

SERMON NOTES
Genesis 1:26-31
“Foundational Truths: Image of God”

Intro:

- R. Kent Hughes, *“So consider this: 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! But the greatest wonder of all is that the child is created in the image of God, the Imago Dei. The child once was not; now, as a created soul, he or she is eternal. He or she will exist forever. When the stars of the universe fade away, that soul shall still live.”*
- After God created the heavens and the earth – the entire material universe – out of nothing / *and after God prepared the solar system and Earth for life / and after God produced sea animals and plants and birds and land animals – then God did something unprecedented and unique – He created a species to reflect His own image and likeness // He set that species apart from and above the animals to exercise authority over the animals*

Genesis 1:26-27 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.

I. CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

- What is it that makes humans unique among all of God’s creatures?

- *Our bodies are made of the same chemicals and material substances as the animals – from the dust of the earth -- the Bible says so*
- So it is not at all surprising that scientists would discover similarities in physical structures and DNA between humans and other animals
- *Yet with all of our structural and genetic similarities to chimpanzees, for example – how is it that chimpanzees cannot do scientific research or compose music or paint a landscape or write a poem or write a software program or learn multiple languages or do algebra or geometry?*
- And what is the explanation for the fact that all human cultures have religious beliefs and practices – while no other species – past or present – has ever engaged in any religious practices?
- Did our branch of the tree experience a religion gene mutation?
- How would a religion gene mutation or a math gene mutation or a science gene mutation have helped our hominid ancestors to gain a competitive advantage for survival and reproduction?
- *Were the earliest math geek hominids considered extra sexy – or did an aptitude for algebraic equations help them to hunt and gather food more efficiently?*
- By Darwinian scientists own reckoning, *all the major branches of the animal kingdom have been evolving on earth for at least 500 million years – with chimpanzees and human ancestors diverging about 5-7 million years ago*
- To put it into perspective: *suppose January 1st represented the Cambrian age 500 million years ago and today was the last second of that same calendar year – in essence condensing 500 million years into one year*
- No arts or sciences or religion or any of that from January thru November
- *The days of December pass – still no sign of even a cave drawing*
- December 31 dawns – still nothing
- 11:00 pm on December 31 – *and still not a trace of any art or science or religion*
- Then, finally, at about 11:50 pm on New Year's Eve – *homo sapiens makes its appearance on earth – and coincidentally – suddenly there are prehistoric paintings of reindeer and other animals that appear on cave walls*
- And then a couple of minutes later – *the full-blown civilizations of Egypt and Babylon – complete with art and science and literature and history and technology and architecture and agriculture and religion and*

government and laws and ethics and music and everything else that characterizes human society today

- And how are our close cousins the chimps and their fellow apes doing after their 7 million years of evolving?
- *Still no signs of the arts or sciences or religion in spite of all their genetic similarities with mankind*
- No ape version of a Michelangelo or Shakespeare or Beethoven or Monet or Aquinas or Einstein -- *Or even of a 1st grade girl able to read and write*
- How does one account for this sudden explosion of culture and civilization – uniquely among one species – homo sapiens – that just arrived on earth a few thousand years ago?
- Darwinian evolution has no explanation – *but the Bible does: God created man in His own image*

- GK Chesterton – The Everlasting Man: *“This creature, man, was truly different from all other creatures – because he was a creator as well as a creature.”*

- That is what it means to be created in the image of God – that we are both creatures and creators who have the capacity to create because we bear the image of the Creator.

