

1 In His Image
Genesis 1: 26-27; 2: 7-8, 18-25

Review

We are in a series called *First Family*. We are looking at the first few chapters of Genesis. Last week we looked at the creation account. It is a unique view of creation. It stands in bold relief to all the accounts of origins we read about, first, **the mythological** accounts of creation where creation is usually because of a conflict among the gods and the gods look with disdain on the humans they created and the world that they created. And secondly, it stands against **modern views of** origins in that matter is not eternal, nor is man the measure of all things. No God stands before creation and orders it, therefore there is a design, an *oughtness* about the world. We can't shape it the way we would like, we submit to the givens to find freedom in a created world. And it is the most positive view of the world possible. The creation of the world comes from the loving heart of a God who out of the overflowing joy of his own being creates a home for his image bearers.

Now this week we look at chapter 2 and see this remarkable account of God filling the world with his images—human beings. And as in creation so with humans, to be fully human we can't make up who we are, our persons, or our sexuality—we too are born with givens. So, let's look at chapter 2 which is the sixth day of creation looked at in detail.

2 Genesis 1: 26-27; 2: 7-8, 18-25

26 Then God said, "Let us make man^[b] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and 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.*

7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for^[e] him."¹⁹ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed^[f] every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam^[g] there was not found a helper fit for him.²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made^[h] into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

*"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,*

because she was taken out of Man."^[i]

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Introduction

We really are surrounded by food. Also, I gained a little weight over Christmas. Then you think now we are out of a season of feasting for the next three months or so, then I get this video of Elizabeth Garland on one of our local news outlets about the season of Epiphany and King Cakes. Elizabeth Garland talking and demonstrating the glory of King Cakes with the little baby Jesus in them and that we start eating king cakes on Epiphany till lent! I'm in Genesis and the first command is what to eat!

Speaking of eating, in thinking about this sermon I was thinking about the book *The Supper of the Lamb, a culinary reflection*. He starts off with an observation and then gives a parable to illustrate it a chapter later. He says, **3** “Man’s real work is to look at the things of the world and to love them for what they are. That is, after all, what God does, and man was not made in God’s image for nothing,” (Robert Capon, *The Supper of the Lamb*) Now up until a few hundred years ago that was possible as Charles Taylor points, because historically people believed

- the world was created,
- nature spoke about the *givenness* of the world, in other words was filled with meaning—glory, and community was thick
- we listened to the wisdom of our tribe. Most of our knowing was imbedded in this.

That is not the case anymore, the world is not created, nature means nothing. Personal choice is God so we wrestle as a culture with issues raised in this text about is there a design, is there a sexual binary, if sex is good, why so many taboos in the bible.

Anyway, Capon represents this modern point of view playfully as G. K. Chesterton would by looking a two people invited to a dinner party. A handsome widow and an eligible bachelor were invited to the party. **The widow** spend the evening talking about how she was sick of being limited by eating merely beef, poultry, lamb or chicken all the time—so few choices, where is the freedom in that? **The bachelor** was more progressive and represented the qua- scientific point of view and he suggested that nature was far to bountiful and lavish to suit the taste of anyone who valued technology, speed and efficiency. He stated that if he had anything to do with creating the natural order he would have insisted on something a little less splashy than this uneconomical riot of flora and fauna that passes for the world. Just one species of animals and one of plants and I suppose if pushed, one gender of humanity as more money, and effort and extravagance and heart ache has been let loose on the world because of romance than anything in the world.

That seems funny, but that is not too far from where we are in poplar culture now. So, let’s go back to the beginning and see what we see about being human, male and female, love and sex. We see in this passage the foundation for Jesus and St. Paul’s teaching on community, male and female and marriage and sex in these few verses. Let’s look at the text like this. We are created for community; We are created male and female; We are created to enjoy sex within a marriage covenant.

