

God made us in His image

Genesis 1:26-31

Sermon for January 23 2022

Introduction

The leaders of this church have decided to study the New City Catechism this year because it is an excellent summary of the most-important Christian truths. One Voice Fellowship is a church of different people who are united by the same Savior. It's important that we have the same mind about what we believe. Today we are looking at Question 4 from the New City Catechism. I will read the question, and then let's read the answer together.

Question 4: How and why did God create us?

God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.

Genesis 1:26-31

26 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."

29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

Let's pray together.

Father, please send the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and truth as I preach. Please open our hearts and minds to your truth, so we can glorify you in everything we do. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Here are the two points for today's message:

Point 1. God made Adam and Eve as man and woman

Point 2. God made them in His image

Point 1. God made Adam and Eve as man and woman

During the first five days of creation, God made the heavens and the earth, the sun and the stars. He made the oceans and the land and filled them with fish and birds. Everything God made was good.

Then God made the first man and the first woman. Verse 26 says:

"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.'"

God said, "let us make man." In Hebrew, the word for "man" is "adam." This word can refer to the first human being named Adam. It can also refer to "mankind" or "human beings." You see in the same verse that God also said, "And let them have dominion..." "Let them" is what God said. God made both men and women in his image, not just Adam. The Hebrew word "adam" in this sentence includes all human beings, just as "the Body of Christ" includes all Christians.

God made both men and women in his image so they could fulfill his command in verse 28: "be fruitful and multiply." God the Creator shared some of his creative power with us. That's one of the blessings of being made in God's image. God made two people, and then blessed them with the ability to make more people. We see in verse 29 that the plants have seeds so they can reproduce. The plants can make more plants to fill the earth. God also put that same power in the man and the woman. But the man and woman do not reproduce like the plants and the animals. Human reproduction is tied to relationship. God made the world in love. God had a good, open, loving relationship with Adam and Eve. And when the man and woman came together in love, they discovered that they could fill the world with more images of God.

These images of God come in two different models, right? Men and women clearly look different. But it is more than skin deep. We become male and female at the moment of conception. Every cell in your body has either male or female programming in the chromosomes.

Chromosomes are like the software inside the hardware of our bodies. Chromosomes are packages of DNA with the programming that determines if you have straight hair or curly hair, if you are tall or short. A human egg contains only an X chromosome. A human sperm contains either an X or a Y chromosome. When the egg is fertilized it has a 50 percent chance of receiving an X chromosome from the sperm, making a baby girl. The egg has a 50 percent chance of receiving a Y chromosome, making a baby boy. So every fertilized egg either has an XX pair, meaning she is a female. Or the egg has an XY pair, meaning he is male.

Verse 28 says that our ability to create children is a blessing. Parenting is also hard work! And sometimes we aren't prepared for the blessing of children. Women sometimes get pregnant when they didn't plan for it. But we must remember that the ability to "be fruitful and multiply" is a very good thing about being men and women.

God made men and women different, but he made us equal in dignity and value. God does not prefer or love one gender more than the other. God made us different so we could more completely display for the world the attributes of God. God divided his image, giving some gifts and blessings to men, others to women. When Adam saw Eve for the first time, he said: "finally, I am complete!"

I want you to hear me say this clearly, my friends: You are not an accident. Maybe your parents were not married when you were born. Maybe your mom did not plan to get pregnant. But it was God who gave you life and a soul. You are not a mistake. God decided if you would get an X chromosome or Y chromosome. God made you a girl or a boy, a woman or a man, because He loves you and wants to bless you.

Some people today are not comfortable or happy with the way God made them. Some people have deep heart wounds that have not healed, and they are looking for peace, comfort, or escape. When our hearts are broken we are tempted to think everything is broken. Sometimes want to change something because we believe change will improve our lives.

I remember being on a three-hour plane trip next to a Jewish lesbian woman. We talked for the entire flight. Because she was Jewish we talked about the Old Testament, and what it was like growing up in a Jewish home. I also shared about my childhood as a Catholic, and being an atheist before I became a follower of Jesus Christ.

It was a fun conversation, and I think she felt safe with me because she told me she was a lesbian after two hours of talking. She said, "I know the Bible says that's wrong. What do you think?" What would you say to her? It's hard, right? Here is what I said. I told her, "God made you a woman because he loves you. God's design is good, and he doesn't make mistakes. I hope you will think about how to be the woman God designed you to be. We all want to be happy. But being in a relationship with another woman cannot bring you the blessings God planned for you. God designed your body, and your heart, and your mind for romantic love with a man. God wants each of us to enjoy his blessings. We can only do that when we live according to his design."

I'm glad we had two hours to talk before we got to that part of the conversation. She wasn't offended or angry with what I shared. I think she could see that my heart was for her and not against her. That's a good thing to remember in these kinds of hard conversations. Are we motivated by love and compassion when we talk to someone who is struggling with their gender or sexuality? Are we also aware of how sin has corrupted all our lives? Straight people are crooked, too, my friends. We all have been affected by the fall.

Sin corrupts everything, distancing us from God and each other. But God provides a path back to his good design. We learn what it means to be made in God's image when we repent of our desire for independence. We need to make God the center and source of truth, not ourselves. We cannot make God in our image. We are made in the image of God. So now let's talk a little more about what "the image of God" means.

