

Anchored in the Storm

Message #7 – “Imago Dei: Restoring Your Spouse’s Image”
Genesis 2:18-25

St. Paul’s United Methodist Church of Elizabethtown
February 21, 2021

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*18 Then the Lord God said, “It is **not good** that the man should be **alone**; I will make him a helper as his **partner**.” 19 So **out of the ground** the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, 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 cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he 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 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; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” 24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. **(Genesis 2:18-25)***

So, God creates man and places him in the Garden of Eden and pretty soon discovers that “*It’s not good that the man should be alone*” (v. 18). Now, what do you think led God to that conclusion?

Recent archeological research has discovered that actually there were several possible reasons for God to come to that conclusion:

1. Within less than a week under Adam’s care, the Garden of Eden had turned into a pigsty.
2. Left to himself, Adam had focused all of his time and energy on making 17 different types of beer.
3. Adam kept getting lost going from the Garden to the local watering hole because he outright refused to ask for directions.
4. Adam spent way too much time amusing himself by making weird noises with his body.
5. Every time Adam would see one of the cows walk by, he’d start asking God for a smoker and a bar-b-que pit.
6. The only time God was successful in having a meaningful conversation with Adam was when the orangutangs were at half-time.

While God created man and pronounced His creation as “good,” it wasn’t “good enough” until God created woman.

There is no doubt in my mind that the creation of woman was God’s finest artistic accomplishment.

Yet, the bulk of our human history does not reflect our appreciation of that fact.

As we bring to close to our “Anchored in the Storm” message series, I wanted to do two things:

First, to all of the women out there watching and listening to and reading this message, I want to say, "I'm sorry" and "thank you." I want to say "I'm sorry" for the major way that humanity as a whole has misrepresented God's original design and has been punishing you for something that God, a long time ago, had already addressed. And I want to say "Thank you" for all of the ways that, in spite of being misaligned, you have partnered with men throughout history to do amazing and wonderful things – from the nurturing of the children of our families to the leadership of our organizations to the peace-brokering of the nations of our world.

Every church and every family has to make a decision—are we going to honor what God honors? Or are we going to continue trying to get God to conform to our way of thinking? For those of us who are followers of Jesus, we need to ask ourselves – when Jesus died on the Cross to pay for all the sins of humanity, did He not also die to cover the sins of both Adam and Eve that occurred in the Garden of Eden?

The second thing I want to do as we finish this message series is to issue all of us a challenge – especially those of us who are married. I challenge us – both male and female – to work hard at restoring the image of God in the life of our spouse.

I believe that challenge is embedded in the creation account in the Book of Genesis – and is very relevant for our purposes today. To flesh it out, I invite you to turn with me in your Bible to Genesis 2, starting in verse 18. As you're turning there, let me give you a few reminders about what we've learned so far...

So far in our series, we've learned that...

1. God is not afraid of chaos. So, neither should we be afraid of it either.
2. God creates out of chaos. In fact, chaos can be a birthplace for creativity for us as well.
3. Chaos in the world does not mean that there needs to be chaos in us.
4. As we face into chaos – into the storms of life – we can hold on to the secure and safe Anchor, Jesus Himself. He has promised to be with us, to never leave us or forsake us. And Jesus never breaks His promises.
5. When it comes to Genesis, the Who and the Why are more important than the What and the How.
6. Humanity – both male and female – were created in the image of God. We were designed to be God-bearers in the world.
7. However, sin, in other words our choice to push aside both God and God's plan for us, sin has graffiti'd that image of God in us. But God's image in us survives sin. In fact, we learned that sin does not have the power to destroy God's image in us.
8. By way of His crucifixion, death and resurrection, Jesus has restored the image of God in all of those who believe in Him, who put their whole trust in His grace.
9. We are to look for and honor the image of God that we see in others.

So, let's use all of that as a foundation for what we're about to see in today's passage. Let's look at Genesis 2, starting in verse 18...

*¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is **not good** that the man should be **alone**; I will make him a **helper** as his **partner**." ¹⁹ So **out of the ground** the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, 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 cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; **but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.***

So, anyone who's ever tried internet dating apps knows exactly what Adam was feeling in that moment, right? Or better yet, speed dating.

There's a couple of things to point out in these verses. First, in this account of creation, the Hebrew word that's translated as "man" is the word **ish**. In Genesis 1's account, the Hebrew word used is "**adam**" – from which we get the name Adam. Adam is translated as "man" but also can be translated as "humankind." We're going to refer to the man as Adam here just for consistency. This all will be important in just a moment.

Second, even though Adam was surrounded by a bunch of other animals and activity, even though Adam was kept pretty busy with certain chores, something was not quite right. God saw Adam's **loneliness**. And God sees yours too. Being lonely is not the heart or intent of God's design. **We were created to be in relationship with other human beings – whether within the intimacy of marriage or within the connections and communion of friendships.**

Third, there's an important phrase that's used here in these three verses that is repeated a couple times. It's the phrase "**a helper as his partner.**" In Hebrew, this phrase is literally translated as "a helper that is fit or suitable for him." A helper. That's an interesting choice of words. What did Adam need help with? Well, the larger context tells us that Adam would be tilling the soil of the Garden of Eden, working the land and taking care of the ground and all that it produced. Adam's other job was to name all the animals and fish and the other creatures that God created. So, obviously, Adam would need someone to help him carry out that divine purpose.

But I believe there's also something more here. Since God identified Adam's relational loneliness, this "helper" would also "help" Adam by being a companion to him, helping to share the journey of life together, helping to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. Notice it doesn't say anything about someone to cook and clean and pick up his underwear.

So, what we read is that God created all of these animals and birds and brought them to Adam to see if any of them might fill the role of suitable helper. But they did not. It might have been the language barrier, but none of them seemed to fill the void.

Then we read, in verse 21. . .

*²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then God took **one of the man's ribs** and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and **brought her to the man.***

And there it is – the artistic accomplishment of God. God created man out of the dirt, out of the dust of the ground. But He created woman from part of the man. I want you to notice the intimacy of that experience. In this very first ever surgical procedure, inclusive of general anesthesia, God removes a part of Adam's body and creates another human being uniquely and intimately connected to the man. They are part of each other by design.

Adam wakes up and discovers that God went above and beyond in creating this particular creature. God brings the woman to Adam and Adam "names her." Now, remember, in Hebrew here in this passage, the word used for "man" is the word **ish**. As Adam names the woman, he

calls her **ishah** – Hebrew for “woman” – and in Hebrew, his particular name for her shows the intimate connection between woman and man.

So, Adam looks at this beautiful creation of God and he goes – in verse 23 –

*“This **at last** is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of man this one was taken.”*

“At last.”

Now, aren’t you hearing Etta James in the back of your mind –

At last
My love has come along
My lonely days are over
And life is like a song *

You see, Adam was waiting. He was waiting for that suitable helper and companion. Have you ever had that feeling—when *finally*, the right person comes into your life? Or maybe you’re looking for that person that is “just right” for you right now.

“Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” According to Genesis, woman and man were designed to be in connection. They were designed to work together, living out the divine purpose together. And with Adam’s response, God closes out the week of creation. The woman is the capstone of the entire week. God made woman and then God rested.

This passage ends with something quite important. Look at verses 24-25 . . .

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

So, verse 24 is actually the writer of Genesis giving some commentary on this passage. The writer is looking beyond the creation account into the present day, the writer’s present day – perhaps explaining to those who are listening to the stories why they practice certain things in their understanding of marriage: “Therefore,” he says, “a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” How do we know this is commentary? Simple—Adam didn’t have an earthly father and mother.

But look at the intimacy of the words chosen here – especially the word “**clings**.” The man is to “cling to” his wife. The word used in Hebrew for “clings” implies that the relationship is to be **cemented**, permanent. They are to be bound together, connected in a unique way by design. And through that cementing one to another, they are to become “one flesh.” Here, they’re talking about the profound intimacy of sexual intercourse. (Now, that’s a topic for another day.) Suffice it to say, that intimate bonding of becoming “one flesh” was to be a powerful reflection of the unity, the oneness, and the heart connection of God’s most profound creation.

