

Made in the Image of God, Remade in the Image of Christ

Introduction

So now that we've looked at the Authority of Christ and His Word to define for us what our true Identity is, let's look at the specifics of what it means to be God's Creation and How that is the root of our identity.

You know, all of us here are in different stages of life and womanhood. Some of you are the beginning of your search for true identity and what it means to be a woman in this world. Others are rounding the other bend toward the finish line and you have wrestled with these questions and have great insight and wisdom regarding finding your identity in Christ alone.

And then there are many of us somewhere in the middle and we are struggling to reconcile what we are learning to be true from God's Word regarding these things and what we are experiencing in our daily lives like building careers, starting families, educating children, building solid friendships, watching children leave the nest, failing health, being involved in our communities and churches, trying to keep up with our Netflix show...really important stuff.

And many of you at this point may be frustrated and saying, "Give me the Goods Pam. What does it look like to be a woman right here, right now?" So often we want to just jump to the answers and say "God just tell me how to live and what I should do?" But our gracious Father is more concerned with the journey we mentioned last time. That we would seek, reach out and find Him.

IN the midst of unanswered questions, he wants us to trust Him and to seek His truth. And He promises that when we seek the truth, we will find it, and it will set us free.

Finding our True Identity in Christ will take time and we are just building the foundation today so that we can be sure we are following God's design not our own.

And that is where we are going to start this session. God's creation of Mankind. Please know that when I use that word, Mankind, I do it purposefully but without any intent to offend anyone. Throughout history the word Mankind has been used to represent the entire human race, both male and female, and not because males are superior to females, but generally because God made Adam, man, first and the human race found its name Mankind from that first Adam, whose name literally means man.

Genesis 1:26-28

Our study will begin in the beginning, the very beginning. Genesis 1:26-28 are very familiar verses to many of us, because they depict our human ORIGIN story. But these verses hold so much more than a nice Bible story for felt boards.

These 3 verses concisely, powerfully, and beautifully show God's creation of men and women as the pinnacle of all God's creative work. These words express that the inherent worth and value of humans is rooted in the fact that we were made in God's own image.

Our first and primary identity is that we are created in the image and likeness of the Creator Himself.

Read

Read these verses with me and let's look at what is revealed about who we are.

Before God created man, all the created beings and living things like plants and vegetation were made according to their own kinds. All the sea creatures were made according to their OWN kind, and the birds of the air were made according to their own kind. All the livestock and creeping things and beasts of the field were each made according to their own individual kinds.

But when we get to the creation of Humans, God decided to make Man according to God's kind. God designed man after God's own image, so Man's "kind" was God.

One of the first things we notice is that the words of creation in these verses differ in formula than previously in the chapter. In the previous verses, God proclaims what is to be created and it is done. He says, "Let there be light. And there was light." He says, "Let the waters under the heavens being gathered together in one place and let the dry land appear...And it was so." He declares, "Let the earth sprout vegetation...And it was so. "Let the earth bring forth living creatures...And it was so."

Right away most students of the Bible notice that God uses plural pronouns in his proclamation to make mankind. "Let US make man in OUR image." But some readers might not realize that the Hebrew word for God use here is actually the plural word Elohim.

The nature of these words has been debated for years. Some say this plurality represents God speaking to the heavenly angels or to His royal court like a King might speak. Others have suggested that God is thinking to Himself and considering making Mankind in what some call a Divine Deliberation. As if God was rubbing His chin and saying "Hmmm. Should I make Man like me? Yeah I think I will."

A more traditional view would say that although the author of Genesis would not have understood a Trinitarian perspective, these pronouns are foreshadowing the Trinity and giving us a glimpse into the interaction between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

It is clear, whatever the proper interpretation, that God is desiring to make man in a special and unique way. He wants man to resemble Himself in some way. Clearly this doesn't mean we physically LOOK like God. But in what way does God want Man to be like Him?

In His Image

In Hebrew, verse 27 forms a chiasm. This is a literary device that uses repetition of similar ideas as previously stated by in reverse order. The point of using the chiasmic structure is to highlight or point out a particular idea or theme in a passage. In this verse, the emphasis is on God's Image.

