SI: Last week we read the whole creation account in Genesis 1.
Today we’re going to go back and re-read the sixth day.
This is the most important day of creation.
Because on this day God made his crowning work.
What is the crowning work of creation?
Listen to God’s Word.

INTRO: When the doorbell rings on Halloween, fun when little children are there.
They are so proud of their costumes. We always make over them.
If they are scary, we act scared. And they like that.
If they aren’t scary, we ask them: What are you?
And without hesitation they say: I’m a cowboy. I’m a ninja. I’m a princess.
They answer the question with such ringing certainty and pleasure.
That’s what I am.

Suppose someone asked: What are you?
What is a human being? How do you define yourself?
Could you give an intelligent answer? Many people couldn’t.
Well, the Bible’s definition of human beings is straightforward and profound.
I am a creature made in the image of God.
That’s what I am. That’s what you are.

There are two parts to that definition.
It affirms, on the one hand, that man is a creature made by God—
just like all the other creatures are made by God.
So he owes his life and existence to God. He is utterly dependent upon God.
And it also affirms that he is made in the image of God.
That means he is a rational and moral person like God with freedom to act—
even freedom to act in ways contrary to the will of his Creator.

The Bible alternates between these two truths about man.
It affirms that we are creatures made by God,
and that we are persons in the image of God.
For example, when Paul spoke to the Athenians, he stressed man’s creatureliness.
“God gives all men life and breath and everything else and in him we live and move
He makes the point even more bluntly in Romans where he says that God is the potter and man is the clay. But the Bible also teaches that man is a free and responsible person. So free and responsible that God is just to hold him to account for his actions. You see this throughout the Bible as God calls people to make moral decisions.

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.”
“We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”
“Repent and believe the good news.”
“Honor your father and your mother.”

So what are you? I am a creature made in the image of God. I’m made by him and I’m somehow like him. That’s the foundation of all human dignity and worth and meaning.

We live in a secular culture that strenuously denies the biblical definition of man. It denies first that man is a creature.

No, it says, man is not made by God and is not dependent on him.
He’s not made by anybody. He just happened.
And it denies that man is a person in God’s image with freedom and moral responsibility.
Instead, it sees human life as the product of chemical and biological forces.
Those impersonal forces are what ultimately shape us and determine our fate.

It is our task as Christians to understand and to believe the biblical definition of man and to teach it to our children.
And at the same time to push back with all our might against the world’s view.

So let’s look at this passage in more detail, and let’s use this two point outline and go a little deeper and think about the implications.

1. Man is a creature made by God.
2. Man is a person in the image of God.

Before I go any farther, credit where credit is due:
Alasdair Paine’s, The First Chapters of Everything.
Also, a sermon by Robert Rayburn on this passage.
What are you?

**MP#1 I am a creature made by God.**

Man is a creature.

- He owes his existence to God and is utterly dependent on him.
- And in that, we are like all the other creatures.

There are a number of details about the sixth day that emphasize our creatureliness.

First, God didn’t give mankind a special creation day all to ourselves.
- He made us on the same day he made all the other land animals.

Remember he made the fish and birds on the same day to fill sea and sky.
- And then he made all other animals and man on the same day to fill the land.

But it even goes deeper than that.
- According to chapter 2, verses 7 and 19, man and animals were both
  made by God from earth, from the dust of the ground.
  So we share the same physical composition as animals.

And even deeper, both man and animals are referred to with the same Hebrew word
“Nephesh.” What is “nephesh”?

Most English Bibles translate it as “living creature.” It also means breath.
- The sun and moon aren’t “nephesh.”
- Even trees and plants aren’t “nephesh”—although they are alive.

Nephesh is the life force, the breath of life, that present only in man and animals.

Also, God provided food for man as he provided for other animals.
- Remember, he said, that he gives to both man and animals the plants for food.

God also gave to both man and animals the ability to reproduce in kind.
- And he blessed the reproduction of both man and animals and made his will
  known that they fill the earth.

All this means that there are profound similarities between us and animals.

The fact that animals have some of the same organs as we find in the human body
should surprise no one. Or that we share genetic components.
- Or that we share some of the same powers and abilities as the animals.

