

God's Image – Given, Lost and Restored

Holy Trinity Sun. – 06/07/20 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Genesis 1:1-2:4a Pastor Keith Besel

v. 27 **“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”**

Introduction

- ✘ This wonderful text from Scripture before us today; the very first words ever recorded from our one and only Triune God provides so many things that we could talk about – all of them very important.
 - ➔ I could talk, for example, about how God created everything that exists in this universe – from the basic physical elements to the most complex creature – in just six 24-hour days.
 - ➔ I could talk about the many ways that this chapter alone refutes the false religion of evolution, including the way that God uses the phrase “according to their kind” 10 times to emphasize that He alone created each and every species that has ever existed from the beginning of time.
 - ➔ Or I could speak to the interesting fact that God is the true source of light since He spoke it into existence on day one, and then waited until the fourth day to create the sun and the moon which many people think of as the source of light.
 - ➔ And it would be very appropriate for me to discuss how the Sabbath Day is truly “holy” – that is unique and set apart from every other day of the week because it is on that day alone that God rested from all of His creating work and reflected back upon the beauty and grandeur of His perfect Creation, just as He desires us to do each Sabbath when we gather for worship still today.
- ✘ I could do all of that, but today is Holy Trinity Sunday. So what does Genesis, chapter one, have to do with the feast honoring the Holy Trinity? Actually it has quite a lot to do with it.
 - ➔ There certainly are trinitarian references and undertones here in these first pages of Scripture. For example, in the beginning is God – the Father, we might say. But with Him, in verse two, is His Spirit – the Holy Spirit; One who is not part of the heaven or earth that God just brought into being; One who is not of the creatures who are created in the days to follow. He is with the Father in the beginning, “hovering” over the new creation.
- ✘ And there is, of course, the Word of God. Ten times we hear the words, “God said...” and six times we hear, “and it was so”. God said, “Let there be!” Let there be light. Let there be an expanse. Let there be vegetation and lights and birds, and swarming creatures, and beasts.
 - ➔ Yes, the Word of God goes forth, and when it does it accomplishes what God has commanded; what He has “said” into existence. John 1:1-3 tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He (you see, the Word of God is a person), He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made.” Later that Word is identified as the Son of God, Jesus.
 - ➔ So, from the beginning there is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; One God in three distinct persons creating the world in His magnificent love and wisdom.

I. The image of God comes from God

- ⊗ Then there is the wonderful phrase in verse 27, “Let us make man...”. Let us.... Who is this “us” that the Bible is talking about here?
 - ➔ Clearly, even right there at the beginning of time, God is not alone; not solitary; not unaccustomed to loving others or aloof in His nature. No, He is the Father. He is the Son. He is the Holy Spirit.
 - ➔ And as one, they act together in creation. Here God has gifted us with the privilege of listening in on a conversation among the three persons of the One God. On this, the sixth day, they now collaborate with each other to make the pinnacle of creation, mankind.
 - ➔ Man in their image. Man who is not alone. Man who loves. Man who will relate to God and love God. Man receiving God’s goodness and righteousness and dominion, and returning thanksgiving, praise, and worship to this Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose nature he is made.
- ⊗ And thus, as we’re told in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that the man should be alone” either. It is not good to be alone in his nature.
 - ➔ As God in His nature is not alone, neither does God make the man in His image to be alone. From eternity, God is not alone; He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, communing with one another in mutual love without beginning or end.
- ⊗ When we think of man not being alone, we most often think of him being made male and female. We think of God considering, as the rest of Genesis 2:18 says, to “make him a helper fit for him”. Yet man is not to be alone in an even more fundamental way, and that is for his life and righteousness.
 - ➔ To be in the image of God is so much more than just to reflect God’s character and attributes. To be in the image of God is to receive from God the very essence of life and righteousness. Just as a mirror depends on a person even to send forth a reflection, like we showed the kids in the children’s sermon, so man depends on the righteousness of God as his own righteousness.
 - ➔ This dependence of Adam on the righteousness of God is at the heart of what it means to be in the image of God. Most important, the image of God in Adam is, Adam’s love of God; his proper fear and honor of God; and his trust in God. Through this love, honor, and trust, Adam receives righteousness from God and then reflects it onto creation when he exercises dominion upon creation; as God’s appointed representative to care for and manage it as God intends.
- ⊗ In the beginning, then, we confess that Adam has an original righteousness. Even this is not a righteousness of his own, however, but a righteousness that comes from God and is reflected in the image of the man, Adam.
 - ➔ To receive and reflect this righteousness of God, Adam is included then in the divine fellowship. As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit commune eternally with one another, when they now create Adam, they invite him to participate in this divine communion. In the living out of this divine, righteous communion of faith, Adam then reflects the righteousness of God and is able to exercise true, good, and beautiful dominion over the rest of creation.