- According to the biblical record – humans are the last species God created – and after creating male and female in His image – God rested from His work of creation
- Humans are the end goal that God had in mind when He created the heavens and the earth and the sea creatures and land animals
- *Humans are the crowning glory of God’s creative work*

- We do not share a common ancestry with apes – we are special creations of God
- *We have been created to relate to God and reflect His likeness in a way that no other animals are capable of*
- What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

1) Spiritual Qualities

- Man is unique in being both a physical and spiritual creature
- *Animals are physical but not spiritual*

- Angels are spiritual but not physical
- *Only humans are both physical and spiritual*
- We reflect in human form many of the invisible attributes of the invisible Creator -- *Intelligence // Creativity // Spirituality // Capacity to Love and be loved // Appreciation of Beauty // Rationality // Sociability // Linguistic ability // Inquisitive Mind // Capacity for compassion and empathy // Capacity for making moral choices // Desire to search for truth and meaning and purpose in life*
- *No other species agonizes over questions such as: Why do bad things happen to good people?*
- Most of you do something creative and uniquely human every day of your life – *that creativity is an expression of bearing the image of God*
- Here is the irony: *The very scientists who are trying to minimize the differences between humans and chimps – the very scientists who are trying to cut mankind down to the size of an ape – are by their scientific endeavors reflecting the image of God that is uniquely given by God to man!*
- Only humans do science because only humans are created in the image of God!
- Any kind of human genius and creativity – whether in science or art or music or math or engineering or technology or medicine or education or philosophy or theology or poetry or literature – *even if carried out by atheists and used to promote atheistic views – nevertheless such genius testifies to the Genius of our Creator and the uniqueness of our humanity as made in God's image*
- Just as the heavens declare the glory of God, so does Human genius and creativity and artistry
- The Chicago Art Institute has diverse forms of Art from every human culture – but nothing from the world of apes today or hominids of the past
- *Every human culture does art – and only humans do art*
- There are no art museums in the jungles where apes dwell
- *Art is universal to humans – and art is distinctive to humans – Why?*
- *Could it have something to do with being made in the image of the Master Artist who created the heavens and the earth and all living things?*

2) Capacity for Relationship with God

- The Bible teaches that God has given human beings – and only humans – the capacity for knowing Him and loving Him and worshiping Him
- *A major component of what it means to be created in the image of God is the capacity for worship and prayer and personal relationship with God*
- Adult chimpanzees do not evidence any such capacity for worship or prayer – but even very young human children pray and sing worship songs and memorize Bible verses
- *Why? Because God created humans in His image*
- How does evolution explain religion among humans? Is it simply a function of a more advanced intelligence? *Do scientists really want to subscribe to the theory that religious faith is a function of advanced intelligence?*
- *God made us in His image for a love relationship with Himself*
- Unlike the animals, man alone has the capacity to communicate with God through speech – *and unlike the animals, man alone is held morally accountable by God for obeying His Word*
- It would be ludicrous even to imagine God saying to lions or gorillas or elephants or whales or squirrels or horses: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength – and love your neighbor as yourself*

3) Human Responsibility

Genesis 1:28 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.”

- *God has given to mankind the responsibility to reproduce and to be stewards of His creation and to exercise dominion over the earth and its creatures*
- *Exercising royal dominion over the earth as God’s representative is one of the basic purposes for which God created man*

- Made in His image – after His likeness – man is the representative of God on earth – given authority to rule and exercise dominion on the earth – on God’s behalf
- Man is to manage and develop God’s creation as God’s vice-regent

Psalm 8:3-8 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

II. HONORING THE IMAGE OF GOD

- Why is it wrong to kill a human being but not wrong to kill a deer or a cow or a hog?
- Because the human is made in the image of God
- Why is racism wrong?
- *Because all human beings of all races trace their ancestry back to Adam and Eve and are therefore equally bearers of the image of God*
- Racism is wrong for the same reason that abortion is wrong – both are violations of God’s image- bearers
- *Honoring the image of God in all human beings regardless of skin color or ethnicity or age or stage of development or IQ or social status or gender or religion is basic to a biblical Christian ethic*
- This is not a conservative value or a liberal value – this is simply a biblical application of a foundational truth of the Christian faith
- *We will speak out against abortion and we will speak out against racism not as conservatives or liberals but as Christ-followers and Kingdom disciples*
- We are not called to make conservatives or liberals or progressives