4 We are created for community

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man^h in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and 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;
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⁷ then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for^e him. (Genesis 1: 26-27; 2: 7-8; 18)

Chapter 1: 26-27 is God creating image bearers under two modes on the sixth day, chapter 2 looks at that day in particular. Chapter 1 was last week, God building a home he loves, chapter 2 is a look at the creatures he makes in his image. But what does it mean to be, “in our image?” An image reflects something and represents something. It reflects or represents a greater reality. God created a lot of things, but those things don’t have the unique capacity to reflect back or represent God in the depth of his being. For instance, a mountain is there and beautiful, the ocean is glorious, and reflects God’s glory but it can’t reflect back to God who God is in his depth. Speaking to what this means, Beale says this, **5** *We are created to resemble and represent the triune God spiritually, for we are created in his image.... As God’s image Adam and Eve were to reign with God as kings and representatives of God.* (G. K. Beale, *God dwells Among us*)

In greek *image* is icon. G. K Beale illustrates it like this in *God Dwells Among us*. On a computer you have an icon—it is a small picture—like an app. You look at it and then you click on it and it opens what it represents—files and files of data. Metaphorically, humanity is a small picture file representing God’s glory, what he is like. And as his image we point away from ourselves to something more glorious. See, what a possibility we have as his image. Don’t you see, In his being God is love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three but one. They communicate, they give to one another, they think and create. So, God makes images who are able to do and be what God is in self. Able to love and be loved, know and be known. *Let’s make creatures who can know what we know and reciprocate. Let’s make creatures with the capacity to enter our dance of joy.*

See at the heart of the universe is love. God is love within himself, God is a community of love, of sharing in a great dance of mutual indwelling. So, God’s image bearers must reflect and represent that in the world. So, the first thing we see about God’s image bearers is we were made for community, we were made for love. That is why in chapter 2: 18 we see the first malediction in the bible, **6** ¹⁸ *Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for^{le} him.* (Genesis 1: 26-27; 2: 7-8; 18) This is right after the account of the creation of Adam. I want you to appreciate how radical this is. Adam is in paradise. He has **power** to subdue creation. He has **comfort, beauty**, he is surrounded by beauty. He has **pleasure and perfect communion** with God—no sin. But he still needs more. That is not enough. What is God saying? With all this Adam can’t be fully human alone or be his image, why? God has never been alone! Adam needs friendship, not just friendship with God, he needs other image bearers to love and receive love. In short, think of God’s humility. **7** God made us in such a way that we can only get our needs met from God through other people. We were built for love.

I never saw this clearer than when I got into the world of trauma. A child’s first need is not food, clothing, or to be changed, it is love. I always thought that deprived of love it would malfunction but it was just psychological, then I realized it is physiological as well. A child can’t thrive without love—attachment. Benefit of love your brain literally won’t form. We form through love, the giving of love and without it we are less than human. As I read somewhere, “A mother’s smile on your helpless face is where formation starts. See delight. Delight in a child forms a child more than anything else. You can give an infant food, nourishment and keep them clean, but if you don’t hold him—they will endure trauma that in some cases they will never be human.

And we don’t’ outgrow this. AARP says for people who are older and lose spouses it would be better to smoke a pack of cigarettes a day and live-in community than to be alone and eat like a nutritionist. And yet what is the average person doing they say, I can put relationships on the back burner—hustle, get money, get power, over around be anonymous and later I will maybe if I have time enter a community that actually has claims on me and I on them. How is that working out? We were built for community. To be human and free is to love and be loved. See ironically because of the way we are made our culture has it all wrong—Without love you are never free! We were built for others.

8 We are created male and female

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man^[b] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
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Notice, God’s image is under two modes—male and female. In chapter 2 we see this fleshed out. Eve is created from Adam and called a *helper*—this is not *daddies’ little helper*, the world *helper* is used of God. It means someone who has gifts and abilities you don’t have—something that is complimentary. So in our creation story there is a sexual binary—two genders. This is reinforced in another way as well. All over genesis 1 we see this binary movement—pairs—*light and darkness, sea and land, forming and filling*. So God made his image under two modes—neither gender is able to reflect back the full weight of redemption and blessing, both are necessary. We are alike share a same humanity but have different gifts and weaknesses. Our bodies are an index of our souls. A man’s sexuality is outside himself, a women’s in within. She is a vessel of life. She is infinitely more, but originally this has explained roles more than almost anything else. It is the design of creation.

Interestingly enough, God is creator and could have made us alike, made Adam a buddy, or made us asexual or without glorious distinctions but he didn’t, and he said this is good. Now, I suppose in our time when the logical end of freedom as personal choice and there is no design, bodies mean nothing, nature means nothing then—we can choose our gender, this doesn’t seem right, but Capor is right when he says about the limited food choices we are given, if you don’t like beef, you have never really looked at beef and the infinite variety that is awaiting you.

