

## Anchored in the Storm

Message #2 – “Imago Dei: What Did God Intend?”  
Genesis 1:26-28; 2:5-15  
St. Paul’s United Methodist Church of Elizabethtown  
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*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make humankind **in our image**, according to our likeness; and let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So **God created humankind** in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (**Genesis 1:26-28**)*

Whenever we launch into a study of the Book of Genesis, especially the earliest chapters, whether for preaching or teaching, we need to remember a very important point—a point that the writers of these Scriptures had no problem remembering even though we “modern” people have struggled with it for generations. What is that important point?

When it comes to Genesis,

**the Who and the Why are more important  
than the What and the How**

That’s right. The Who and the Why are more important than the What and the How. Many an argument has been waged over the years pitting the supposed science-minded against the supposed spiritually-minded. Did God *really* create everything in six days? Did we not *evolve* over hundreds of thousands of years?

The writers of these Holy Scriptures would probably laugh over these debates. Why? Because they were telling a different story than what we try to enforce. They were more concerned over the Who and the Why --- Who created? Who *is* the Creator? Who is the Lord of life? Who is the Eternal One deserving of all praise? Who is the One who breathes life into our very existence? Who is the One whose image we bear, whose heart beats within us, and whose Voice calls us, inviting us to know Him?

And why?

The Who and the Why draw us deeper into the message series that we began last week – a series that we’re calling, “Anchored in the Storm.” Last week, we learned that it was within the void of chaos that God created. In fact, from Genesis 1, we learned that

**chaos is often the birthplace of creativity...  
and that God is not afraid of chaos,  
so neither should we be afraid of it.**

Listen: **chaos in the world does not mean that there needs to be chaos in us.**

We also learned from **Hebrews 6:13-20** that Jesus Himself is our “**anchor**” – a “*sure and steadfast*” hope that we can hold onto no matter what comes our way.

As the year 2020 has now come to an end and 2021 has begun, we can find great hope and strength with the God who created us with purpose and intentionality. We find our hope in Jesus, who is our “Anchor in the Storm.”

Last week, as we focused in on the opening verses of Genesis 1, we also discovered that God had a plan from the very beginning... And as we looked at the New Testament book of Hebrews, we discovered that plan ultimately found its greatest expression in Jesus Christ—in His life, death and resurrection.

Today, we want to go a little further into Genesis – into the stories of the creation of humanity.

But before we look at the Bible passage for today, I have a few questions for you:

What do you learn about God when you –

- Look in the mirror?
- Look at your spouse / partner / significant other?
- Look at your children?
- Look at your co-workers / fellow students?
- Look at your neighbor?
- Look at people you know from church?
- Look at the newspaper or TV news?
- Look at some of the drivers on Rt. 283?

Hold onto your answers for a moment and now look with me at Genesis 1:26-28...

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make humankind **in our image**, according to **our likeness**; and let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created humankind **in his image, in the image of God** he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and **subdue** it; and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”*

**(Genesis 1:26-28)**

Notice that it says – repeatedly – that God created humankind “in God’s image.”

Before we talk about what that means, it’s important for us to realize something: No other part of creation was made in God’s image, only humanity was.

That means that human beings were made . . .

- **with great purpose** – we must be pretty unique if we’re the only ones made in God’s image

- **with a divine call to holiness** (set apartness) – in First Corinthians 6:19, the apostle Paul says that our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit. If we are made in the image of God, we therefore need to respect the sacredness of every human life.
- **with the DNA of God embedded in them** – The DNA of our Creator is embedded in us!

So... What does it mean for us to be made in the image of God?

In simple terms, it means that

**we are to reflect the heart, the character, the values,  
the compassion, the freedom, and the overarching love  
of the One who created us.**

Think about that for a moment. Every child—every child—has the DNA of their biological parents embedded within them. In *ideal* circumstances, as we mature, we are to reflect all of the good that we get from our parents as we represent ourselves in the world.

In God's *original* design and plan, humanity was created uniquely and given the very breath of God, embedded with the DNA of God... and we were to reflect that DNA in the world.

In other words . . . We are **God-bearers** (as we learned in the Christmas story).

That, as I said, was the *original* plan. But the thing is... when you create humanity to be image bearers of Almighty God – endowed with all of the heart, character, values, compassion, freedom and love of God... then you also have to allow for the fact that in their full freedom, they may actually choose a different path than what you might hope. Even though a child has the full DNA of the parent, they are not the parent. Eventually, they make choices that are independent from the hopes and desires of the parent. When those choices caused humanity to violate the boundaries of love that defined their relationship with God, sin entered the picture.

In Hebrew (which is the original language of most of the Old Testament), the word "sin" is the word, **khata** – which literally means to "miss the goal"– and it refers to **a failure to honor God**. God is the Creator and we are the created – and when we confuse the two, we begin to dishonor God and God's love by failing to treat Him with the respect that He deserves. It's a failure to love – God and others – by putting ourselves, our selfish desires, first.

We'll talk about that part of the story in the coming weeks. But for now, God's original design was for humanity to bear God's image and reflect God's glory in the world. The good news is that **God's image in us survives sin. Sin does not have the power to destroy God's image in us.** But... **sin has 'graffiti-ed' the image of God in us.**

There are two other words that are important to look at in verses 26 and 28. They are the words "dominion" and "subdue." Let's look at those verses again:

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air,*

*and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”<sup>27</sup> So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.<sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and **subdue** it; and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:26-28)*

Within our role as Image-bearers, God has placed us in a very special role within creation. We are to be Care-takers. The words “dominion” and “subdue” have caused a lot of confusion over the years. For some reason, we confuse “dominion” with “dominance.” But there’s a significant difference. The word “dominate” or “dominance” is all about exerting power – power over or power against someone or something. In fact, in our human history, we’ve actually seen way too many examples of how people abuse power – physically, emotionally, spiritually – and try to exert dominance rather than dominion. And sadly, a lot of that happened even in God’s church – among Christians. We saw it a lot even this past year - especially on social media.