- *We are not called to make Republicans or Democrats*
- We are called to make disciples living under the reign and rule of our Lord Jesus Christ in accordance with biblical truth
- *Our primary allegiance is not to conservative politics or liberal politics but rather to the Kingdom of God*
- *Only the biblical worldview offers a rational basis for treating all human beings with special value and dignity*
- It is because all human beings bear the divine image – going all the way back to Adam and Eve – *that the Bible emphasizes so strongly the responsibility of the strong to care for the weak // the affluent to care for the poor // the healthy to care for the sick // the successful to care for the disadvantaged*
- The Maker of heaven and earth made all human beings in His image – *and He gives special attention to those who are most vulnerable to experiencing indignity*
- The Bible teaches that God upholds the cause of the oppressed and lifts up those who are bowed down and watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and widows
- *And He expects His people to do likewise*

Proverbs 14:31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

- We either honor God or show contempt for our Maker by how we treat the poor and needy
- *Why?*
- Because the poor and needy are made in the image of God just as surely as the wealthy and powerful and successful
- *When we are merciful and generous toward the poor and needy – we are honoring the image of God in them – and thereby we are honoring their Maker and ours*
- *Are human value and dignity in the eye of the beholder?*
- Are human value and dignity determined by politicians or judges?
- NO – human value and dignity are determined by the Creator

As Christians who believe in the sanctity of human life and the dignity and worth of every human being – *we are called to stand up for all the unwanted and marginalized*

--As Christians, we stand against the Lie that there is such a thing as a life not worthy to be lived – or not worthy to be loved

- *And as Christ-followers, we stand against the Lie that there is such a thing as a life so sinful or bruised or hopeless that it cannot be redeemed*
- *To uphold the sanctity of human life is to show God's love for the weakest and most vulnerable of all human beings*
- That includes the unwanted baby in the womb
- But it also includes children born in poverty -- and the fatherless -- and the special needs and at-risk children and youth in our schools
- It includes minorities and refugees and immigrants
- *It includes those who are being trafficked into slave labor or the sex trade*
- It also includes those approaching the end of life and who are as virtually dependent on the care of others as a newborn infant

- We value every human life because of the immense value God places on our lives as made in His image and crowned with glory and honor
- ---especially the least of these – *thus honoring the image of God in the most vulnerable – treating them with compassion and dignity because they are image-bearers of immense value to God*

III. SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

- Many Christians regard abortion as the greatest moral evil of our times on the basis of the sheer numbers of innocent, defenseless children being intentionally killed each year
- *60 million babies in the US since 1973 – killed – not just harmed or disadvantaged or mistreated – but killed – having done absolutely nothing wrong themselves to deserve such a fate*
- I can think of no other moral evil resulting in so many deaths of innocent human beings
- *And killed intentionally – not as an unintended consequence of some bad policy or wrong action or accident or injustice – but killed intentionally -- violently*
- Death is the intended outcome of abortion -- A failed abortion is when the fetus somehow survives

- How can it be that we as a society are able to tolerate so many deaths of so many children?
- And by the way, of those 60 million children killed by abortion – 20 million were black babies
- *Do you know what the total black population in the US was in 1960?*
- Just under 19 million
- More black babies killed by abortion since 1973 than the entire black population in 1960
- *And that's not evidence of racism?*
- Margaret Sanger would be proud

- *Would we tolerate that many children – that many black children -- being killed by any other means than abortion?*
- NO – absolutely not – *the moral outrage and protests would grind our nation to a fiery halt*
- Why then no outrage with 2,000 or so deaths by abortion day after day after day?
- *For one thing, the numbers are mind-numbing – and heart-numbing*
- We can understand tragedies involving scores or hundreds of people once in a while
- *But 15,000 every week – week after week – as a matter of routine?*
- We can't even feel that
- *Can you imagine a daily abortion tally alongside the daily COVID death tally – how depressing!*

