

5/29/22 Christ Fellowship

“What We Believe about Mankind” – Genesis 1:26-30

We are continuing our study on what we believe and why and today we are back in Genesis looking at the creation of mankind, starting with Adam and Eve. I heard that Adam was sitting in the Garden of Eden, talking to God one day and he said, *“God, You’ve given me life, the purpose of naming every animal, and plenty of food to eat. You’ve made me comfortable, kept me well fed, and a sense of purpose. However, I’m feeling quite lonely; is there anything you can do to fix that?”*

God replies, *“I will give you a partner, and she will be called “Eve”. She will stand by you, and support you. She will lift you up, obey your rules, and be at your right hand whenever you ask. She will bear your children, and raise them to your liking. She will feed you, clothe you, and take care of you. She will be beautiful, graceful, and warm, never being a problem. She will be kind, caring, thoughtful, and will always be there for you. But, it is going to cost you one arm and one leg.”*

Adam thinks for a second and says *“**Hmm. That sounds expensive. What can I get for a rib?**”*

I don’t know if that is exactly the way it happened but it was sort of like that. Let’s take a look at **Genesis 1** and see how it actually went down. Genesis chapter one is an overview of all creation including Adam and Eve. Then chapter two goes into the story a little deeper and tells how God put Adam to sleep and took a rib from him and created Eve from that rib.

I want us to think about what we believe about this because what happened with the very first couple thousands of years ago is more relevant today than ever. This passage is more than just history although it is that. It also speaks to the issue of sex and gender. It addresses the Trinity. It lets us know what our roles as humans are but specifically it addresses **why we are here**. That’s one of the biggest, deepest questions ever considered. Why are we as humans here on this earth?

Turn to **Genesis 1:26-30** and let’s see what it says.

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, 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. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.*

*30 Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.*

Now, you may not believe this but I just happen to have the very first photograph of Adam and Eve. It's obviously very old and very rare. I believe it is a tintype photograph. If you ever wondered what the first couple looked like, now you know. I'm sorry it's not very clear. You can imagine what kind of camera was used back in the day.



This picture was obviously taken before they chose to sin. I'm glad they are modestly standing behind some tall grass here because scripture tells us they were naked at this time. And since it was before they sinned, this is a perfect picture of what it looks like to be made in God's image.

The problem is that sin did come into the picture not long after this was taken and do you know what happened to the image? \*crumple picture\* Sin messes everything up. Sin distorts the picture. The first couple doesn't look the same. You can still tell that it is them but they don't look like they should anymore.

It's the same with us today. God made us all to be image-bearers of Him. And what does God look like? Well, we know that God is spirit (John 4:24) so we know He is not talking about how we look physically. Aren't you glad God doesn't look physically like I do? You would definitely pray with your eyes closed if that were the case but it's not. God is saying that we are made in His image spiritually but also in some ways we are made like Him mentally, morally, emotionally, socially and relationally.

Just think of all the ways that God is and how we should be more like Him in those ways. God is loving, forgiving, just, and kind. He listens. He cares. He protects the helpless and provides for the needy. He is a peacemaker. He shows grace and mercy. He forgives. He forgives. He forgives! We ought to all be more and do more of all of those things.

But sin causes problems for everything. We have a hard time being more like our Heavenly Father sometimes because of our earthly fathers. I don't know of a more difficult job on the planet than being a parent and sometimes when our parents are not perfect or not even good parents in our minds, we have a hard time seeing the Heavenly Father as loving, forgiving, just and kind and all that other stuff. And so sin distorts the picture we have in our minds of a good

model for those things. Maybe it is our sin and maybe it is the sin of our parents but there is a disconnect there – a distortion - to seeing God as one to emulate. Sin always does that.

As theologian Wayne Grudem explains, *“Since man has sinned, he is certainly not as fully like God as he was before. His moral purity has been lost and his sinful character certainly does not reflect God’s holiness. His intellect is corrupted by falsehood and misunderstanding; his speech no longer continually glorifies God; his relationships are often governed by selfishness rather than love, and so forth. Though man is still in the image of God, in every aspect of life some parts of that image have been distorted.”* (Systematic Theology, p. 444).

Somebody tell me what you think of when you think of being made in God’s image.

I think there are lots of right answers about this but to, once again, let scripture interpret scripture, I would like to go to the New Testament and see just one sentence. The Apostle Paul had a way of saying more in one sentence than most people can say in a book. And he does that in **2 Corinthians 13:14**.

That verse is the very last verse of 2 Corinthians and it is how Paul says goodbye to the church in Corinth. He has written them a fairly lengthy and personal letter and just like we might close a letter with, *“I hope to see you soon. Say hello to your mom. All my love, Todd”* or something like that, Paul says these words. *“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*

I’m telling you, that may sound like Paul is just saying, *“See ya later”* but it is way deeper than that and, I believe, sums up perfectly what it means to be made in God’s image. Let’s look at this closer. *“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*

Why would Paul say, *“the grace of the Lord Jesus?”* What was the grace that Jesus showed? Well, Jesus showed grace by His healing and His words of peace while He was here on earth bodily but He showed all of us grace by dying on the cross. What is grace? Grace is not getting what you deserve. Jesus knew we all deserve to die physically and spiritually for our sins. We all deserve Hell because we are born into sin and choose to sin over and over again and the Father said that where there was sin, something had to die. So, Jesus showed us grace by dying on the cross for all our many sins. That is truly amazing grace!

So, what better way to be an image-bearer of Jesus than to show other people grace? If we are made in the image of God then we ought to be world-class grace-givers. Grace ought to flow out of us like gas through a funnel.