We have the same Creator.
- And all his creatures of the sixth day, including mankind, he made to live
  in this world and to breath its air and eat its food and reproduce in kind.
But, this conception of man as a creature is under direct attack today. Because to refer to man as a creature is to imply that he has a Creator.

There are many influential people who are happy to admit that man is an animal like the other animals—even the highest of all the animals. But they hotly deny that man is a creature.
   No, they say. We were not made.
   Man and animals were not designed by a Creator God.
   We just happened. We are the product of random accidents.

That’s ridiculous.
And all the claims used to bolster it are ridiculous.
   It’s such a ridiculous idea that we ought to scoff at it.
No accident of chemistry could have produced life and human beings.
   Not a million or ten million random accidents could have done it.
I told you last week that I’m not going to address scientific questions in this study of Genesis. That’s not the purpose of the creation account, and furthermore, I’m not qualified to do so anyway. I was an English major.

But, as an unqualified, non-scientist,
   I find it laughable how often news stories appear speculating that life on earth was deposited here by aliens from other planets.
This isn’t National Enquirer stuff.
   These are stories from supposedly reputable news outlets.

There was a story in the Huffington Post back in February about scientists who had found a microscopic metallic sphere in a collection of atmospheric dust. They were speculating that this was a device used by aliens to seed the earth with bacteria from their distant planet to produce life here.
And just this month, a chief NASA scientist announced we will make contact with extraterrestrial life by the year 2025.
Someone replied by saying it took us 10 years to find Osama bin Laden—and we knew he was in Pakistan!

But seriously, do you know what is behind this drive by some scientists to find extraterrestrial life? It’s because they know that even if the earth is 4.5 billion years old, that’s not nearly long enough for evolution to work.
That’s not nearly long enough for random accidents to produce the profound
complexity of life, even of a simple bacteria—much less human beings!
So they are desperate to find some older source of life to prop up their bogus theory.
Well, good luck to them.

I am happy to believe and affirm that I am not an accident—I am a creature.
Genesis says I have been made by a Creator.
The same Creator who made the oceans and mountains, the plants and trees.
And because we are his creatures, and not just an accident, we have value.
There is a preciousness to everything God has made—
especially his wonderful creatures of the sixth day—
man and animals to whom he gave the breath of life.

You know, I’m not as hard-hearted about animals as you think I am.
I would never have an inside pet, that’s a fact!
But my good Christian parents impressed upon me the value of living things.
I remember mother stopping me once when I was heading outside with a BB gun.
She must have seen me eyeing some robins in the yard.
She said: Son, we can kill animals for food and we can kill them if they are pests—
but we shouldn’t wantonly kill God’s creatures.
That’s what she called them: God’s creatures.
I was probably 10 years old when she said that, and it went in deep.
Because God made them, they have value.

Jesus said that we ought to consider the birds of the air—
They don’t sow or reap, yet the heavenly Father feeds them.
How much more valuable are we.
So this is where a biblical view of mankind begins—
by affirming that we are creatures made by God—
and because we were made by him, creatures of value.

But that’s not all, that brings us to the other crucial facet of the Bible’s
definition of man.
What are you?

**MP#1 I am a person in the image of God.**

Human beings are not only God’s creatures, they are, at the same time, something entirely unique—something utterly different from the animals. In fact, we are so different that even in our day, dominated by evolutionary thinking, the vast majority of people find it impossible to think of human beings as animals. We are in a class all by ourselves. And that is indicated by this remarkable statement that we are made in the image and likeness of God.

What does it mean? This expression image and likeness of God. First of all, the words “image” and “likeness” are synonyms. These are not two different concepts, just two words for the same things. You can say one or the other or both for emphasis. We are told later in Genesis that Adam had a son after his likeness, in his image, and he named him Seth. So it is used of personal relationships. We talk this way today. We say that a son is the spitting image of his father. Or we say that a son is just like his father. So this means that we are like God in some crucial ways.

But how exactly? Answering that question thoroughly requires a survey of all of Scripture. We don’t have time for that. So let’s look more carefully at this passage. What we see is that Genesis stresses one area of resemblance between us and God more than any other—the image of God is tied to ruling.

