The Imago Dei — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 1:26–27 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, January 15, 2023 · *In The Beginning*

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...been talking about and will be talking about in our church over the next several weeks as we work our way through this new series entitled Genesis or the beginning. And I think it's going to be one of the more relevant series that we ever go through as a church because the book of Genesis, in chapter 1 in particular, raises and answers questions that everybody asks. Maybe you don't ask them out loud, maybe you don't talk to people about them, but your life is being fundamentally shaped by your answers to questions like why am I here?

Why is there something rather than nothing? What is here? When did it happen? What is earth and is there a creator? What's the difference between right and wrong? How do I know it? What's wrong with me? And how do I fix it? These are questions that every human being wrestles with and tries to find answers to and live in light of those answers. And I believe when we find the right answers to those questions, then our lives will flourish because we'll be in alignment with the one who created. And when you live your life according to the creator's design, your life is better.

Your life functions like it's supposed to function and those kinds of designs are laid out very clearly in Genesis. I don't think the problem is that they're not clear. I think the problem is they're not attractive to the culture. And that's why no one wants to do them. And so for the next couple of weeks, we're going to show how that is the case and then hopefully embrace these things into our life. If you're just now joining us last week we looked at Genesis chapter 1, and it's a real summary statement of the creation there in verse 1 of chapter 1.

You may even know it, even if you're not a Christian person, maybe you don't even go to church, but you know Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It's a summary statement. He created everything up there and everything down here,

which encapsulates everything that there is. But verse two begins to kind of work out how he creates, and this was the main focus of last week, that when God began to create the universe, it was, according to verse two, formless. And empty or void. These are two Hebrew words that rhyme.

That's one of the reasons I think maybe Genesis 1 is somewhat like a song or a poem. It's the Hebrew words *tohu wavohu*, which just means empty and void. There's no form. And there's no fullness. There's no— it's chaos without structure. It's disorder that needs to be put into order, and that's what God does in creation of the universe. He does it in seven days in Genesis 1. Each day represents a separate creative activity of God. Days one to three is God giving form to the formless. Order to the chaos.

He creates light and dark, separates them; he separates water to create sky and sea; and then he separates land and sea. And then from those forms in days one, two, and three, he creates fullness in days four, five, and six. And we looked at this last week, the fullness of time. There's meaning to time because there's now a sun and a moon in the galaxies. In day four, there's reproducing life in the sea and the air in day six, which corresponds to day two. And then there— I'm sorry, day five, corresponding to day two.

And then there's reproducing life on the land in day six. Corresponding to day three, the creation of the earth. Now what happens on day three, there's two creative acts. And on day six there are two creative acts. And the second creative act on day six is what we're looking at this morning. And it is one of the most foundational truths, I think, in the entire scripture. It's the creation of mankind, the creation of Adam. And it says in Genesis 1:26 and 27 that mankind is made in God's image. Theologians talk about the *imago Dei*, or the image of God, and that's what we're looking at.

So let's read our text starting in chapter one, verse twenty-four. To give you context, this is the beginning of day six, and God creates the living creatures on the earth. And then you're going to see the creation of man in verse 26. So it says in verse 24, God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds. Livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds. And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and livestock according to their kinds and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind, and God saw that it was good.

So you see, like domesticated animals, wild animals. And reptiles, God says it's good. There's a second creative act on day six, verse twenty-six, God said, let us make man in our image, and 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 of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So, verse 27, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him, male and female, he created them.

Now you can't see this in the English as easy as you do with the original language, but you notice the word created here. It's the Hebrew word *bara*. It's kind of fun to say. Like, you're going to create something, you would probably go, "*Bara*," and it would be. That's what God did. He creates and it was. It's only used three times in Genesis one or two times in Genesis one before it's used here in verse 27 it's used at the very beginning of the summary statement. It's used of the creation of organic life in the sea.

And now here with the creation of man. And notice it repeats itself. *Bara*, *bara*, *bara*, three times to kind of emphasize that this is the key moment of creation. You might say mankind in God's image is the crown of creation, it's the climax, it's what everything has been working towards. And the rest of the scripture plays that out, that it is really the most, one of the most foundational concepts. In scripture. And really it's one of the most foundational concepts in human civilization. Every human civilization that has taken this Judeo-Christian truth of the image of God and woven it into their laws and their philosophy and their culture, systems of culture making, those cultures have flourished.

