

MISSION: Grace, Sanctity of Life

Genesis 1:26-31

- Creation (26-27)
- Instruction (28-30)
- Declaration (31)

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

This is our third Mission:Grace sermon, and our focus this week is the sanctity of human life. Today is Sanctity of Life Sunday and we're taking time to remember the fact that people are God's special creation. Our passage today highlights this and as we explore this topic, we're going to see that because people are God's special creation, we have an obligation to care especially for people. What we believe about how we should treat God's creation has a great deal to say about what we believe about God.

(Genesis 1:26–31 ESV) “Then God said, “Let us make man 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.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

Most of us are familiar with this passage, the testimony of how man came to be on the sixth day of creation. As we work through this passage we're going to look at how God created in verses 26-27, instructed in verses 18-30, and finally declared in verse 31.

Creation:

(Genesis 1:26 ESV) Then God said, “Let us make man 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.”

In what manner did God create man? In his image and after his likeness. What are the implications of this? No other creature is created in the image of God. This is a special status, and there is something unique to be seen about it. God takes a personal level of care here. Look at how when this is expounded we get a peek into God's level of interest. (Genesis 2:7 ESV) 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.”

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The breath of God, breathed into the nostrils of man is part of his creation story. This is truly unique. Of the other animals, they are simply spoken and commanded into existence. But not man. Nothing else was made in the image of God. Nothing else looks like him. I was talking with a missionary from Thailand last week and we were talking about how in Thailand, the image of the king of Thailand is plastered on every street corner, and appointed to every house. There is almost a worship of the king because of how his image is displayed in every corner. There is no way in any civilized area of Bangkok to not see the image of the king. It is absolutely everywhere. This is intentional. The purposes is so that every living person in the land will know that there is a king in Thailand and he is in charge. What do you think it means that God has filled the planet with seven billion creatures created in his image? What is he wanting to remind us of? There is a God in Heaven, he is the creator and maker of everything that is, and we would do well to remember him. Everywhere we look, there is a biped homosapien walking around as a walking talking living breathing reminder that there is a creator who made us in his image. He made us male and female. This binary structure and system was intentional and serves as part of how we live out his command to be fruitful and multiply and have dominion over creation. Just as God has dominion over all creation, God makes us in his image for the purpose of being like him in having dominion over the earth. The creator creates creators to create. Creators use the resources anther disposal to accomplish things. That's what having dominion is about. Making the most with the resources God has given us. That's caring for creation in such a way that all of life flourishes: people, beasts, fish, birds, and plants. Aren't you glad that his purpose for us was to have dominion over earth and not the entire universe? Anyone want volunteer to have dominion over the sun? It shouldn't be too bad, it's only a medium sized star. Have you ever tried to have dominion over the garden in your back yard, or the mice in the walls or ceiling? It's not easy. In fact, it's hard work. He created us to create things to help us have dominion over them. In being makers, we ourselves are being like God, doing what he made us to do, which, in fulfilling his design for us, we glorify him.

We can't even manage dominion over the earth, and we keep reaching out to supplant God from his throne as if we could handle dominion over the entire universe. How vain are we? What makes us think we're so great? We can't even have consistent dominion over our own driveway! If we did, then snow removal and weeding the cracks wouldn't need to happen at all. Our own hearts don't obey God, yet we think we can coerce the earth to do our bidding. Tell that to the farmers for a laugh. Working the soil is hard work.

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This concept of being made in the image of God is called 'imago Dei' in church history. Being made in the image of God means we are reflectors and magnifiers of God. That is what it means to be made in the image of God. We reflect his nature. Contrast this with Christ.

(Colossians 1:15 ESV) "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."

(2 Corinthians 4:4 ESV) "...the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Hebrews 1:3 ESV) "He 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. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"

As reflectors and magnifiers, as image bearers, we are reflecting and magnifying the image of Christ, we are reflecting and magnifying God.

Instruction

(Genesis 1:28–30 ESV) And 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so."

Man is created specially and specially given a task, as we have already discussed. God gives instruction for this creation, and permission to use God's other creation to fulfill the needs of man. Why? In order for man to be fruitful and multiply. God started a domino effect at the beginning of all things with this simple command. The repercussions we still feel today. Be fruitful and multiply. That's the reason every single one of us are sitting in this room today. Some man and some woman procreated and as a result of their act and the will of God, we are all here together today.

Also, note how the people God made and the animals God made are to be fed? God feeds them. God provides the plants to grow and provide for every bird, beast, and person. No other God is like this, who provides for his people. Why does God do this?

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Why does he take such great interest in man, forming him with his hands, crafting him in his own image, breathing his very life into him, instructing him to multiply?

Why? Because He wants more reflectors and magnifiers around the planet. In fact, the whole aim of the instruction is that (Habakkuk 2:14 ESV) "...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Remember the king of Thailand whose picture is in every home and every business and at every roundabout? It is the Thai king whose glory covers Thailand. God made man and woman from every tribe tongue and people to glorify and magnify his great name, no other name is worthy of the praise he deserves.

All the pieces are now in place, at the conclusion of six days of creation God has a final thing to say.

Declaration

(Genesis 1:31 ESV) And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

God saw it, and it was very good. He's looking at everything. And there's only one things to say about it: very good.

Implications:

Today is sanctity of life Sunday. The fact that man is created in the image of God is what drives us to this point, because what we believe about God affects how we treat one another. The image of God is the most holy and righteous and precious and good thing that there is in the universe. We are made in that image. When we ignore that reality, when we ignore that our neighbor is made in that image, we are declaring that some image bears of God are better than others. That some are worth protecting and others aren't. The example that God gives us in his word is that the most vulnerable gets most protected. Those who are vulnerable receive extra care. There are no image bearers of God here in Iowa, anywhere else in the US, or in any country on the planet that were not made with the same love and care for our God. If we believe that is true then there are implications upon us for how we view people who are not like us. We look at each of them regardless of religion, regardless of skin color, regardless of their need for care, their infirmities, their age, their sexual orientation, or their geographic location, inside or outside the womb. They are people to be loved.

One way we see this in our society is through abortion on demand. Millions of babies being forcibly removed from what is supposed to be the safest place for the unborn.

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Many of us would consider it an unthinkable act, but we have to remember that humans are people who believe lies and act on them. That's what every kind of sin is.

The warning for us is that the same heart that justifies racism and Jim Crow segregation, and marginalization of LGBTQ people, is the same heart that decides an unborn baby is not worth caring for. This is not a statement that would justify any sin, but rather a recognition that our personal biases easily lull us into a prideful position that would make us judge over others and hinder us from loving them as we ought.

For us today, this means that we recognize the imago Dei, the image of God in every person and love them regardless of any variable. And why do we do this? Because God did it first for us. We were rebellious sinners, enemies of God, and he reached out to us to call us to himself, and purchase us for himself by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Despite the fact that there is an abortion in your past, or racist tendencies, or harbored hate for someone who doesn't look or act like you.

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