

Man created in God's image

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[0 : 00] You turn back for a short time this morning to the passage we read in Genesis chapter 1, the very well known in the first chapter of the Bible. And there's words that I'd like to concentrate on in verse 26, where we're told, as God went on in his creative work, God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

Let us make man in our image and after our likeness. And sometimes as we read the news or as we hear things that are happening around us, or that we know of the behaviour of some people in our community, or farther afield, or in other parts of the world, we shudder to think about the beast mankind.

We shudder to think about the monster that has been created, and the horribleness of our behaviour one to another. There's no doubt that sometimes the way we behave, when we say that we behave like animals, is an insult to animals.

Because there are things that human beings do to one another, that animals would never be known to do. The human evil that we see around us, the degradation, the misery, and the sheer hatred that people have one for another, sometimes leave us wondering if there's any hope at all.

There's any hope for our society. When we see the ridiculous things that are happening, the murderous intents of children towards children, of parents towards their children, of people claiming to be Jesus Christ, and of shooting people left, right and centre, we wonder if there's any hope left for mankind.

[1 : 35] And we wonder why it's like that. Maybe we wonder, well, why has it become like this? Or was it always like this? Or what is God in this picture?

Or you come here to God's house every week, you pontificate about God from the pulpit, but where is God in the middle of all that misery, and degradation, and hatred? What does the Bible have to say about these things?

What does the Bible have to tell us? Has it got anything relevant at all to say on the subject? Well, for the next four weeks, I would like to look at what the Bible has to say.

Because the Bible starts off by saying that we have been made as man and woman in the image of God. That we were created in God's image. And I would like to look today at that original image that we were made in.

What were they like when they were first created, and whether that likeness has remained until the present day. And I would like to look at that perverted image, which went all wrong, and where things began to crumble.

[2 : 36] And then that image that can be renewed in Jesus Christ as our only hope, and as our only direction. And one day, when that image will be perfected in glory.

So I would like to look at this because it gives us a broad understanding of humanity, and what's happening, and of our own behaviour, and of life, and of the search for meaning in life.

And when God speaks here about man being made in his own image, it is the cumulative term for mankind. Humankind. He's not talking about males here. He's talking about man and woman.

He created them, man and woman, male and female. And the word man there is referring to the whole generic race of mankind. And I think from this account, as we've read that account, and one you know all so well, we recognise how unique humankind is.

How unique you are, and how unique I am as a human being. Because when God made the world, he made human beings to be the pinnacle and the glory of his creation.

[3 : 41] Mankind was the crown of God's creative work. The world, and the animals, and the fish, and the mountains, and the sea, were all made by God for mankind.

They were all made in God's name for mankind to enjoy. And we find as he goes through that each different day, God makes things according to its kind.

He makes the fish according to its kind. He makes the animals. He makes the seas and the hills and the mountain. And it's all created. Then, we find something very different happens on the sixth day.

On the sixth day, something very significant happens because God changes his approach. Because up till now, he said, let there be, let there be, let this happen after his own image.

But then, on the sixth day, he said, let us create. Let us make. And it's a new dimension. And it's a new direction. For the first time, we're given insight into a consultation process that goes on within the Godhead.

[4 : 53] God doesn't just create by his word, but he consults with himself, with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A reference to the Trinity, although the Old Testament people wouldn't have understood it.

Let us make man. He takes time with man. He deliberates. He consults with his own person to create man. There's a discussion in the glories of heaven.

There's a deliberation, an agreement. The divine fellowship get together and say, yes, let us make man as the crown of our creation.

Let us make man special. Let us make mankind unique. And let us put them on the world. We're unique because God deliberated, he consulted with himself when he made us.

But also because he says that we are made in our image, in our likeness. God speaking. In his image and in his likeness. No other part of creation.

[5 : 56] No animals, no fish, no mountains, no trees, no seas were made in the image of God. God isn't in nature in the way that some people believe.

God isn't in a tree. He isn't in the sea. He isn't in a fish because he made mankind in his own image. And we were made in his image. Uniquely alone.