This is the foundation of almost everything good that we appreciate about human rights and freedom, all of that stuff that we as Americans kind of treasure. The first line of our founding documents right after the preamble that all men are created what? Equal, and they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. And what are those rights? Among these are life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. Where did that come from? It comes from the *imago Dei*. It comes from Genesis chapter 1, and everything that we enjoy as Americans rests on this foundation.

And when this foundation goes away, and if it goes away, which you kind of see crumbling in our day and age, then a lot of the good stuff that comes with it will begin to disappear as well. So what I want to do with the time we have in Genesis 1, verses 26 and 27, is answer: What is this? What is this big, important, foundational thing, and why does it matter or how does it matter in our life? So you can really answer the question of what is it right from Genesis chapter one, just to give you a working definition right up front.

My definition of the image of God, very simply, is man's ability and responsibility to image God. I know it sounds kind of simple. If you don't want to use the word image, you can use the word represent. We represent God on the earth. We speak for him. We act for him. As we live and move and have our being, we should display truths about him. When people look at us and the way we live, they ought to think to themselves, well there must be a God and this must be what God is like.

The image of God is our ability and responsibility to image him or represent him on the earth. Now that doesn't mean we are God, like some people sometimes suggest. It's kind of like the difference between a driver's license and a human being like this is my driver's license. Actually like this picture on my driver's license. The last one I didn't like because I

didn't have any hair, but this one I have hair on. This is my driver's license. Is this me? You can answer back. Is this me? No, I mean really, come on.

Is it me? Some say yes, some say no, most say no. Of course it's not me, but it is me in a way. Like, when I go and get on a plane, they want this driver's license. Doesn't matter who I am, I better have my license to confirm that I am who I am. It can speak for me, it can act for me. It can do certain things on my behalf, but it's not me. And in the same way, we are not God. We are not eternal. We're not all-powerful, omnipotent, all-knowing.

But we are like him in a way. We image him. We represent him. We can speak for him and act for him and do things on his behalf. And that's what it means to be made in the image of God according to Genesis 1. I'm going to show you how that plays itself out. If you look in Genesis 1, the difference between God and man is very clear. It's very clear that God is— man is not God, because man is very much of the creation, right? He comes from the earth.

We talk about dust to dust, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. It's not just a rap song, it's a biblical truth. We come from the dust, the earth kind of God fashioned us from the earth, so we are a creature, just like the rest of creation is creaturely. We are dependent on God. We're kind of interlocked with the rest of the creative world. We have to eat and sleep. We have this thing called mortality. We are instructed by God. We are like the rest of creation, accountable to God, but we're not like the creation in every way.

You notice in the creation of the sun and the moon and the sea animals and the living animals, God says, "Let there be." Let there be light, let there be a sun, let there be life in the sea. But when he creates man, he doesn't say let there be. What does he say? If you don't remember, he says, let us create. It's a big difference. God made— it's not the word... When it comes to man, he created, and it is the word *bara*. "Let us"—there's something where God kind of counsels himself.

Let's do something special with this thing right here. In the rest of creation, when they reproduce, it says they reproduce according to their kind. Says it over and over again, according to their kind. But when it comes to the creation of man, it's not according to their kind. It's let's make them in our image and in our likeness. Unlike the rest of these animals, these are going to be unique, in that they're in our image. So mankind's given rationality, broad responsibilities, and a special relationship with the Creator. So if you're taking notes, the difference, the beginning point for understanding the image of God, is that we are both a creature and a person.

And it feels like a contradiction that we can be dependent and independent at the same time. Usually they work against one another, but in God's economy and his creation and his design for humanity, the more dependent we are on him, it actually breeds greater independence and freedom from the creation. You think about the creatureliness of man, a lot of

philosophies emphasize this to the expense of personhood. They say we're just a creature. A lot of atheistic, secular, humanistic philosophies say there's nothing to separate us from. You know, we're just evolved monkeys, we're just sophisticated primordial soup, whatever the case may be.

