

“Foundational Truths: Humanity is Special”

Gen 1:26-28

1.24.21

How would you answer the question: Is human life more important than the life of an animal? That question was asked on the website debate.org. 69% of those who responded voted “No.” Human life is not more important than animals. One of those who voted wrote, “Human life is NOT more important than life of ANY other animal or plant! Human is just like any other animal, we don't deserve any special treatment. Sure, we like to think about ourselves as better, smarter etc. However, that is not the case. Law of the nature is simple. Strongest can survive and dominate environment. At this point in time, we are the most dangerous predator. This is "our" 5 minutes. If I had to choose between saving the life of my dog, cat or fish, and saving life of another human... I will always chose to save the live of my dog, cat or fish. This is what healthy animals do! They care about their pack because only this can help them survive. On the other hand, why should I care about other humans I don't know? Who is he or she to me? Same species? Not enough.”

Another response, “Nope. We're all worthless and pathetic. That's right folks. Humans life doesn't have a higher priority to other animals in the eyes of nature. We ain't worth nothin'. Life ain't worth nothin'.”

Where did all this negativity toward mankind come from? It arose from the theory of evolution. Macro evolution is a theory, not a scientific fact, that tries to explain how we came to be without a creator.

Evolution teaches that humans are just evolved animals. What are the implications of this?

If we are just evolved animals we don't need to live by any laws. Why should a student get in trouble for cheating on a test? We are just animals who are trying to survive.

If we are just evolved animals then we answer to no one.

If we are just evolved animals our lives are meaningless. We have no significance. We have no purpose.

If we are just evolved animals then we don't need to care about anyone else.

If we are just evolved animals then God's Word is false.

Many teens and adults struggle with their worth and experience thoughts of suicide because they have believed the lie that we are worthless and have no significance.

We could spend the rest of our time discussing how flawed evolution is. There are so many flaws and holes in this theory. To believe in macro evolution you have to stretch things; you have ignore things; you have to make up things.

Instead lets spend time getting a big dose of the truth of the significance of humanity.

We are in the second week of the sermon series called "Foundational Truths." We are discussing important foundational truths for a proper Biblical worldview from passages in the Old Testament.

What is a worldview? A worldview is a set of beliefs that govern how you see the world and live. Last week we started building a biblical foundation by answering the question of the origin of creation. We saw that the origin of creation was not by random chance but by a loving Creator God.

Let's look at God's perspective of humanity so that our biblical worldview can be strengthened.

Turn with me to Gen 1:26-28, "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." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ 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."

What makes mankind the greatest creation? We can see three reasons in this passage. The first reason is:

God deliberates before creating man

When you read chapter 1 you see the pattern of God's divine command written in the third person, "And God said let there be..." In verse 26 we see a change in wording as well as change to first person plural. "Then God said, "**Let us make** man in our image, after our likeness."

Who is the us that is deliberating before creating man?

Some theologians believe it was a conversation in the heavenlies between God and angels prior to creating man. But angels are not made in the image of God so God cannot say to them let us make man in our image.

Others have suggested the us is called the "plural of majesty" or "Royal we." It is someone in power using the word "we" instead of I when writing or speaking from an official position.

For example, when UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became a grandmother back in 1989, she used the royal we when releasing a statement to the press, “We have become a grandmother.”

Other theologians see this as an early reference to the Trinity- God the Father, Son and Spirit deliberating prior to creating humanity. Henri Blocher writes, “God addresses himself, but this he can do only because he has a Spirit who is both with him and distinct from him at the same time. Here are the first glimmerings of a Trinitarian revelation.”

If you look back over the first few verses of creation we see the Trinity involved in creation so it seems reasonable that the us is referring to the Trinity. Verse 2, “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Verse 3, “And God said...” God the Father and God the Son- The Word are present together in the creative act. 1 Cor 8:6, “There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

So the Trinity deliberates before creating man which shows significance to what He is about to create.

The second reason that humanity is special is in whose likeness we are created.

When we look at all the various creatures they are made “according to their kind.” A rabbit is made according to its kind. A horse is made according to its kind. But the creation so far does not reflect God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “God loves God’s work, loves it in that it has its own existence...God still does not recognize God’s self in the work, however; God beholds that work but not God’s own self. To behold oneself means, so to speak, to recognize one’s own face in a mirror, to see oneself in an image of oneself. But how could that possibly take place? God, after all, remains without qualification the Creator before whose feet the work lies; how then will God be able to find God in this work? The work

does not resemble the Creator, it is not the Creator's image...Only in that which is itself free could the free Creator behold the Creator. But how can what is created be free? What is created is determined, bound by law, conditioned, not free. [referring to the animals] If the Creator wishes to create the Creator's own image, then the Creator must create it free. And only such an image, in its freedom, would fully praise God, would fully proclaim God's glory as Creator."