The original Hebrew word used here, however, is a unique word. While it does imply harnessing the resources of creation, it specifically refers to **protecting those resources---applying the same care and protection of those resources that reflect the heart and character of God.**

I wonder... how are we doing with that?

And the word “subdue” in Hebrew is the word **kavash** – and it applies to cultivation (farming), domestication (shepherding), and discovering the best use of the resources while honoring creation.<sup>i</sup>

In other words, we are to oversee and take care of the rest of creation as God’s ambassadors, as God’s regents, as God’s image-bearers. We have an important role – and all of creation is counting on us living up to the role God has given us (**Romans 8:19-23**).

If that doesn’t spell it out enough, the biblical account continues. Let’s look at Genesis 2, starting at verse 5:

*<sup>5</sup> Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one **to work the ground**,<sup>6</sup> but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground.<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.<sup>8</sup> Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.<sup>9</sup> The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... (Genesis 2:5-9)*

And then verse 15...

<sup>15</sup> *The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden **to work it and take care of it.** (Genesis 2:15)*

Dominion and subduing – they were roles that humanity was given actually to “serve” creation – and even the ground – to take care of it. The Hebrew word used for “work it” here (or “till it” as it appears in some translations) literally means to “serve it,” to “take care of it.” **As God serves us, we are to serve the rest of creation.** We are to take care of creation with the same heart and compassion and love that God has for it... and for us.

As God’s image bearers, therefore, we are at our best when we are:

- loving others the way God loves them
- caring for creation the way God cares for it
- harnessing the resources of creation while also protecting it
- using what we have been given to create in ways that glorify God
- honoring, within our work, the God whose image we bear

The word “Eden” literally means “delight” or “pleasure.” This Genesis account reminds us that God placed humanity there in Eden as a visual representation of how pleased God was with His creation – including the unique star of His creation, us. And God gave humanity purpose, responsibility, freedom, power meant to be used for good... and most especially, God gave them His own image, so that all who saw them would see the God who created them.

Now, back to those questions I asked at the beginning of this message...

What do you learn about God when you –

- Look in the mirror?
- Look at your spouse / partner / significant other?
- Look at your children?
- Look at your co-workers / fellow students?
- Look at your neighbor?
- Look at people at church?
- Look at the newspaper or TV news?
- Look at some of the drivers on Rt. 283?

The image of God – in us and in others around us – may have a lot of graffiti on it... some may have so much that it’s hard to see any evidence of God’s image at all... but **sin does not have the power to destroy God’s image in us.**

The New Testament letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Jesus “*is the radiance of the glory of God and **the exact imprint** of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power*” (**Hebrews 1:3 ESV**). In His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus Christ has restored that image within us. He has restored our relationship with the God who created us, with the God who calls us, with the God who breathed His Spirit into us and gave us life.

One of Jesus’s closest friends, the apostle Peter, wrote in **1 Peter 2:22-24** that Jesus “*committed no sin... yet He carried our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to our sins and live to do what is right.*”

It's time for us to get back to our work of being God's image bearers in the world...

**Friends, chaos in the world does not mean that there needs to be chaos in us.**

How do we get to that place of peace in the midst of any storm? ---

**Mark 4:35-41** says this...

<sup>35</sup> *That day, at evening, Jesus said to his followers, "Come with me across the lake."* <sup>36</sup> *So they left the crowd behind and went with Jesus in the boat he was already in. There were also other boats that went with them.* <sup>37</sup> *A very bad wind came up on the lake. The waves were coming over the sides and into the boat, and it was almost full of water.* <sup>38</sup> **Jesus was inside the boat, sleeping with his head on a pillow.** *The followers went and woke him. They said, "Teacher, don't you care about us? We are going to drown!"*

<sup>39</sup> *Jesus **stood up** and **gave a command to the wind and the water.** He said, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind stopped, and the lake became calm.*

<sup>40</sup> *He said to his followers, "**Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"***

<sup>41</sup> *They were very afraid and asked each other, "**What kind of man is this? Even the wind and the water obey him!**"*

**"What kind of man is this?"** --- He is Jesus. He is the Son of God. He is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords. He is the Forerunner, the Great High Priest who is able to enter into the Holy of Holies. He is the Risen and Exalted Savior. He is the Sure and Steadfast Anchor in the Storm.

And **He is alive and living inside you** by virtue of the Holy Spirit in you.

We need to be God's image bearers in the world, here and now, by...

- loving others the way God loves them
- caring for creation the way God cares for it
- harnessing the resources of creation while also protecting it
- using what we have been given to create in ways that glorify God
- honoring, within our work, the God whose image we bear

And we need to do so with the sure and steadfast faith in our Anchor, Jesus. If He can sleep in the storm, and He's residing in us... maybe, just maybe, we can trust Him with our chaos.

Whose image will you be bearing this week?

Let's pray our prayer together:

**Lord, what do You need me to see, what do You need me to hear, what do You need me to know, what do You need me to do? I am Your servant in Jesus's name. Amen.**

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<sup>i</sup> Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 46.