Point 2. God made them in His image

The first five books of your Bible were written by Moses. Think about his audience. Moses was in the desert with thousands of former slaves. The Egyptians treated these people like property. The Egyptians used and abused them, like animals. But God had a message for his people in the desert, and for us. In Genesis, God is saying through Moses: "You are not an accident! You are not animals, or worthless slaves! You are men and women and boys and girls made in my image! You have dignity and purpose!"

Do you remember what God said after he made the sea, and the sky, and the sun, and the stars? He said everything he made was "good." After God added human beings to the world He made, what did God say in verse 31? He said it was "very good." We are the best part of God's creation. You are not a monkey with a bigger brain. You are a unique creation, blessed by God to be a blessing.

We read Psalm 8 earlier in the service. Do you remember what the author King David said about human beings?

Psalm 8:3-9

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.
9 O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!"

Do you see what verse 5 says? God made us "only a little lower than God." He also made us higher than the rest of creation. We see that in Psalm 8:6-8.

Maybe this is a helpful way to think about the differences between us and God, and also between us and creation. God is the Creator. God is also a person--three persons, actually. And God is a spirit, He lives forever. Animals are creatures, they are not persons. Animals have bodies but don't have souls. But human beings are both creatures and persons. People have bodies that die and souls that live forever.

God: Person, Creator, Spirit.

Human: Person, creature, spirit and body.

Animal: Creature, body.

My friends, we are God's representatives on earth. We are under God's authority. And God put the earth, plants, and animals under our authority. In Genesis 1:26 and 28 God said that human beings "have dominion" to rule over the world. "Dominion" is related to the word "dominate." Dominate can be a negative word in English, when it describes someone who dominates in a damaging way. Dictators like Kim Jong Un in North Korea dominate people instead of plants and animals. Dictators twist God's design for dominion. They treat their citizens like animals, like the Egyptians did.

But God's intention for our dominion over the earth is help everything and everyone flourish according to God's design. Remember that God told Adam to take care of the garden, and to name the animals. But then sin entered the world, and Adam's son killed his brother. Cain used the strength God gave him to destroy his brother made in God's image. Images are powerful things. Today in North Korea, portraits like this are required in offices, factories, shops, hospitals, classrooms, and homes. These portraits of North Korean leaders are only images, but disrespecting them is a criminal offense. A penalty of one day of hard labor is the punishment if you fail to properly hang the portraits. Some North Koreans have a box under the portrait with a white cloth that is used only for dusting the picture, and for no other purpose. Some families bow to the portraits every morning and in the evening and say greetings to the images. Leaders in oppressive countries like this want everyone to remember who is in charge. They use these images to project and protect authority over other people. But they have forgotten that they are under God's authority.

Do you remember King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon? In the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar required everyone to bow down to a statue of himself. He wanted to receive the worship and honor that belongs to God alone. Nebuchadnezzar, Joseph Stalin, and Kim Jong Un used images of themselves to evoke praise and fear from their people. That is blasphemy. A human being should never seek the praise that belongs to God alone.

We should be like these athletes. Thousands of people in the audience are celebrating them and praising their achievements. What are the athletes communicating when they point up? They are saying, "Don't worship me. Worship the one who made me in His image. God gave me these legs and arms, this mind and these skills." These athletes are reminding everyone that they are not God. They are images of God.

In Acts 10:25–26, the apostle Peter came to visit a Roman military commander. Listen to what happened.
25 "As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him.

26 But Peter pulled him up and said, "Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!"

Peter knew that he was only an image of God. Peter was an apostle and messenger of the good news, and he wrote parts of the Bible. He was an important guy. But Peter had known and walked with Jesus, the only human being who was also God. Peter knew that Jesus is the only human being who can receive worship.

After Jesus died, was buried, and was raised again, this happened in John 20:24–29.

24 "One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (nicknamed the Twin), was not with the others when Jesus came.

25 They told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But Thomas replied, "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side."

26 Eight days later the disciples were together again, and this time Thomas was with them. The doors were locked; but suddenly, as before, Jesus was standing among them. "Peace be with you," he said.

27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!"

28 "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed.

29 Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who believe without seeing me."

Thomas and the other disciples worshipped Jesus because He is God. The disciples also knew that Jesus was a human being, born in the image of God. Jesus created all things, but was willing to be born as a creature. Friends, the sin of human beings damaged and twisted God's good design for us and the world. We forget that we are under God's authority and put ourselves in God's place. We dominate and hurt God's creation and creatures, instead of protecting and nourishing.

But God had a rescue plan for us! Jesus the Son of God was born with chromosomes and DNA and a human body, like everyone one of us. He lived a perfect and holy life, that none of us could ever do. And he died a sacrificial death on the cross, to heal and forgive our sin. When we trust in Jesus, we are restored to a right relationship with God the Father. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to say no to sin, and to live in a way that honors God who made us in his image. Then, when people see the good works we do, we can tell them: "Don't praise me! Praise and worship God who made me in His image, and saved me to live for His glory."

I think a great way to finish this sermon would be to read together again the answer to New City Catechism Question 4: How and why did God create us? God created us male and female in his own image to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory.

Let's pray together now:

Father in heaven, thank you for making us in wisdom and love. Sometimes we are ungrateful for the way you made us. Sometimes we are frustrated with the circumstances we are in. Holy Spirit, show us our pride and unbelief. Help us believe that your design for the world and for human beings is good. Help us live according to your design, to love others, and bring you glory in all we do. We pray in the name of our Savior Jesus. Amen.