The Imago Dei. This is what separates humans from the rest of Creation. Only Mankind was made to image God in some way. And it is clear from this verse that male and female were both made equally to bear God's likeness.

This is important for us to note as women. Some of us may come from traditions or cultures where women are not treated with the same dignity and respect that is afforded men. Even in this culture where equality is promoted, it isn't always realized. Many women have been the victims of demeaning statements and abusive behavior simply because they are women. And sadly the Church has not been immune to this activity.

Yet this behavior is vehemently opposed by the Word of God. Right here we can see that from the beginning of Mankind's creation, women were made to have equal value and significance with men.

Women and men alike were made in the likeness of their Creator God.

Yet, men and women were made differently from one another also. God made Mankind both male and female, so there are some obvious differences between us. We are not the same. God was purposeful in making two genders when making Mankind in His image, so both men and women are vital to the full expression of God's image on earth.

Later in our series we will delve more deeply into how God intends for us as women to be different from men and how the specific role he's called all women to is one of great strength and significance. But today we will be focusing on our basic humanity and how God has created us in His image.

Although men and women each fully bear God's image individually, there is a unique way in which they reflect His image together. In verse 28, we see that God calls the man and woman to Be Fruitful and Multiply. God is involving His creation in the act of creating.

God creates life and Man and Woman emulate that act of creation in the privilege of bringing life into the world through procreation. Of course humans don't create "ex nihilo" or out of nothing as God does, but God engages both the man and the woman in the act of creating by transmitting His image to their children through procreation.

When men and women obey God's command to be fruitful and multiply, they are helping to spread the image of God across the face of the earth.

Does this mean that if someone is single or unable to have children that they in some way lack part of what it means to be made in God's image? NO! We are not only individuals, but we are also members of the human race and we share in the beauty of God's continued creation of human life as we help to teach and love all children even if they are not our biological children.

Dominion

So what exactly is this Imago Dei? We get a glimpse in the very next phrase in verse 26. "And let them have dominion."

Just as we elaborated in the first session, God is the ruler of all things. He has dominion over the universe and over the world He created. So it would make sense that one way in which He would want man to resemble Himself was to give him power to rule over the world God had placed him in.

Man was to be like God in that He was to rule like Him. Mankind was created to care for the creatures that were under His authority. God's rule stems from His love and concern for what He has made and so Mankind's rule was to be the same kind of loving control over his world.

As humans we are to represent God in the world as His vice-regents. We are God's kingly representatives on earth.

Resemblance

Mankind also reflects God's image in that we have moral, intellectual and aesthetic capabilities just like God who is completely Holy, all-knowing, and the Maker of all things beautiful. We know what is right and wrong. We have the ability to reason in a way that animals can't. Philosophy and politics are examples of ways in which human intellect is categorically different than animals. We have an appreciation for beauty in various forms like art, music, fashion, interior design and the like.

Relational

But perhaps the most significant way in which we manifest the Imago Dei, is in the fact that we are spiritual and relational beings. We were made to relate to God. In fact, we were made to love and be loved. In 1 John we see over and over again that God is love. He defines love and desires to be loved and longs to share His love.

We were made in such a way that our spirits can relate to and connect with God Himself who is Spirit. The Being of Ultimate Worth and Beauty and Truth and Goodness desires to know us and love us. And we are called to love Him back with all our hearts, souls, mind and strength in return.

No other part of God's Creation was made to relate with Him in quite this way. We can receive and give love and were made to enjoy being with God and sharing life with Him. What a privilege!

And all of this is possible because God is a god of relationship. He has always existed in perfect, intimate, eternal relationship. He exists as One God in three persons. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always perfectly loved one another and have been completely satisfied, at peace, and unified as one in all things.

In John 17, Jesus prays "Now Father glorify me in your presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."

Jesus is referring to the perfectly fulfilling and intimately familiar, personal connection He shared with His Father and with the Holy Spirit when He was the Pre-Incarnate Son of God in heaven.

We are relational beings because our Maker has been a God of loving relationship for all eternity.