That makes us the highest revelation of God on this earth. When God made us, we were to be spilled out onto the earth as God's own revelation of himself.

We are mirror images. We were made as mirror images of God. We were to reflect God. We were to represent God. When we were made made in his image like no other part of God's creation.

Made in essence to bear the image. By our very nature, we are image bearers of God. An unbelievable honour. What does it mean to be God's image?

[6 : 57] What does it mean practically for us to be made in the image of God? Well, I would say it means one or two things. It means, firstly, that we were made for God. When God made mankind, he made us for himself.

We were made towards God. Directed towards God. Looking towards him. Every single of our body shouts out this need to know and to experience God.

You see, we're God-centred people made for God. And we are reliant on God. He took us up as a clump of dust and made us in his own image so that we're like him.

We are nothing without God. When we were created, it is all by his glory and by his power. Made by God. Made for God. Made to mirror God.

So God is essentially part of what we are by nature. And he says here that we are made in his image and in his likeness. Made in his likeness.

[7 : 58] That is, if you look in a mirror, you see a mirror image of yourself. When God looked at good creation and said, it's good. When he looked at man and mankind, he said it's good. It's because he could see a mirror image of himself made to reflect God.

Made persons like God. You see, animals aren't people. Fish aren't people. Fleas aren't people. But men and women are persons.

There's persons in the Godhead. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And we are persons. And everybody here is a self-conscious, rational person. A free, moral and religious person in a way completely unique to the rest of mankind.

We have never been non-moral. We have never been able to discern, not discern between right and wrong. We have never not had a conscience as people because we're made in God's image.

We're able to laugh, we're able to cry. We have emotions. We are gifted. We are good, holy and righteous when we were first created. Made in God's image.

[9 : 07] Made persons. Made like him. So when Adam and Eve were created, they were images of God. They were so that we could see what God was like. But also, not only were they made in his likeness, they were made in his image.

As well, maybe as a slightly different idea about it. If you remember in Daniel 3, we have Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon. And he wanted the whole of the empire to worship him.

And so what he did was he set up an image of himself, a golden image. And he put it somewhere out of his own presence so that wherever people were, they could see this image of him and it was his representative and it stood for him and they had to bow down and worship it.

Well, that's really what it means for ourselves. That we are God's image. That we, when we were first created in glory in Eden, were representatives of God.

We stood for God. We were those who were set on the earth to ambassador for God, stand for his rights and for his interests, to support God, to defend him.

[10 : 10] We were there, planted in the garden to do his will, to do his duty. And we were given responsibility. We didn't just fan around the garden of Eden, but God gave mankind a responsibility because we were ambassadors for him and he said, take it and keep it and care for it and look after it and have dominion over the animals and over the birds and over the fish.

We were given a mandate, a cultural, creative mandate. We were spoken to by God in a unique way, in a relationship way, made to live for him.

There's been no other created being that lives in the realm of duty and obligation. We were created to obey, to be under God's duty and to be obliged to him.

We weren't created to flap around like ostriches. We were made to be under God's provision and God's obligation. And along with that image, we are made religious.

Inescapably religious. From every angle that we are, we have been made religious. made, the catechism says, to glorify and enjoy God. Created in his image for him, looking to him, at one with him.

[11 : 27] That is how we were made. But we know that isn't the story which remained. We know about the rebellion and we know how that whole image of religiosity and of service and of image was tarnished and almost lost only to be regained in Christ.

but nonetheless, the image, although it's tarnished, remains. And for every living soul, there is still a consciousness of God. And you may stick God down 20, 30 feet in your consciousness, but he's still there.

And you can't run away from the reality and the consciousness of God because you were made for him. You were made in his image and your very sin you shout out to acknowledge that God exists.

And it is true that mankind will find no peace and no satisfaction in this God-forsaken world and no rest until they find their rest and their answer in Jesus Christ.

It is only in Christ is that image renewed. Only in Christ can the way we were created be again fulfilled because he rights the wrongs. He upturns the mess that we have made.

[12 : 41] Augustine said it well. You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. Now you might be confident and bold in your unbelief, but in your beds alone at night you will find no rest deep down in your soul's consciousness no peace until you find it with Christ.