They emphasize our creatureliness and they denigrate our personhood. So these kind of atheistic philosophies are the ones motivating people like Hitler and Stalin and Margaret Sanger. We're just creatures. We're nothing but meat, and so there's nothing special about us. On the other hand, there are other more pagan philosophies that emphasize the personhood at the expense of the creatureliness, right? So they say things like, well, we are God, and we're not dependent. There are no strings on me. And we can just kind of self-actualize whatever we want to actualize. And we know deep down, neither one of those make any sense.

We know deep down that doesn't resonate with reality. You know deep down that if let's say me and Audra bought some land, which we hope to do one of these days, and we end up having a farm and she gets her cow and Blaze gets his horse and everybody gets all the animals that they want. And then something happens and I lose my job or we lose our source of income and we have to start selling things on the farm. Some people will say well you need to sell the horse first or you need to sell the cow first or you need to— maybe someone would even say you need to sell the dog.

But I guarantee you no one's ever going to come up to me and say, well, you need to sell Audra or you need to sell Blaze or you need to sell one of the kids. You know that's not right. You know there's something different about humanity, it's a person. We are persons. We are created persons, which means we're distinct and separate from the rest of the created order. Now, what does that personhood give us? Well, if you're taking notes, I think it's at two levels. It gives us a unique capacity to do certain things, God-like things, but it also gives us a unique calling or a God-given calling to do those things in a certain way.

And you see all of those in Genesis 1. I'm going to put them under three R's just for the sake of simplicity. I think in Genesis 1 you see man given a unique rationality, a capacity for rationale, he has a unique capacity for relationships, and then he has a unique capacity for responsibility. And those things all make him different from the rest of the created world. When it comes to his rationality, you can see this in that you see a little bit later in Genesis where he starts naming the animals.

You see that mankind is able to know God, worship God, hear from God, talk with God, all of these things. You— animals don't talk. You know, I don't care what show you're watching. Blaze likes those dog shows where the dogs talk and play basketball. Anybody else watch those things? It would be amazing if dogs could talk, but they can't talk like we can talk. They

can't reason. You never see a dog stay up all night worried about its kids' college education, right? Do you? No. Dogs don't feel shame. They don't self-reflect.

Some of you say, well my dog feels shame. Because when I come home and he's pooped on the carpet, he's like— cowers and starts— does anybody else's dog do this? They back up in fear, they run to the back door, please let me out, please let me out, don't hit me. That's not fear, that's instinct. Because he knows you're mad and you're upset. So it's not that he's out there in the backyard thinking about what he did wrong. I promise you he's not. If you go out and look at what he's doing in his backyard, he's licking himself, he's digging holes.

And you know it's not shame also because as soon as the dog walks back in the house, what happens? You change your tone of voice, it's like nothing ever happened. You know something happened, but he's not reflecting. He's not worried, he's not anxious about his life. He doesn't stay— dogs don't have that capacity in them. They don't reflect. They respond, yes, to stimuli instinctually, but there's a difference between instinct and intuition. Human beings have this rational intuitive unique capacity, a godlike capacity to think and know. We have a godlike capacity for relationship.

You see this in our text two ways. Number one, when God says let's create, he says, let us create. Did you notice that? Let's create him in our image. There's this sense of, like, there's this community in the Godhead. What's going on there? And then he creates man, Adam, but he creates them male and female he created them. So you see this relational core to the human experience is this relational differential complementary relationship. One thing's a man, one thing's a woman, and they together display the image of God. That means part of the image of God is our capacity for relationship.

Now what I think God does in creating mankind with this capacity is he shares with them the eternal relational love that he enjoyed within himself. The Bible talks about God as a Trinity. We just sing about it. I believe in God the Father. I believe in Christ the Son. I believe in the Holy Spirit. Our God is three in one. And people think about the Trinity, it kind of blows their mind, but it's one God, one, you might say, one essence, one being who exists eternally, and three persons. Some use the word personality; that makes me think that God has split personalities.