How does Being Made in God's Image Shape my Identity

So how does being made in God's Image shape our identity? It is actually the core of our Identity. We were made to rule God's world in love, to resemble God's perfect character, to connect to God in a loving relationship and to pass on the Imago Dei from generation to generation by being fruitful and multiplying. So everything we do and say should be flowing from this intimate connection with God and His world.

We've been given by God great value and significance. We are God's very own creation! This should encourage us and motivate us to live according to our true identity.

Being human is supposed to be a beautiful thing. But our current reality does not reflect this well. Does it?

The Fall

Are we all flourishing in love for God and emulating his perfect character in everything we do? Uh noo!

Are we all exercising dominion over our world in peace? NO way!

Why Not?

Anyone who is honest would agree that something horrible has happened in our world and in our lives and now no one experiences the intimacy and oneness that we were created to have with God Himself.

This is true because the very first human representatives, Adam and Eve, made choice that has forever affected every one of their descendants ever since.

Many of us are familiar with the story of the Fall of Man in Genesis 3, but it's worth highlighting, because what happened in the Garden of Eden in that moment, effectively marred the Imago Dei in humans thereafter.

Adam and Eve were the first humans God created and they were absolutely perfect. They enjoyed an intimate relationship with their Creator and they lived in harmony with the beautiful world that God had designed for them.

They lacked nothing. God gave them all they needed in abundance...plenty of delicious food, a meaningful and purposeful existence in tending their Garden home and in living in perfect oneness with each other.

In this idyllic scene there was but one command that God gives to Adam and Eve. There was a tree in the center of the Garden called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And God told Adam and Eve that they could eat of every single tree in the Garden except for that one, because if they did, God warned them that they would die.

And everything went well until Eve was met by God's Enemy, Satan, who was actually a Fallen Angel who had rebelled against His creator. And Satan wanted nothing more than to destroy this beautiful couple that God had made by tempting them to rebel against their Creator just as He had.

So Satan lies to Eve and tells her that God is not telling them the whole truth and that if they would simply eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree then they would gain the Wisdom of God and they would in fact become like God knowing Good and Evil.

As always some of what Satan said was true. In eating the fruit, Adam and Eve would gain a perspective of the world that they had never had before. In their innocence, they had never known evil or imperfection in any way. All they knew was the goodness and kindness of God.

But Satan's distortion of God's truth was enough for Eve to doubt God's goodness to her and she took the fruit because she wanted to be like God. And of course she gave it to Adam and he followed her in disobedience.

What our first parents failed to realize is the they already were like God. They had been made in his image and likeness right. They were able to experience all the goodness and beauty that God had created in the nest of Safety that He had given them.

But when Eve saw the fruit she recognized that it looked good for food. Meaning it looked like something that she would enjoy. She began to question why God would keep something so beautiful from her and soon she had forgotten that God was she needed and he had provided her with everything she needed.

If we are honest, Eve was not too different from you and me. Don't we often question God's goodness to us. Don't we long for things that we think will make us happy even though we know God doesn't want it for us. How many times have we chosen to replace God as the Being of Ultimate Worth in our hearts with something that He created? Yes we are not too different from Eve.

Well in that moment of rebellion, Adam and Eve fell from their state of innocent perfection and became sinners. They no longer could meet the standard of God's perfection in which they were created and as God had promised they died.

Of course they didn't die physically just then, but they did die spiritually. Their perfect union with God was broken and they were cast out from His presence in an act of God's grace, so that they would not eat from the Tree of Life which would cause them to live in their state of separation from God for all eternity.

In their sinful state, Adam and Eve were ashamed and hid from God. And humans have been hiding from God ever since.

But even in the face of His beloved children's rebellion, God still cared for them and wanted to protect them. In fact, in verse 15 of Chapter 3, we get a glimpse of God's love and grace. He promises that He would send a rescuer to save Adam and Eve from the death that had come upon them. And from that moment on, God has been all about His rescue mission.

But until God would send His Savior, all of Adam and Eve's children would bear the marks of their sin. Their physical and spiritual DNA had been marred as a result of their sin and the death penalty they were living with.