In order for God to see Himself in creation He created something other than an animal- He created mankind. Instead of being created according to our kind,

God created us in His image

Verse 27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

The Hebrew words for "image" and "likeness" refer to something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents. Likeness can emphasize "appearance, character or nature between persons or things."

"When God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" the meaning is that God plans to make a creature similar to himself.

What is the image of God?

Is the image of God the physical nature, the spiritual nature, is it our intellect or our emotions or our ability to make moral decisions?

Reformer John Calvin believed "When it comes to define the image, he says that it really means man's original integrity, his unity, his uprightness, his straightness. But he says as well that 'the image of God extends to everything in which the nature of man surpasses that of all other species of animals'.

Let's take a look at the image of God as Calvin said is "everything in man as a natural being that differentiates him from the animal" and also "the spiritual aspect."

We do know according to this passage that male and female are both created in the image of God. Though man and animal were created from dust only man was created in the image of God. And though woman was created from man's rib, she too is made in the image of God. They are both made in the image of God.

How is mankind different than animals? When I share with you some very practical examples they will sound so silly- so common sense- that again speak out against the idea of macro evolution. But they speak to being made in the image of God.

As I give examples I am going to be using the word man as God does in verse 27 representing male and female. It is easier to use man and sounds better in this context than mankind.

Do animals dream and plan and go on vacations to experience a new location and relax and get refreshed? Man does.

Do animals appreciate amazing views of a river or lake or mountain? Man does.
[Show pics 3-4 seconds each]

Do animals feel compelled to capture those images with paint or pencil or with a camera? Man does. Man is able to appreciate beauty and contemplate it.

Do animals have social media accounts? Do they post pics of their meals? Or new shoes or jewelry or post a funny face? Man does a lot of that.

Do animals create or design or make things better than they are? Birds have been making nests since they were created. Do their nests change over time? Do they

decide to use building materials like tyvek that can keep water out? Or do they see the commercials about flex tape and decide to try covering next year's nest in it?

Man creates, designs, and seeks to make things better. A builder keeps an eye on new materials that will make the houses he builds stronger. Athletes study new methods to become better at their sport. Robotics engineers seek to make better robots. I can't wait until they can make an inexpensive robot that cleans houses.

Scientists teach that humans and apes are very similar in DNA. The similarities can be explained by a wise Creator. A wise creator may use similar parts in all kinds of creations. For example, that is what businesses do. If they can use the same part in many different goods, it saves them research and development costs.

Though there are some similarities in apes and humans there is no comparison between how they think and live. Take the smartest ape and compare it to a young child and there is no comparison. The child is more intelligent and responds to his/her surroundings. A young child makes up songs to sing. A young child has an imagination that moves him/her to create things out of legos or play dough or with paint brushes or even with their fingers and paint.

I have yet to see an ape in Hobby Lobby purchasing crafts.

Do animals fight for the rights of other animals? Do you ever see commercials of animals fighting for the rights of other animals or for the rights of humans? **Man does.** Man fights for the right of all kinds of animals- especially endangered animals.

Do animals contemplate important questions like: If God is all powerful why does He allow evil? Where is God when it hurts? What is my purpose in life? Man does. Man seeks to find answers to these questions. Man chooses to write books or blogs on these subjects.

Do animals struggle with addictions, remorse, regret? Man does. Man can lose hope and the motivation to live when they get encumbered by addictions. Man can experience great remorse and regret. Why? Because man knows right from wrong. Man was made with a conscience.

Do animals experience the many emotions that man does?

In Bible study on Wednesday night we were discussing how humans experience emotions to a greater degree than animals. Judy Hodgett said something quite funny. She said, “Want to know the difference between a dog and a human? Lock your dog and wife in the trunk of your car and come back 30 minutes later. The dog will be happy to see you but your wife not so much.” I do not recommend you try that.

Do animals feel compelled to know God personally? Man was created with an internal desire to know God. Sometimes that desire is suppressed by things like work or money or sex.

Are animals commanded to bring glory to God? Man is. We were created to bring glory to God in whatever we do.

Did Jesus come to earth to rescue animals from their sins? Jesus came to seek and save lost men and women..

Did Jesus spend his 3 years on earth healing sick animals and casting demons from animals and telling animals that the Kingdom of God is here? Jesus cast out demons and healed man from their illnesses and told them about the kingdom of God.