He doesn't have split personality, he has individual persons within his— and so that means eternally there has been a love relationship within the Godhead because God didn't create Jesus, he didn't create the Spirit; they've always existed eternally in a loving relationship, Father loving the Son loving the Father, Spirit loving the Son, that dance is now not being created in Genesis, it's being shared in Genesis. With the man and the woman created in God's image. Now, this love is experienced in our lives. We experience love in our relationship with God. We can experience love in our relationship with other human beings, we love our spouses, you love your children, but that capacity is different than a lot of what

animals experience because it's this godlike thing, this godlike gift that was uniquely given to human beings.

We were made for communion and community. It's core to what it means to be in God's image. And then finally this final R is the responsibility. And this is in verse 26 when God says, let them have dominion over the fish, over the birds, over the livestock, over the entire earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. Five times this word over is used and this word dominion which is a scary word in the English language, is central to what it means to be made in God's image.

So what is dominion? I think a good definition and illustration would be the use of great force to bring something wild into subjugation, taking something chaotic and bringing it into order. Basically doing what God does. Days 1, 2, and 3. He's saying, I want you now to do this with my world. Bring it into order. Think of a horse whisperer or horse trainer taking a wild powerful stallion and through time and effort and great force bringing the will of that stallion to serve the will of the rider. That's dominion. That's cultivating.

You could use the example of gardening. You take the barren earth that's kind of wild and waste. And we're going to fertilize it, we're going to till it up, we're going to infuse it with nutrients so that it can breathe life. And I'm going to grow watermelons and squash and zucchini out of this garden. I have dominion over my garden. That's the word dominion. And notice God says, I don't want you to just have dominion over the plant life. I want you to have dominion over all of it. The wild animals, the domesticated animals, even the reptiles, yes.

Even the lizards I want you to have dominion over all creation. So we have a responsibility or an accountability to steward God's order. So we have a unique relationship with God. And a unique responsibility to God, and then we have this unique godlike rationality to think and to know and to create and to vision like God does. It's a God-given gift. But it's not just a gift, it's also a calling. And you see this in Genesis as well. And certainly you see it later on in the rest of the scripture.

You might think of it the difference between the structure and the function. We have a structural capacity, but we also have a functional responsibility. It's not just that we are able to know God. The Bible says you're also as a man in God's image, as a woman in God's image, you don't just have the ability to know. I want you to know him rightly. I don't want you to just know him. I want you to love him. I want you to see him. I want you to worship him. I want you to pray to him.

It's not just the capacity, it's a calling to live a certain way. We have the ability to have relationships. But it's not just the capacity for relationships. It's not just that we're able to love. We have a calling to love well to love the good, to love that which is glorifying to God.

We don't just have the ability to create. It's not just that we have the capacity to make art. We should make beautiful art and cultivate the creation so that it flourishes and serves us and glorifies God and amplifies our joy.

We have the capacity and we have the function. And it functions relationally in those three environments, in our relationship with God, our relationship with other people, and our relationship with creation. That's the image of God. In our relationship with God, we're called to know him, love him, worship him, adore him, serve only him. In our relationship with other people, we're called not to serve, we're called not to be served, but to serve. We're called to love. We're called to honor. We're called to respect. In our relationship with the creation, we're called to cultivate, create, enjoy, beautify.

That's God's plan for man, because man is created in God's image. Now you can hear all that and think to yourself. Well, that's probably true. You know, I do see there's something different about mankind and man we've been able to see some incredible things happen throughout history. Mankind has come up with some incredible inventions. But at the same time there's been a lot of nastiness too. Yes, there could be special love between a husband and a bride and a mother and a daughter, but there's also a special hatred between people.

There's also a unique ability humans have to exploit people and torture in cruel and unusual ways. And yes, we can invent things and we can make the creation beautiful, but there's also a tendency in us to abuse the created order and maximize it just for our greed and pleasure and not in a sustainable way but in a destructive way and it kind of destroys the world that God made, it destroys the beauty of it because of our self-interest. And certainly yes, we should probably know God and worship God, but there seems to be a lot of people who hate God and want nothing to do with God.