- Another reason we tolerate such evil is that the victims are faceless – we never see them – purposefully hidden from our view – disposed of quietly
- *Most Americans don't even know what actually takes place in an abortion clinic – and we don't want to know*
- And it is considered bad form to show it or talk about it in any graphic detail
- *We tolerate the doing of the evil more than the exposing of the evil*

- Another reason we tolerate so many deaths of innocent, defenseless children is because abortion is part of the sexual revolution – and Americans value their sexual freedom more than the lives of unborn children
- *We're not entirely comfortable with the idea of aborting babies in the womb – but we really want to hang on the freedom to have sex whenever*

and with whomever we want without having to worry about taking care of babies

- Americans regard divorcing sex from reproduction and parenting as a sacred right
- Men especially enjoy that freedom from responsibility
- But I think the primary reason why we tolerate so many deaths of children is this: we don't really believe they are children / we don't really believe they are fully human
- *We have bought into the lie that fetuses are just parts of a woman's body*
- My body, my choice
- *"I personally don't believe in abortion, but I support a woman's right to choose"*
- But what is she choosing?
- (Or in many cases, what is her boyfriend choosing?)
- *Something like an appendectomy or tonsillectomy?*
- Or the death of a genetically distinct, developing human being?
- At what age can it be determined that it is a human baby in a mother's womb?
- *Before birth? YES! At 20 weeks? YES! At 12 weeks? YES! When?*
- Human beings are human beings from the moment of conception
- *Human beings are capable of reproducing only human beings*
- A fertilized egg or embryo does not start out as some other species and then become human at some later stage of development

Dr. Jerome LeJeune (Doctor in Medicine and Science in Paris / Professor of Fundamental Genetics / Discoverer of extra chromosome number 21):

"When does a person begin? Life has a very long history, but each individual has a very neat beginning - the moment of its conception.

-At two months of age, the human being is less than one thumb's length from the head to the rump. He would fit at ease in a nutshell, but everything is there - hands, feet, head, organs, brain - all are in place. His heart has been beating for a month already. Looking closely, you would see the palm creases. With a good magnifier, the finger prints could be detected. Every document is available for a national identity card.

"And to let you measure how precise the detection can be -- if, at the very beginning, just after conception, days before implantation, a single cell was

removed from that little individual, we could cultivate that cell and examine its chromosomes.

-If a student, looking at it under the microscope, could not recognize the number, the shape, and banding pattern of those chromosomes, and if he was not able to tell with certainty whether it came from a chimpanzee or from a human being, he would fail in his examination.

“To accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place a new human being has come into being is no longer a matter of taste or opinion. The human nature of the human being from conception to old age is not a metaphysical or religious contention, it is plain experimental evidence.”

This, of course, is the same truth that the Bible has affirmed for centuries

-the Bible is uniform in regarding the unborn child as a human being and therefore under the protection of God’s commands: *“You shall not kill”* and *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Psalm 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the most compelling Christian apologetic for the sanctity of unborn human life.

--The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that the eternal Son became human flesh in Mary’s womb beginning at conception *-it was the presence of the Son of God in Mary’s womb that elicited John the Baptist’s leap of joy in Elizabeth’s womb*

Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby (John) leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Same Greek word is used for unborn baby in the womb as for the newborn baby Jesus in Luke 2:12 *“This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

The full humanity of the unborn child is not a disputable matter

-therefore, the Sanctity of Human Life - from conception to death - is an absolute moral value for Christians

The early church stood against abortion - for the reason that the life of the fetus is a creation of God, and because the fetus is not merely a part of a woman's body but is a human neighbor to be loved and protected

-the early Christians advocated that Jesus reached out to the poor and weak and defenseless - and there is no one more defenseless than a baby in the womb

-the early church regarded abortion as an offense against the image of God in human beings and as a violation of the command to love your neighbor as yourself - *the baby in the womb being regarded as a neighbor*