Look at verses 26 through 28 again: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” First the image of God is mentioned, and then our ruling over creation. Now look at the next to verses and you see this same idea repeated for emphasis. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female
he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

So the pattern is image, rule, image rule.

The connection is plain. God is the great Ruler, he has given us ruling authority. But this rule is under God, and carries with it a moral responsibility to obey him.

You can see this by comparing God’s blessing of the animals in verse 22 with his blessing of mankind in verse 28.

Look at verse 22: Speaking about animals,

“And God blessed them saying, “Be fruitful and multiply.”

Now look at verse 28 again. Speaking to man.

“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number.”

Did you notice the difference? He spoke over the animals in blessing.

But he spoke to man. With his blessing comes a command to obey.

He treats the first man and woman as morally responsible beings who must choose to respond to him in obedience. That’s part of ruling.

And then another subtle but profound difference in verses 29 and 30.

Here God makes the provision of food for animals and men.

It sounds the same when you first read it,

but look at it again and see if you can spot the important difference.

Then God said (to man), “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.”

What’s the difference? Seeds. Mankind is given plants yielding seeds, animals not. Obviously this doesn’t mean that animals don’t eat seeds. They do.

Seeds imply agriculture.

And agriculture is the most fundamental way that mankind exercises rule.

I heard recently that an acre of corn in the early 20th century produced 20 to 30 bushels. Now agricultural science enables us to produce 150 bushels.

That’s a picture of man’s rule and dominion-bearing.

As image bearers, we are like God in this respect.

We take the natural elements of the earth and we use them and reshape them so that we do and make things that are entirely new. Look at cell phone!

We do so through agriculture and engineering, business and industry,
art, sport, science and all the endeavors of human culture. And every day we use this power to rule and make things to shape the little spheres of life in which we operate in Godlike ways.

But this brings to mind a question that we can’t avoid. But what about the fall? Has it destroyed the image of God in man? We aren’t yet to Genesis 3 and Adam and Eve’s fall into sin but can’t avoid. The book of James helps us understand:
All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

Human speech is a God-like quality. There is nothing like it in all the animal kingdom. Animals can communicate through their grunts and growls—but that is nothing like human speech which can transfer the thoughts in one mind into another and which can create relationships, carry out our rule. Notice what James says about our speech—it has the power of good and evil. It can be used to bless and it can be used to curse.

And we could say the same about all the other aspects of the image of God in us. It can be used for good, to be like God, or for terrible evil. So the image of God is still present, but it has been warped, corrupted, obscured. And that’s why human beings are so perplexing.

Listen to the way Robert Rayburn put it:
We often prefer animals to some human beings precisely because the animals are not human beings: our expectations of animals are so much lower and so much more easily met. Human beings, with all of their moral and intellectual abilities and powers, ought to be so much more than they are. They are a chronic disappointment to us. Only of human beings could this be said, that man is “one vast need.” It is because they are men that they can be so evil, it is because they are men that they can be so good, it is because they are men that they so disappoint us, and so please and elate us. Being human beings ourselves, we can too easily take for granted what a breathtaking thing a man is. A creature yes, but in very important ways a creature who is also like God.

And that’s why the eternal Son of God became a man, and took on human nature, and entered into our world.
Because you are God’s masterwork, the only creature like him in all creation. Capable of Godlike rule over his good creation. And God himself will go to great lengths and terrible cost to restore that image in you to its original perfection through Jesus Christ.

Paul says that through Christ you are renewed after the image of your Creator. There are so many implications for this that we don’t have time to work out. It profoundly shapes the way we look at other people—at children, at disabled people, at people of other races and other religions, at those below and above us. It profoundly shapes the way we view our work and all human endeavors—science, art, and industry.

And the way we see ourselves as rulers and stewards of this creation.

But the main impression I want to leave you with today through this sermon is a gratitude and wonder for what you are, and how that biblical view of man is absolutely essential for us and our children. And how we must push back against all the dehumanizing ideas of our age.

Let me leave you with the words of the old Scottish pastor, Rabbi Duncan: “Oh what a solemn thing it is to be man! Made so exalted, fallen so low, capable of being raised again so high.” It is a very large part of true wisdom to live every day in the constant awareness of that fact.

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