II. The image of God is lost.

- ⊗ Indeed, it is not good for Adam to be alone – not only alone from other men, but alone from God! For if he were to be alone from God, that is separated from His Creator, he could no longer reflect God’s divine righteousness.

- And unfortunately we know that shortly after Adam's creation in the image of God, Adam did turn away from this righteousness, fellowship, and image. He turned away with His God-created companion, Eve to pursue their own imaginary good and evil.
- In that sinful rebellion and search for personal glory, all mankind lost the ability to live by faith in God; lost the perfect love toward one another God had given so graciously; lost the proper relationship with the rest of Creation and became self-centered and sinful in every way.
- Yes, when mankind fell into sin, we lost God's righteousness; we lost the image God we had been blessed with and strictly speaking we therefore lost the saving fellowship with God that He desired and intended for us all.
- ✘ So without some dramatic; earth-altering action from that point, the destiny for all men and women is to be without God; without righteousness; without His image, which means to be alone, and on the path to eternal condemnation and death.
- That's our natural fate now from the point of our conception folks. Psalm 51:5 lays it before us in black and white, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me". So it is that we are conceived and born...to die.

III. The image of God restored.

- ✘ Yet all is not lost. And the Feast of the Holy Trinity points us to the Good News where we are blessed to see the restoration of eternal life given to us; re-created within us, we might properly say, at the Word and work of the Holy Trinity.
- This is not just a Sunday for abstract racking of the brain to figure out how three can be one, or one is three. Rather, this feast today is our joyful celebration of God's powerful work to bring us back to Himself; to restore the image of God inside of us; to reestablish us into the fellowship and togetherness of the divine life that God intended from the very beginning.
- ✘ You are a man. You are a woman. And so, you are made with the unique dignity of the image of God, where you joyfully and humbly depend upon God's life, love, and righteousness in all things.
- It is God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's deepest desire for you to live in His image. So to that end God humbled Himself and became a man to restore you to Himself; to rescue us all; to bring us back into His divine life.
- Where we were alone and without God; wandering the earth without hope in our sin, God took it upon Himself to work out and offer us the remedy without any cost to us.
- ✘ But oh, the cost to God was greater than any of us can ever imagine or understand. Ps 8:5 says of the Son, "You have made Him a little lower than the heavenly beings".
- When Jesus took on human form, although He remained God, He did not use all of His divine characteristics and attributes, so that His human nature was, for a while, lower than the angels or the heavenly beings.
- St. Paul describes this of Jesus in Philippians 2:6-8, "Though He was in the form of God, . . . [He] emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men". Let's pause there for an interesting point. Did you hear how the very God who created us in His image originally, now continues to love us so much, even when we are steeped in sin, so that He willingly took on our human "likeness" (minus the sin of course). Why would He do that?
- We continue with verse eight, "And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross". This is Jesus, the Son of God,

making Himself lower than God for a brief time; choosing not to use all of His divine power so that He can suffer and die on your behalf and mine. This...this is how much our Triune God loves us!

→ In the person of Jesus, He took upon Himself the isolation, the condemnation, and the suffering that belongs to all mankind. He does not leave us alone to suffer eternal wrath. He became like you and bore the condemnation for your sin, and in doing so He reconciled you to God!

✘ Psalm 8:5 continues on to say that after He is made a little lower than God, the Son is “crowned...with glory and honor”. Yes, He rose from the dead and victoriously ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of God, taking on and fully using His divine power forevermore.

→ Now Jesus’ crown of thorns has been replaced with His eternal crown of glory and honor in the threefold Godhead, ruling over us with love and grace, having justified us and reconciled us back to the Father.

✘ You see, this celebration of the Trinity reminds us how God in His love longs to be with us in the image-bearing relationship that He first created and enjoyed with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

→ And in the Son, our Savior, we enjoy that fellowship with the Father already today, as Paul writes in Colossians 3, verses 1 and 3, “You have been raised with Christ.... You have died [to sin], and your life is hidden with Christ in God”. The tenses there are clear – this is an already accomplished fact! When the Son ascended to the Father, He took us with Him; into fellowship with Him, and the Father, by the Spirit.

✘ So rejoice brothers and sisters. For in Christ, the restoration of God’s image in us has already begun, even as we still struggle with sin in this earthly life, for Christ lives in you – baptized as you are – by the Holy Spirit.

→ Therefore the Father welcomes you in love; feeding you the feast of salvation, the feast of victory in His Word and Sacrament – the means by which He, through the Spirit showers you with His grace.

→ Yes, this is your God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; vibrant in life and love for one another, and welcoming of you and me into His vibrancy and love through the merits of the Son. To this Son, Jesus Christ, and to the Father and the Spirit, be all the glory, forever and ever. Amen.