- *Why do Christians with a biblical worldview oppose abortion?*

- (1) The unborn baby is a human being

- (2) *All human beings are created in the image of God*

- (3) Therefore, the unborn baby – as a human being created in the image of God – is a neighbor that we are obligated to love as ourselves

- Of course, this same line of reasoning applies to all human beings of all races – including women struggling with unplanned pregnancies

- *A consistent life ethic also includes caring for the young woman who is feeling so desperate and so hopeless and so alone and so trapped that she is considering aborting her child*

- Crisis Pregnancy Centers

- Frederica Mathewes-Green: *“A woman doesn't want an abortion like she wants an ice cream cone or a Porsche, but like an animal caught in a trap who gnaws off its own leg.”*

- The war on women is being waged by Planned Parenthood and the abortion industry and the spiritual forces of evil behind it – not by pro-life advocates

- *Abortion is NOT healthcare – abortion is an act of violence – the abortion industry is engaged in evil – and women as well as children are being victimized by this evil – and black women and other minorities and the poor are disproportionately being victimized by this evil*

- And a consistent life ethic also includes caring for the woman who has already had an abortion – *whose soul has been damaged by aborting a child* -- and who is in desperate need of the healing grace and forgiveness and mercy and redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ

- *It is for such women – loved by God -- that Jesus Christ came into the world and died on the Cross and rose from the dead to give us a new life and to make us new in his likeness*

IV. TRANSFORMED INTO THE LIKENESS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

- God's image in man has been badly marred by human sin
- *Though man still bears the marks of God's image – He is no longer reflecting the likeness of God's character*
- Adam rebelled against God's authority and then himself became subject to the rule of sin, death and Satan
- *There is no man or woman on earth today to compare to the original glory of Adam and Eve*
- *But there once was such a man 2000 years ago*
- A man who revealed to us what God had in mind when He created man in His image and likeness
- *Namely, the Second Adam or the Last Adam – Jesus Christ*

Colossians 1:15-16 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

- *Jesus Christ is the Word of God by which all things were made – and He became flesh in Bethlehem 2000 years ago – the visible image of the invisible God*
- Adam was created IN the image of God – but Jesus Christ IS the image of God
- It is God's purpose to restore by salvation what was marred by sin – namely, to restore the image of God in man
- *For that reason and purpose, God sent His Son in human form – the visible image of the invisible God – in order to cleanse and liberate us from our sins and to renew the image of God in us*
- Salvation is not just the forgiveness of our sins – salvation is all about being renewed in the image of our Creator in true righteousness and holiness

- All human beings bear the image of God by virtue of descent from Adam and Eve
- But the awesome destiny of born-again Christ-followers is to bear the likeness of the God-Man Jesus Christ by virtue of faith-union with Him
- And even now we are growing in that likeness

II Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- One day – at the Second Coming of Christ -- God will make everything new
- All of creation will be set free from bondage to decay and corruption and death – all of creation will be restored to its original beauty and goodness – and then some – even more glorious and awesome
- *And the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ will become fully human and Christ-like and will fulfill all of God's purposes in creating humanity in the first place*
- You matter to God – every one of you
- He made you in His image
- You are special in His sight
- *And He has plan to restore you fully and perfectly to His image and likeness*
- *He sent His Son to save you from the rule of sin, death and Satan*
- He gave you His Spirit to enable you to reflect the glory of Christ's likeness
- *And His destiny for you as His child is to be conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ and to live forever with Him and to reign with Jesus on the earth*
- *Live for the Glory of God – Love Him with all your being*
- There is a sense in which all of creation glorifies God as Creator
- *But only man can choose to love Him – or not // choose to live for God's glory – or for his own // choose to worship Him – or not // choose to obey Him – or not*
- *Among all of God's creatures – God gave YOU the capacity to love Him and worship Him and have a personal relationship with Him*

- And then love your neighbor as yourself – *especially those neighbors who are most vulnerable and most unwanted and unloved* -- because your neighbor also is one of God's image-bearers

Prayer