And who live lives that are damaging not just to themselves but to other people because of their idolatry and unbelief. So deep down we know we're special, but also deep down we know there's something wrong. And if you kept reading in Genesis 1, you find out in Genesis 3 the thing that went wrong is that the image God gave us, which was this beautiful capacity and calling to love and worship Him, and love one another, that mirror of reflecting God got a rock thrown into it and it shattered. It's kind of like getting a rock thrown in your windshield.

It impairs your ability to see through the windshield, and our brokenness impairs our ability to represent God in the world. It is present, the image of God is still there, it's intact, but it's impaired. It's present, but it's perverted. It's intact, but it's impaired. And Genesis 3 says there's no fixing what got broke on our own. God casts mankind out of the garden and he gives him a promise. He says, from the seed of the woman is going to come a messiah or a savior who will crush the head of the serpent who took your will to choose and love and create and turned it against me.

You were supposed to trust me and follow me and love me, and instead you thought, I know better, I'll do better, I'll be God. So you broke your mirror. Now you're not reflecting me, now you're reflecting yourself. And so you read the rest of the Bible. The Messiah is promised in the Old Testament. The Messiah arrives in the New Testament with the Lord Jesus Christ. And guess how the Bible talks about Jesus? It's so interesting. Colossians 1:15. You know how Colossians 1:15 presents Jesus? Colossians 1:15 says he is "the image of the invisible God."

So the image was corrupted at the fall, but it is perfectly displayed in a new Adam, and that new Adam is Jesus. And think about Jesus' life. Think about his relationship with God. Nobody loved Jesus— nobody loved God the Father like Christ the Son. He was always praying, he was always retreating to the lonely places, he was always hearing the Father, I only do what the Father tells me to do. You think about Jesus and his relationship with other people. Jesus said, I came not to be served, but to serve.

I came to give my life as a ransom. No greater love— we have the capacity to love— "No greater love has anyone than this, that he laid down his life for his friends." And if you think about Jesus' capacity over nature, he calms the raging seas, he walks on water, he takes a fish and some loaves of bread and feeds 5,000 people. You talk about cultivating the creation. No one cultivated the creation like God the Son. So every person is created in God's image. God's image got corrupted by the fall.

Then Christ comes on the scene and he perfectly displays what God's image was always supposed to look like, but it gets better than that. He doesn't just display it. He at the cross willingly lays down that perfect, spotless, unblemished life. And he says, I'm going to die as a ransom or as a payment for your broken mirror. Here's what you deserve: death and brokenness eternally because of your choosing the wrong. And so I'm going to take your choosing the wrong, your sin, and I'm going to put it on myself, and I'm going to take my righteousness and absence of sin, and I'm going to put it on you.

As a gift of my grace, not of your works. You don't deserve it. You don't earn it. It's a gift of God because He loves you. He can credit my righteousness to you, and he'll credit your sin to me, and that's what happened on the cross. That's what Christians believe. It's substitutionary atonement. We just sang about it this morning. In my place, the Lamb of God, in my place— His blood poured out. And now when we repent of sin and put our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, His righteousness is not just given to us in a legal sense.

The Bible talks about his spirit begins to renew in us and restore in us that broken mirror. Says it a lot of different ways. One example is Colossians chapter 3. He says don't lie to each other. Because your old self is gone. You got a new self now. And now notice how he describes a new self. It's "being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." The

image that got broken in Genesis 3 is now being renewed by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:28—a lot of you have this memorized. God works all things together for the good.

You kind of maybe have it on a coffee cup and remind yourself when you're having a tough day. What is the good? You read the rest of the verse, verse 29. The good is, "those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the" likeness, or "image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." So Jesus started the movement of perfectly displaying God's image, and then he, through his Holy Spirit, is saving men and women from every tribe, tongue, and nation. And restoring in them God's image so that one day we will all be presented before the throne of God's grace, perfectly displaying his image, enjoying his creation, and enjoying him forever and ever.

The final thing is in 2 Corinthians. To show you this is explicitly a work of the Spirit is in 2 Corinthians 3:18. It says we all, with unveiled face, are beholding God's glory being transformed into the same image. It's progressive. It's not all at once. Amen. One degree of glory to the next. And this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. So God gives us his image. Every person is created in God's image. The image got broke. Christ revealed it perfectly. And now through the Spirit, as we repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he fixes the broken mirror that was lost in us.