So here we are in the middle of the culture that says, that view is oppressive to people. What is our response? As the people of God in a time when the Bible’s teaching on sexuality is less and less popular we must remain committed to being counter-culture when the cultural accounting of things is at odds with the truth of Scripture. That alone will make Christians truly relevant.

Compelled by the love of Jesus we must love those who oppose us and not posture an *us against them posture*. Jesus didn’t, and we can’t either, he befriended those whose views on sex were opposed to him or whose lives were ruined by bad sexual practices—he befriended them, but he didn’t condone sin. Can we do that? Can you? We must be compelled by the truth of Jesus to honor and obey the Creator’s design. His thoughts and his ways are higher than ours.

9 We are created to enjoy sex within a marriage covenant

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for^[e] him.”¹⁹ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed^[f] every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam^[g] there was not found a helper fit for him.²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made^[h] into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;

she shall be called Woman,

because she was taken out of Man.”^[i]

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Genesis 1: 18-25)

This passage is the foundational teaching for Jesus and St. Paul as they work out what and where sexuality is a blessing and the teaching on marriage. And it is a blessing—*one flesh*, God invented sex. In fact, the bible is not prudish about sex. It is talked about in Scripture guardedly and poetic as opposed to gratuitously and in vulgar terms, but all over the bible the view of sex is over the top affirmed. It is viewed as a great gift for husbands and wives to share, to taste a little bit of Eden, naked and without shame. Proverbs offers benedictions on reproduction anatomy and I am being guarded here because a lot of people of all ages will listen to this. Song of Solomon is a poem of marital pleasure. Paul, single and celebit, like Jesus, says not to withhold marital pleasure except for a short season. Sex in and of itself is not taboo, thought is surrounded and guarded with taboo and guardrails. Why? *It is because sex is so delightful and also the most dangerous of human capacities God says so much about it.* Sex in the bible is liberating inside a covenant marriage with vows and so limiting in any other setting. The more special a think is to keep it from being common we this everywhere. You can't just go touch the Monalisa, it is set off, guarded, protected—why because it is dirty? No because it is priceless!

The picture we see here is of marriage, of leaving and cleaving. The lover and the beloved. Adam is uttering the first poetry in the bible when he sees his mate. It is the language of longing.

“This at last is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

At last, see, I have seen wonder before but at last something that answers to my deepest longings.

That is why **Vegan Gorian**, orthodox theologian says, God made us more lover than worker!

We see God's design for marriage here in Genesis 2, a man and a woman vowed to be physically one, economically one, emotionally one and spiritually one. Union and communion of body and soul. The rest of the New Testament works this out and we don't have time to go through all the passages. This is the design of marriage. Not everyone marries and that is fine, and the Bible teaches chastity, or living without sex until married, but the bible teaches sexuality is for a man and woman covenanted relationship. It is so special we have elaborate rites that attend it, vow taking, and we do it publicly because the whole culture has a stake in what happens in the home. As the home goes, so goes the city.

So, as we close what is our part in this? It is first of all to take this seriously. Could we first of all do this. Let's get our own houses and marriage in the church in order. Can we not model and give our children the promise of marriage as the best of all worlds if we are called to it? Can our marriages though broken and marred by the fall, not be salt and light to the larger communities we live in and even with those who think we are nuts? And let me remind you, it was the Christian view of marriage, more than anything that changed Rome, liberated women and gave children, male and female a secure place in the family as men were called to love their wives as Christ loved the Church and lay down their lives to make them more beautiful. And in their homes, they took in the abandoned children cast off, abused women and gave them a secure place to find love and belonging. Is that too much to ask? And they took in and were family to those who had no family. Would people find that oppressive? No, they flocked to it in the past, and perhaps they will again. We build gardens in Babylon and that might be good enough. To extend the metaphor and make it larger and more glorious and applied to homes. Vegan Gorian said this of a garden, **10** *“A true gardener would never pretend that gardening is all pleasure, or that it always prompts reflection. But she might claim that in the garden she has tasted Paradise.”* (Vigen Guroian, *The Fragrance of God*)