Because we were made for him. We're made in his image. We're not made in the image of money or in the image of wealth or in the image of ambition or in the image of self-glorification.

We're made in the image of God and it's until we find our peace in Christ that we will be restless deep down. Millions and part of the reason surely for the degradation and evil is because people are looking everywhere.

politicians are asking all kinds of questions about our society today but do they ever look in Christ? Do they ever find the moral answer in him? Have they ever looked at our image of where we've been made?

No. And until we do we will remain restless. So being made in God's image means that we're made to be towards God but also means that we were made for each other.

[13 : 59] There's no doubt that being made in God's image also means that we were made for each other because we're told in verse 27 that God created man in his own image and the image of God created he him. Male and female he created them.

So it's not male in his image it's not female in his image it's male and female together make up God's image. There's more to this than just the sexual difference that God created between man and woman because that difference was in the animals and they aren't made in God's image.

But here we have a greater and a deeper truth that God is telling us about himself. He's saying that his image in us as we were made is reflected in the togetherness of relationship.

That that reflects his image. That man alone or woman alone is not God's image. It's not good for man to be alone. A child left in the jungle to look up to look after itself away from parents will not grow up to be a well balanced human being.

He will become or she will become almost like an animal. Man is not good to be alone. Woman was given to complement to supplement to complete the man because man was incomplete without woman.

[15 : 16] She was there to make him strong for he is weak. She was there to fill the emptiness that was in Adam's soul because he wasn't complete as a man or as an image bearer of God until she was there.

And the united relationship of Adam and Eve images God because God isn't a solitary. God isn't a solitaire. God is a fellowship, a plurality of people.

He is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit always living together in perfect unity. He's dimensional. He's social. He's a being. He speaks with himself and he fellowships with himself.

And our image, his image is reflected in us in togetherness. It's reflected in the togetherness of marriage and also in the togetherness of society.

More than just man and woman. This was the image of mankind and that society in its perfection before the fall would have reflected God's image perfectly because it was not good for man to be an island.

[16 : 18] Society in perfection would express God's image, would speak about God's love because in society we find our fulfillment in perfection.

Sharing with one another, supplying one another's needs, helping, loving, bearing one another's burdens. We were given the ability to speak because we could speak together in society and in fellowship.

Creativity, which we can give our gifts and our abilities to others. Speech and song, all given for fellowship and for union and for togetherness as God made us.

God's image means fellowship. Do not forsake the assembling of yourself together, he says to Christians. No good to be a Christian on your own. No good to think you can survive on your own.

But we know that was the picture of perfection and we know that since the fall that there's been a great breakup of this togetherness and there's been a great breakup of this unity in a million and one different ways that we would take all week to speak about.

[17 : 23] Society today is it not a testament to a broken, tainted, spoiled relationship between mankind where we're greedy and ambitious, sneaky and divisive, do anything we can to spoil one another's relationships and to spoil each other.

Whereas Christ is the only hope for healing. He's the only hope for breaking up the division, the ethnic cleansing. Who can heal that cleansing but Christ because we need him because the image is gone.

The image has been fatally flawed, made, for God. That is a reflection of God's image made for each other. That reflects his image and also briefly we were made for the creation and that reflects God's image.

That is what we were like because when we were created in God's image we were to have dominion and rule over all the creation and we were to make sure that we tended the garden that we were put into.

God's image means that we were made for this world, made to interact with this world, with the fish and with the seas and with the land and cultivation and in every other way we reflect God's dominion and rule over the universe.

[18 : 39] We reflect it in a small puny way as we were created. It reflects his great dominion. We come and worship the one who is in control of the whole universe.

Everything. And we mustn't come lightly and as if it doesn't matter a hoot. But we were given rule over the animals to develop the land, to cultivate, to explore, to use, to progress in science and in technology and in art.

We were given all these things, a cultural mandate. We were given the task in the beginning to take this world and God said make it God glorifying. Make your work, make your time, make your dominion, make your rule, make it God glorifying.

That is what he gave us. And he gave us not only dominion and rule over the animals and over the other beasts of the field but also the need to work and to care for a garden.