Everything was perfect. Verse 25 says – “*And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.*” The word “**naked**” in Hebrew can also mean “**vulnerable**.” They were fully exposed to each other, fully known, fully embracing one another under the divine care and blessing of God. Everything indeed *was* perfect . . . until it wasn’t.

In Hebrew, the word “naked” can also be translated as “**crafty**” or “**cunning**.” And it’s used again in Genesis 3 to refer to the snake. Through the crafty exchange between the snake and the woman . . . and then the man, the perfect connection between the man and the woman –

and between the couple and God – was broken. And, as we’ve seen in prior weeks, the image of God in both of them, and in all of humanity from that point until the time of the Cross of Christ, was graffiti’d, marred and broken.

But then, there was the Cross. In God’s infinite grace and sacrificial love, He reached down yet again and created in the midst of our self-imposed chaos. By virtue of the blood of Jesus shed on that Cross, God made a way where there seemed to be no way. He forgave. He gave hope. He created life out of death. He gave us Jesus, the Anchor in the storm.

Now, in Jesus Christ, He calls each of us to recapture the original divine design – and restore the image of God in one another, especially in our spouse.

How do we do that? The New Testament gives us some guidance.

We restore our spouse’s image by:

1. **Our WORDS.** Look with me at **James 3:9-10** — Talking about our tongues, James writes:

⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

We are responsible for our words. What we cannot tame, the Holy Spirit can. And we need to **ask the Holy Spirit to baptize our words with love, humility and grace.** Let’s challenge ourselves to treat each other the way we want to be treated. Especially in moments of disagreement and pain. We must reflect with our words the image of God we see in the other person.

We also restore our spouse’s image by:

2. **Our ACTIONS.** Let’s look at **1 John 3:18** -- Writing to a challenged congregation, the apostle John writes these words:

¹⁸ Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

Too much hurt and pain gets stored up inside of us over the years. We tend to believe that that’s God’s image of us. But it is not. It is the image of a false god that we have developed to legitimize how we feel about ourselves. It’s time to take out the trash in each other’s lives.

Finally, we restore our spouse’s image by:

3. **Our RESTORED PARTNERSHIP.** Now, turn with me to **Galatians 3:26-28** – Writing to a group of Christians who were flirting with false teachings about Jesus and salvation, the apostle Paul wrote:

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

As I stated at the beginning of this message -- Every church and every family has to make a decision—are we going to honor what God honors? Or are we going to continue trying to get God to conform to our way of thinking? For those of us who are followers of Jesus, we need to ask ourselves – when Jesus died on the Cross to pay for all the sins of humanity, did He not also die to cover the sins of both Adam and Eve that occurred in the Garden of Eden?

Look... We need to stop treating women as if the sin of Genesis 3 was still requiring punishment. If we are truly followers of Jesus and we truly believe in the message of the Cross, then we need to restore—by our words, actions and partnerships with one another—the full image of God in our spouses—in the women and men who are our partners, our helpers, our companions, our fellow workers in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Truly, we are better together. Isn't that the best Valentine's Day gift?

Our church isn't perfect. We have a lot of broken people here – and all of us are trying to figure out how to daily give our hearts and lives to the God who gave His all for us. If that describes you, you need to know that the only way to find healing to your brokenness, the only way to find healing to the brokenness in your marriage, the only way to find hope in this crazy chaotic time we are living in right now... is by saying "yes" to the God who has said "yes" to you. Don't miss this opportunity. Put your life, put your marriage, put your family, put your future into Jesus's hands. He's got you. He sees your loneliness. He wants what's best for you. He loves you—so much that He died for you. The apostle Paul once wrote that "*God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God*" (**2 Cor. 5:21**). I invite you to trust the One who died for you—Jesus. He's the One who restores God's image in us.

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.

*"At Last" was written by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren for the musical film "Sun Valley Serenade" (1941). Etta James' version of this song was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999.