Humanity is special. We did not determine our worth; God did. Listen to King David as he reflects on the privilege of being made in God’s image. He writes in Psalm 8, “³ When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers— the moon and the stars you set in place— ⁴ what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?” ⁵ Yet you made them only a little lower

than God* and crowned them* with glory and honor. ⁶ You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority— ⁷ the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, ⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents.”

Of all of of God’s creations, the moon, the stars, the universes, the angels, the animals, the fish- man is God’ chief creation. R. Kent Hughes writes, “Though you could travel a hundred times the speed of light, past countless yellow-orange stars, to the edge of the galaxy and swoop down to the fiery glow located a few hundred light-years below the plane of the Milky Way, though you could slow to examine the host of hot young stars luminous among the gas and dust, though you could observe, close-up, the protostars poised to burst forth from their dusty cocoons, though you could witness a star’s birth, in all your stellar journeys you would never see anything equal to the birth and wonder of a human being. For a tiny baby girl or boy is the apex of God’s creation!” (Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing.*)

When David writes, “a little lower than God” he doesn’t mean that we are just a step below God. He knows we are temporal and God is eternal. He knows that God is God and we are not. But he does know we are the closest to God in image than any other creation. That includes angels.

Think about this for a second. Angels are spirit beings. Animals are physical beings. Only humanity is spiritual and physical.

The third reason humanity is special is because

God gave us dominion over the earth.

Verse 28, “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.”

What does this dominion look like? Think of a king empowering another person to rule in another part of the land on his behalf. That steward is to govern as the king would govern. And one day the steward will have to give an account for his stewardship. Man has authority over the whole earth. We are responsible for its care- care of animals, care of the oceans, rivers, plant life.

We are often inundated with political statements like man is destroying the world. Man is removing so many natural resources that we will run out. Man is what is wrong with the world. Again we can see culture trying to degrade man and ignoring a God who is in control.

We are to be good stewards of the earth so that we leave it better for the next generation. But let us not forget that we are not the ultimate sustainer of life. God is the ultimate sustainer of life. Would God allow humans to completely ruin His creation? Would God allow the world to starve to death?

The truth is one day God will cause unprecedented damage on this earth in preparation for the end of time when He ushers in a new earth.

I hope this message has elevated your view of humanity and yourself personally. I hope it has encouraged you and has strengthened your biblical worldview affecting how you see the world and live in it.

Let me end with some implications. What are some implications that we are made in the image of God?

The first implication is:

Everybody is a somebody.

Everybody is a somebody because we are all made in God's image. **All human life is of supreme value to God. All human life.** This morning we set aside as SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE Sunday. Focus on the Family provides an excellent statement about

humanity from God’s perspective, “We believe that human beings are created by God in His image. Therefore **every** person, from conception to natural death, possesses inherent **dignity** and immeasurable **worth**—including preborn children, elderly individuals, those with special needs and others marginalized by society. Christians, then, are called to defend, protect, and value all human life.”

Everybody is somebody and God and proves it by sending His only Son **Jesus to die on the cross for all people.**

As followers of Jesus, may our eyes see everybody like God sees them. Everybody is a somebody.

The second implication is:

You are created to bring glory to God.

Listen to Wayne Grudem, “This fact guarantees that our lives are significant. When we first realize that God did not need to create us and does not need us for anything, we could conclude that our lives have no importance at all. But Scripture tells us that we were created to glorify God, indicating that we are important *to God himself*. This is the final definition of genuine importance or significance to our lives: If we are truly important to God for all eternity, then what greater measure of importance or significance could we want?” Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*.

How can we bring glory to God? It happens naturally because we were made in His image. When you do something that animals are unable to duplicate you are bringing God glory. When you create, you are bringing God glory. When you converse with others you are bringing God glory. When you sing or write or read you are bringing God glory.

Paul calls followers to take intentional steps to bring God glory. He writes:

1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV), “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Colossians 3:23 (NIV84), “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...”

The third and final implication is:

You are to tell others that they are special to God.

You are special. There is no doubt about it. When we know this truth we have a humble, grateful heart like David. A humble heart extends grace and love. A humble heart wants others to experience the joy of knowing their worth in God.

Our vision is: “Every Christ-follower a disciple; every disciple a disciple-maker.” One of the steps of a disciple is to share your faith.

Who will you tell of their worth in God’s eyes as a step of obedience in fulfilling the vision for your life? Who will you share with about the great love God demonstrated by sending Christ to die for them?

People are tired of hearing bad news- especially about COVID. I am quite sure they would be open to good news for a change. And this good news can transform their worldview in how they see themselves and others. And it can transform their lives for the here and now and for eternity.

What a privilege we have to be used by God in that capacity.

Let’s pray.

o.b.g.