See, it wouldn't have been good maybe just to have dominion because we might have abused it but we were given work to do. Adam was to be a servant. He was to be a steward in the garden.

[19 : 49] He was to conserve. He was to preserve. He was to protect. He was to love. He was to care. He was to nurture the ground that he was given. And what we have in the whole of the creation and in the image that God gives us is a beautiful framework for a perfect life.

A beautiful, productive, balanced existence. But we know what happened in the fall. That the fall destroyed that unity and the marriage between the land and the people.

We know that since the fall that the land has been our enemy and that man has been the land's enemy and that we've mined to destruction and we've been greedy and we've abused and we've raped the land.

We let enmity one to another. There's weeds that are always coming up and telling us how much work is still to be done. There's friction. There's antagonism. But it wasn't meant that way.

There wasn't meant to be earthquakes and floods and death and disease. There wasn't meant to be hatred for each other. There wasn't meant to be disgust against God. All these things tainted and perverted in the fall.

[21 : 00] God originally made us good. But only the final redemption of mankind will we see this sick groaning earth once again clapping their hands with joy in a renewed freedom.

can we not see that Christ is not only the only answer to our own problems but to the problems of a decreasing and diminishing and destructive world in which we live.

So in conclusion we find that we were originally created good. Very, very good. That we were created as God's image makers.

God's imagers perfectly. And we can see can we not a clear and a logical and a distinct and a persuasive account of our beginning.

And does it not fit in to the pattern of what we're like? Can you not look outside and see the creative beauty and see your own person and your own desire for worship even though you're not a Christian can you not see it as a tainted version of what you should have been?

[22 : 11] Can you not see the terracings at Ibroxville with people worshipping as a tainted image of people trying to worship God? People worshipping their jobs worshipping their ambitions worshipping their bank balances as a tainted image of people who were made to worship God.

Because what we've done is we've taken the creator we've thrown him out and we've taken the created things and we've worshipped them instead. but inside us there's that desire to worship.

Can we not see that it's all lost? That we're empty that we're aching that we're out Christ we have nothing. That we've lost that goodness we've lost that rightness and there's nothing but a tragic beginning to record a tragic beginning that has affected the whole of mankind every living soul in here every living soul outside everyone because Adam and Eve were man's representatives and we can see surely that God is the only answer and Christ provides the only redemption for us in our needs for us in our world.

Do you not see this morning a world that needs redeemed? Is it such a good upright nice place that it doesn't need redeemed?

Do you not see your own soul as needing redeemed? are you perfect and right and not needing God? Can you not see that the image is tainted and that Christ is the only answer?

[23 : 47] Can you not see a creation that's groaning out to be redeemed with Christ and all those only are breaking apart a world slowly destroying itself because it needs God's redemptive power.

we need God. My plea is that we come to find the renewed relationship with God as it was meant to be in the beginning through the person of Jesus Christ through his forgiveness and through his finished work.

Here we have the original image of God next week we'll look in more detail or whenever God willing we'll look in more detail at how that image was perverted because thereby we find the answers to our searches.

Amen. Let us pray. Gracious God we ask that you would bless your word and that you would bless the truth of your word and in a day and generation where it's laughed and mocked and ignored and thrown out as being fairy stories or myth we ask that we would see there with the eye of faith that we would see great truth and great relevance and a great honest logical clear cut description of perfection lost and our need for Jesus Christ.

We ask oh Lord God that the scientists of our day that the brains and intellectors of our day would see that evolution from a non-personal source can answer no needs can fill no empty soul cannot give meaning in life and cannot speak about our destination gracious God we need a personal loving God whose image we are made in and we need a personal living saviour who will restore that image forgive us as sinners Lord God for the way that we've abused and taken all the things you've given us and twisted them to use them for ourselves for our own pleasures for our own sins for our own rebellion for our own wickedness because we were made completely dependent on you and we've taken our freedom and we've abused it dear Lord forgive us and enable us to be those who image

[26 : 12] Christ and follow him in all that we do remember us then and pardon our sins for Jesus sake Amen