The Imago Dei, the image of God, would still be passed on to their offspring, but it would be dulled in some ways. That is why we can see some of the goodness and truth and beauty that still exist in our world and in God's creation, but we also recognize that there is pain and brokenness in the midst.

Adam and Eve saw that right away as they had to endure the murder of their son Abel by their other son Cain. Sin does not lie dormant. It is always active in the hearts of fallen humanity.

Our hearts and our world are broken. As a result, our Identity has been changed. We are no longer in perfect union with our Creator. We still have the capacity to know and love God, but we don't because sin has destroyed our connection to Him. We need someone who can restore our friendship with God by destroying the death that separates us from life God intended for us. Because we can't do it for ourselves because we are spiritually dead and unable to save ourselves.

What we need is a completely new Identity. Since we are Adam and Eve's offspring just like every human who has ever or will ever live, we were born with sinful DNA. Our hearts are turned away from God and we are bent on pleasing ourselves.

But the image of God within us reminds us that we were made for so much more. And God has not forgotten His promise to rescue His people. His rescue mission was fulfilled when He sent his own Son to pay for the death penalty Adam and Eve had received.

Identity in Christ

In Jesus, we see a whole new humanity. Jesus is the perfect Son of God who came to earth to live the perfect life Adam did not. Christ's perfect obedience stood against Adam and Eve's disobedience. And the death that Christ would die would be the means by which all of Adam's children could escape death and therefore be given a completely new Identity. One that is marked by forgiveness and grace.

So how does a fallen child of God find this new Identity in Christ?

Let's look at 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 to the amazing way in which God has provided salvation for broken humanity.

Did you catch all that?

Look at verse 21. In order to save us, for our sake, God made Jesus who had never sinned to "be sin". This means that God treated Jesus as sin and allowed Him to bear the punishment for the sin that Mankind had committed.

How is this even possible? Well since Jesus is God He is infinite and eternal. And because He was fully human and was without sin, he did not have a sin penalty of His own to bear. So Jesus was the absolutely perfect substitute for Mankind's sin penalty. He could pay for an infinite amount of sin for an infinite amount of people. So anyone who would look to Jesus, God enables them to "become the righteousness of God"

This doesn't mean they are perfect and without sin. But just like Jesus was treated as sin, so too are we considered or treated as righteous and pure before God.

It's what some call the Great Exchange. Christ's death for our life. Our sin for Christ's righteous perfection. It's certainly not fair, but God has declared it as just payment for sin.

And all of this is from God Himself verse 18 says. We are reconciled to God, we are restored to our friendship and loving relationship with our Father.

When we think about the intimate connection between God the Father and God the Son, it helps us to see the immensity of Christ's sacrifice in coming to earth.

He gave up the perfect peace and joy of the relationship within the Godhead so he could take on human sin and redeem the world. What kind of love must He have for those He came to save if he was willing to give up all the love he perfectly experienced with His Father?

That's a love that is incomparable, like nothing we've seen as humans. And if we embrace that love and trust Christ's sacrifice as the payment for our own sin, God will grant us forgiveness and new life in Christ that lasts for all eternity.

This is the New Identity that we are offered. If we are IN Christ, we are a NEW creation. The old has gone and the New has come.

We are REMADE in the Image of Christ. Our sins are forgiven, we've been made whole and we've been given a whole new purpose in life. And that purpose is to be an Ambassador for Christ to those who don't know about His wonderful offer of salvation and forgiveness.

What a privilege it is to share this life-changing message of Christ to those around us. There is hope in the face of death. Jesus has defeated death for us and we never need to fear it again. We can be made new in Christ and find all that we are in Him.

He can be our new identity. And as we seek to live our lives in light of that New Identity, we will find all that we need is in Christ. All the other ways in which we seek to identify ourselves just pale in comparison to the power and joy of being made in the Image of God and being Remade in the Image of Christ.

Conclusion

Of course we have just skimmed the surface today of all that it means to be Remade in the Image of Christ. And that is why we are offering this series on Identity. We hope you will join us in February when we look more closely at our New Identity and how we are to live that out specifically as women.

I hope you'll join us.

Let me pray for us.