animals serve the needs of man, and man rules over them because man was made in the image of God..

Another issue related to the the image of God doctrine is abortion.

Why is abortion wrong?

It destroys the image of God seen in a baby in its mother womb...

Some people ask about capital punishment in relation to the image of God..

Should governments execute people who bear God's image?

And the answer is yes because the Bible endorses capital punishment is the sense of a person who takes a life made in God's image should have his life taken as a result..

We will see that in Genesis 9 after the flood...

And the endorsement of capital punishment is repeated in the NT as Jesus and Paul speak of the government bearing the sword to punish evil doers..

The image of God in man also addresses all sorts of other crimes...

In a very real sense, why are school shootings, murders, abortions, suicides, assisted suicides all on the rise?

Because society has lost the idea of all human being being made in God's image...

This is also seen in the rise of racism around the world...

Racism is first of all impossible since there is only one race in world...

But prejudices based on skin color and culture are growing out of control because people forget that everyone is made in God's image...

But even more common than all that are insults and jokes and gossip and slander which all violate the image of God in man...

A few weeks ago, we examines Proverbs 17...

Listen to Proverbs 17:5..

5

He who mocks the poor taunts his Maker;

According to this verse, an insult to the poor is an insult to the Maker of the poor...

Who is the Maker of the poor?

Well, it is God...

So, why is an insult to the poor an insult to God?

Genesis 1:26...

Because even the poor of the world are made in the image of God..

And in case you breathed a sigh of relief since you dont think you mock the poor, I assure that you can put any class of people in Proverbs 17:5 and it would still apply...

He who mocks the rich..

He who tells jokes about another race or culture of people..

He who gossips about his neighbor...

He who slanders a person might as well slander God..

Because all people in the world bear his image..

And it doesn't matter how evil they or how much you think they deserve your making or jokes or gossip or slander...

When you mock those people, you mock the God who made them..

And I will tell you what...

Our culture is filled with those who mock others, and unfortunately, Christians specialize in it...

If anyone in the world should look at other people and see the image of God in them, it should be the people of God...

Yet, we insult others faster than unbelievers at times, and what a shame that is..

Remember that the next time, you get ready to tell a racial joke or listen to one being told...

You might as well laugh at God when you laugh about a person made in His image...

That is how important God takes the insults directed at those made in His image...

On the other hand, the image of God should encourage us to love others...

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 25:40...

40 The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'

Even that statement from Jesus is related to this this idea of the image of God in every person...

In this case, the image of God is not prohibiting certain actions but rather encouraging the right action...

In other words, we should love and care for one another because when we do, we show our love and care for the Lord..

In short, the image of God in man has far reaching implications in how we live and what we do and say...

And that is a one reason why man is the masterpiece of God in creation...

We will begin the second reason by simply reading about it in the second half of verse 26...

I call this..

II. A Masterpiece of Purpose

26 Then 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 [ak]sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Man is God’s masterpiece not just due to his design of being in God’s image, but also His purpose of ruling God’s creation...

No other part of creation has such a far reaching task as man...

Yes, God gave others parts of his creation a purpose...

The land was called to bring forth vegetation and be home to the land animals...

The sun, moon and star were called to give light to the earth...

The animals were told to reproduce and fill the earth...

But only man was give dominion over it all..

Man was given the purpose of ruling God’s creation...

But we will have to wait until next week to see what that means for us today..

Conclusion

Here are a couple thoughts on what we have seen in the creation of man so far..

#1 - God truly desires the salvation of man.

Yes, we love our pets and our plants and the beauty of the heavens around us, but man is the focus of God's creation...

This should help us understand God's great desire to save us through repentance and faith in Christ...

When God says that he desires to save people, He means it...

Listen to Ezekiel 33:10-11..

10 "Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus you have spoken, saying, "Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we are rotting away in them; how then can we [d]survive?"'"
11 Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord [e]God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.

And since we are made in God's image, we also should truly desire the salvation of people...

If you ever find yourself looking forward to the destruction and death of an unbeliever, repent of that sin and pray for God to save them...

We are most unlike God when we rejoice in the death of unbelievers...

#2 - Man truly needs to see God's image in everyone.

I said this a few weeks back on Wednesday nights, but if you begin to see everyone as made in the image of God, it will change your attitude, your speech, and your actions...

And if every Christian were to behave in the same way, it would change the world over night...

Yet, when we as the people of God mock others who are made in God's image, we shouldn't be surprised when people kill others also made in God's image..

We now know better, so let us live better as a result...

Let us pray.

III. A Masterpiece of Focus