Now, that's a theology of God's image. What does it have to do with our day-to-day lives? Well, if you think about this theology of the image of God, it is the rock bed of our Western approach to human rights. The whole reason we have these debates about I have the right to do this and you should treat those people with dignity and let's stop being mean and judgmental, what's underneath that is the image of God. It's this deep awareness and intuition, every human being is special. All men are created equal.

And so as Christians, even if our culture loses this, we must maintain it. We got to treat every person with dignity and respect. Now, how you treat people with respect when you disagree with them, our culture will probably never agree with us on that. But it doesn't mean we don't treat people with dignity. We treat them with dignity because they're made in God's image and they are special. Even the people that don't live like you live and don't believe like you believe, and maybe you think I would let them touch my children because they'll bring harm on my family.

Doesn't matter. They're still in God's image. This is why Christians have no room, no place for any form of racial prejudice, ethnic supremacy, human mistreatment. No grounds in Christianity. Why? Because they're made in God's image. This is why Christians, thankfully, at least a few, were at the forefront of the movement to abolish slavery. Sadly, many Christians were not. Many Christians lost our theology. We stopped believing what we said we believed. Even Southern Baptist churches were giving— whitewashing the chattel slavery

in the American system, using the Bible when the Bible clearly says that kind of human mistreatment is unacceptable because all men are created in his image.

So we should be at the forefront of the human rights discussion. We should be at the forefront of abolishing things like slavery. It's why no Christian should be engaged in pornography, not just because pornography is marital unfaithfulness if you're married. But because most of those women on those porn sites are trafficked. They are slaves. Many of them taken at a very young age. Hooked on drugs, persuaded and manipulated to think they're nothing but a piece of meat and my property and a way for me to make money and so hey you can have a little money too and you can have a little pleasure too.

You just serve the will of your master and all over the world. The porn industry is propagated and made successful because of this kind of human mistreatment. And yet many Christian men, probably even men in this room right now, are watching porn on a regular basis. And you should see those girls on that screen and think to yourself, those are my sisters. They are created in God's image, and this is wrong. It's wrong at a core, fundamental human level. It's why we don't have Christians support euthanasia or eugenics or any of that you world.

We don't need to improve because God's image is there. It's why we are against abortion. Because all human life is precious, because they're made in God's image. In my mother's womb, you formed me. I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Born, pre-born, postborn, all humans, regardless of their stage of development, are made in God's image. And yet it is the corruption of God's image in us, and it is the loss of this truth in our culture that promotes the culture of death we see all around us. It promotes the desire that many girls have to say I have to get an abortion.

I don't have any other choice other than to choose an abortion because everything else is so jacked up it's the loss of this truth. And so we Christians should be at the forefront of outlawing it, making it unthinkable and impossible, because we truly believe all life is precious. And it's the absence of this truth that, as I said earlier, it's what motivated Hitler. It's what motivated him to say Jews are an inferior ethnic race. And so we can exterminate them. It's what motivated Margaret Sanger, who is the mother of the abortion industry, to put the vast majority of women's health care clinics in minority communities.

Because she wanted to weed out the inferior races. A despicable human being. Because this truth was not present in her worldview. Still today, eight out of every ten planned parenthoods are in minority communities. No human is a weed. Every human is made in God's image. And we should look at any philosophy that takes that image away with disgust. The second way this truth is very relevant to our culture is not just that we should treat people with dignity and respect. But we should embrace and celebrate our gender as a gift.

A gift— embodied biological gender is a gift of God's design. It's not a concept that we create and manipulate however it is we want to manipulate it. It's very clear in Genesis, part of the *imago Dei* is God creating two sexes biologically different. They are not the same. And they were created different so that together as they complement one another, they beautifully display the image of God. And we've taken that design and those differences and we've said there are no differences. And we've taken biblical masculinity and we've called it toxic and we've taken biblical femininity and we've called it sexist.