I read about the story of a man who coached a little league boys team made up of mostly 8-year-olds and he said that while he had a couple of kids that could play pretty well, most of the

team was just awful. They never won a game all season long. It was the last game of the season and in the last inning of the last game, his team was only down by a run. There was one boy who had never been able to hit the ball--or catch it. With two outs, it was his turn to bat. He surprised the world and got a single!

The next batter was the team slugger. Finally, the players might win a game. The slugger connected, and as the boy who hit the single ran to second, he saw the ball coming toward him. Not so certain of baseball's rules, he caught it. Final out! The team lost! Quickly, the coach told his team to cheer. The boy beamed. It never occurred to him that he lost the game. All he knew was he had hit the ball and caught it--both for the first time. His parents later thanked the coach. Their child had never even gotten in a game before that season. (Jeffrey Zaslow, "Tell Me All About It," 1990.)

That is just a small example of grace. That little boy didn't deserve to be cheered for but who knows how that simple act of grace by the rest of the team may have changed his whole outlook on life? Grace will do that for a fellow, won't it? This life is short. Show grace to somebody today and reflect the image of our Savior Jesus.

Paul also closes 2 Corinthians by mentioning **the love of God**. May the love of God be with you all. The word Paul uses for love here is "agape" in the Greek and it is the kind of love that is a choice. There are other kinds of love as most of you know but agape is the highest form of love. God showed agape love when, as it so perfectly says in **Romans 5:8**, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

I was going to ask if you could comprehend that kind of love but I don't think we can put ourselves in God's shoes necessarily and completely understand it but we can emulate that kind of love back to Him and also to others. Agape love is not a natural kind of love. You don't "fall in" agape like you do other kinds of love. Agape love is deciding that no matter what happens, no matter how the other one feels, no matter what is said or done or felt, you are going to want the best for that person forever. And it is only proven through actions.

God agape loves because that is His nature. He is love. He loves the unlovable and the unlovely, not because we deserve to be loved or because of any excellence we possess, but because it is His nature to love and He must be true to His nature. It might be hard for us to do but God can't help but love. That's just who He is. Aren't you glad?

But we are commanded to love and most of us would say, *"Eh, yea, I think I do a pretty good job of that..."* But you can't say that you agape God and yet not love other believers. And you can't claim to love God if you don't obey Him. Now, how well do you stack up? Do you love other people like you love God? And do you love God enough to say, *"I don't understand why I have to do this but I will be obedient no matter what"?*

My dog Bam is easy to love. She is so sweet and so precious and everybody loves Bam, right? Raise your hand if you don't love Bam. I'll have some ushers escort you out the door. Bam is easy to love. But what about that mongrel down the street that gets out and chases you back to your car? What about that mean dog the neighbor has that barks all night? What about the vicious hound that tried to bite you the other day? Aren't you glad we aren't commanded by God to love those mutts?

But what about that mongrel boss of yours? You are commanded to love him. What about that vicious ex-wife that tried to hurt you...and did? What about that mean neighbor who stole your mower? Jesus said in **Matthew 22**, "*Love your neighbor...*" Is that command even possible? Well, I have good news. Love, the emotion, cannot be commanded. Love as an action or a behavior, can. That is agape love when you do something to prove that you have decided to love a person even if you don't feel like it.

I'm running out of time. We will talk more about all this tonight in Bible study but let's move on to the last point Paul makes here and it is interesting. Again in 2 Corinthians, Paul closes with "*May the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*" The fellowship of the Holy Spirit? What in the world does that mean? Well, I looked that word "fellowship" up in my 90-pound concordance and it is actually a familiar word that I have seen before but I forgot about it.

Some of your versions may say "communion." The Greek word is "koinonia" (coin-a-nia) and it means to partner with or participate. It means to share what you have, whether it be spiritual or physical. We koinonia our time, our money, our places and our experiences with each other.

The Holy Spirit shares with us every good thing that Heaven has to offer in the next life and in this life, He shares with us the peace of God's presence in our lives in a real way. What is peace worth? Thank you, Lord, for your presence which brings such peace! And if the Holy Spirit can share with us the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7) then we can share with others what we have, whether it is time, talent or treasure.

Mother Teresa said, "*If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving.*" Just like loving the unlovable is difficult, sharing with others will be difficult too. But, you know what? Everything is hard. Giving and sharing with others can be hard but life is hard when you are selfish too. Being in shape is hard. Being fat is hard. Being single is hard. Being married is hard. It is a hard life but when you share what you have without expecting anything in return and without letting others know what you are doing, God sees that and blesses that because that is what He looks like and He sees that we are made in His image.

That is the reason that we are here. That's why God made us – to be His image-bearers. Do you look like Him? Are you being transformed to His image more and more every day? You

should be because this life is hard and without God's blessings, it is way harder than it has to be.

Let's bow our heads for a few minutes and I want all of us to just spend a few minutes doing business with God. Is there some part of your life that is not looking more and more like Jesus? Is it your speech? Your attitudes? Your hobbies? Are you having a hard time forgiving? Are you struggling with some form of addiction? Call on the name of the Lord today. Take it to Him right now.

If you don't have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus, then do that right now. Ask God to forgive you of all your sins and repent of those sins. Ask Him to give you His Holy Spirit to live inside of you and change you. Admit that it was your sins that put Jesus on the cross and just believe that His sacrifice was enough. That's all you have to do but that decision of yours will manifest itself in your life as a changed life. Let Him do that for you right now and start looking more like Him. Do it right now as the music plays.