And we've feminized the men and we've masculinized a lot of the women and we've taken what used to be very clear differences and said there need not be any such thing. And we've taken what God intended us to celebrate, and now we've denigrated it. And it's created all kinds of confusion in our culture. And even me saying this, some will get very upset with me and think that I'm being bigoted when all I'm trying to be is clear about what God's design actually is. And I think what our culture wants, our culture wants the kingdom.

Our culture wants the blessings of the kingdom, but we don't want the king. And we don't want the design. But you can't have the kingdom unless you submit to the king. And that means embracing your gender as a gift. Now yes there are unusual circumstances where people are born with asexual or hermaphrodite and these kinds of things exist in our world, but you can't take exceptions to the rule and abolish the design. Or you'll sow the whirlwind. And our culture will eventually sow the whirlwind of the loss of this image.

The other day I got on Facebook to change my gender and I used to be two, now there's thirteen. And there used to be more than thirteen. There was something like 75, but they whittled it down to 13. There are deep philosophical roots that I think explain our culture's approach to gender. I think it's pagan Gnosticism with new jeans on. In Gnosticism what mattered is not the biology, it's not the physical, it's the spiritual. And so in our culture, modern Gnosticism says it's not what's between your legs that matters most to God, it's what's between your ears.

And whatever you think and decide and feel, that's what determines reality. But we know in God's design, He created a physical universe and physical bodies and his design and that our bodies are a good thing and they should be celebrated and embraced according to God's design. There's a Chesterton quote that I love. He says, the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild. That's why God has an order.

You create lines in a piece of art so that the art can be beautiful because without that order, it's all just chaos. There is no beauty. And so God created an order, and He gives us a design for that order so that we might fill it with life and beauty. And then finally, very quickly, the final implication is that we should preach Christ and His gospel as the cure to all of this

social brokenness. We talked about pornography, maybe you're a porn addict. There is a cure in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may feel the guilt of having an abortion recently or in your past. Jesus Christ is a cure for that guilt and shame. You may struggle with where the culture's going and man we need to elect a new president and new politicians and we need to enforce this morality. You can enforce morality, but it won't change the heart. Only Christ can change the heart. So politics have a place, sure, but not over preaching. Preaching the gospel is the thing that the Holy Spirit will use. He uses the word of Christ to change the hearts of men.

And so we need to preach Christ as the cure. He alone perfectly displayed God's image. He alone can save us from the damage of our broken image, and he alone can cure us from our brokenness and confusion. I know that a message like this can ruffle feathers and I might get an email and people be upset with me. The problem is the truth is not unclear. It's just unpopular. The truth is right there in Genesis 1. We've lost it not because of any one person, it's because of a sin nature that is a result of something that happened way before us.

But there is hope and power and healing in the name of Jesus. So if you're here this morning and you don't have a personal relationship with Him and you're trying to recover God's will and design for your life, you want to flourish as a human being. The antidote to your chaos is found in the Lord Jesus Christ by repenting of your sin, by trusting in Him, by believing that He died for your sins and that God raised him from the dead so that the power that raised him from the dead can change your life and restore what's been lost.

And so as Taylor leads us through a time of response, there'll be an opportunity for you. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time and I pray that we would be a people who treat people with dignity and respect even as we disagree with them and that we would be known not just for what we're against but for what we are for, what we celebrate, what we promote. The life-giving nature of living life according to your design. Would you make us, as Jesus said, that bright city on a hill that shines so brightly that it cannot be hidden, so that people would see the way that we live and the way that we love and give glory to our Father in heaven.

Would you do that in us now as your word takes root in our hearts and bears fruit for your glory. Help us to know not just what to do, but to have the courage to do it, and we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. This message raised some questions in your mind, or a conversation that you would like to have, you can scan this QR code and be happy to talk with you throughout the week. If you have a spiritual decision or maybe you're wrestling with some doubts and struggles about taking what it means to be a Christian and taking it seriously, growing in your faith.

Any kind of spiritual next step, you can keep the conversation going by filling out a connect card. If you don't want to scan the QR code, there's connect cards out in our gathering place. Father, we thank you for this time and your word. And we pray that you would give us the Spirit's power to put it into practice in our life and together as we advance your gospel in our culture. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.