

# God's Image—Where His Glory Shines

Genesis 1:26-28

Halifax: 18 May 2014

## Introduction:

Today we come to our second sermon in our new sermon series in the Book of Genesis.

- Last week, I did an overview of the first chapter into chapter 2 verse 3.
- I showed you that when God first created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form and void, and it was enveloped in darkness...

The creation account shows how God, in the space of six days called a blob into being and then took the blob and made it into a beautiful habitation full of light and life for us!

- It ought to make us very grateful to see how He thought of us the whole time He was creating—how he prepared the earth as a place for us to live...
  - Remember, He does not need light and water and air and plants—but He made all of this for us—He prepared the earth as our home and then He made us!
- I also encouraged you that this creating by a process instead of all at once helps us to see the way He does His saving work...
  - When He comes to us in our sin, we are a shapeless, lifeless, blob in the darkness, but when His work is completed, we will be a beautiful people who are full of light and life.
- His work of creation all redounds to His glory!
  - It is so amazing to consider that in His amazing imagination, He came up with all this—that there should be such a thing as light—and such a thing as colour and taste and such a thing as people and animals and water...
    - He came up with all of this!
    - He is so amazing—He is to be worshipped!
      - And that is what the seventh day of the week is all about...
        - We saw that on the seventh day when God had finished His work of creation, He set that day apart...
        - He made it a holy day for us to consider His works and His glory and to commune with Him with thanksgiving.
- We will plan to look at more about the Sabbath next week...
  - But this week I want to focus on the apex of God's creation—the creation of man...
  - We are His master-work—the summit of His creative activity!
  - As Calvin says in a sermon on this passage,
    - “Although the sun and the moon are such noble creatures that they appear to be divine, although the heavens also have an appearance which astonishes and delights men, although the great diversity of fruits and other things that we see here on earth are designed to declare unto us a divine majesty, the fact remains that if we compare all of that with man, we will find in man much grander and more exquisite features.”
      - How true it is—we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

So let's get underway with our scripture reading—Genesis 1:26-31

**Genesis 1:26-31:** Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”<sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over

every living thing that moves on the earth.”

<sup>29</sup> And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.

<sup>30</sup> Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so.<sup>31</sup> Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy Word.

I want to begin by looking at:

## **I. The amazing declaration in our text that God made man in His own image-**

A. There is a building up to this in the narrative...

1. As I pointed out last week, there is a kind of a “drumroll” in verse 26...

- because here, for the first time, the triune God begins to converse with Himself—to deliberate about what He is going to do next.

- There is council among the three person of the Godhead.

- This alerts us to a change—that something even more extraordinary is going to happen!

a. Already, He has called the earth into being, has created light—and He has made the sun and moon and the billions and billions of stars.

- Already, He has called the earth to bring forth all kinds of amazing plants and animals and creatures of the sea...

- And all of this is very amazing and very grand—

b. And then we hear what God says!

- He says, “Let Us make man in Our own image!”

- He is going to make that which is somehow patterned after Himself!

- An image, you know, is a picture or a representation of something.

- You take a picture of yourself and that picture is an image of you—it looks like you—it is not you, but it is you in such a way that you can point at it and say, “that’s me.”

- c. And God is making the staggering statement that He is going to make man in His own image—
    - The image of this God who is so amazing that He came up with the whole idea that there would be light and life and stars and oceans and DNA—it is all His idea...
      - And the God who is so great that He called it all to come into being in six days—
      - And now He is making us in His own image!
        - It is a stupendous thing!
    - Man is going to be, out of all that God has made, the place where His glory will be seen!
      - Yes, there are great galaxies and great oceans and whales and mighty cedar trees and majestic mountains and forests...
      - But man is made in His very own image to display His glory before Him and before each other.
        - What a privilege!
        - What an honour!
        - The very image of the invisible God!
2. Moses is in awe as he writes about this...
- a. See how Moses is staggered that God should do such a thing...
    - In verse 27, he repeats himself like a man in a stupor from amazement:
      - **Gen 1:27: So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**
    - It is as if he is saying, “God actually did this—He actually made man in His own image—in His own image He created him, male and female He created them.”
  - b. Let this awe of amazement capture you!
    - Let it sink in that the God who made heaven and earth made one being within His creation in His own image...
      - One being—one special place—where His glory would shine!
- B. Consider what it is to be God’s image.
- 1. It certainly does not mean that we look like Him in our physical appearance...
    - a. No, no—He is Spirit and we are flesh.
      - God was around long before there was anything like a body or like ground for anyone to walk on...
        - He is transcendent to His creation—
        - He is the only being who is self-existing.
        - He is not confined to a body—He is not a part of this creation...it is all the product of His imagination.

- b. There is a great difference between an image and the thing that it is an image of...
    - You might have a very good picture of you, but there is a great deal of difference between the picture that looks like you and real you!
      - We are talking about a whole different level of existence...even if it is a video image that can talk—or a holograph that has a three dimensional appearance...
        - It is still only an image and very much less than the real thing.
        - God is spirit and we are flesh...
  - c. But don't get me wrong—our bodies are part of the image just as the photo paper is part of your image in a photograph...
    - Your arm, for example, when it picks something up, is a picture of God moving things by His strength...
      - And when you hug someone with your arm or you give someone a present—it is a picture of what God does all the time...
      - Or when you reach out and rescue someone from danger—or punch out an enemy to protect a victim...
        - It is a picture of the “arm” of the LORD which is not really an appendage, but something far greater that corresponds to an arm—
        - It is the “arm” that separated the dry land from the water and the “mighty arm” that delivered Israel out Egypt.
        - It is an arm that cannot be seen or touched, but that does things that are similar to what our arms do—only on a much grander scale!
    - So your body is a necessary part of the image of God...
      - We could do the same thing with your eyes and your ears and your feet—you get the point—
        - It is all part of that which makes up the image of God.
2. And furthermore, it should be observed that we are God's image not only as individuals, but also in our corporate aspect as human beings...
- God is three persons, and there is beautiful interaction between them...
    - There is equality, but with economic subordination—so that the man is head of the woman, and that they are parents to their children...
  - And part of the image of God has to do with this diversity shared in commonality...
    - And it has to do with how we live in communion with one another, delighting in each other, sharing with each other, being a blessing to each other, communicating with each other, loving each other...
      - This is all part of our being the image of God...
      - Again, as the image, it is on an entirely different scale than the unity and diversity that is in God—
        - but it is a true reflection of the glorious God who made us.

- Think about how amazing it is that God made us so that we could relate to one another in meaningful ways...
    - Even that He made male and female the way He did—
      - It is a just a marvellously splendid thing!
      - Sin has spoiled our relationships, but we were not created in sin and how excellent it is that we have such relationships...
        - They are beautifully reflective of the glory of God!
        - He made us to be the place where His glory shines forth!
          - It is a tremendous thing indeed, isn't it?
3. The theologians have a helpful way of describing what we share with God...
- a. They speak of it as His *communicable* attributes—the ones He is able to share with us...
    - These, of course, are contrasted with the *incommunicable* attributes that He cannot share with us.
      - For example, God cannot share His self-existence and His eternity with us—by the very fact that we are created!
        - We cannot be unchangeable—because we are made and after our first parents were created, we are brought into being by the birth process...
      - Nor does He share with us His infinity—we don't have the capacity to know everything, nor do we have all power.
        - We have power and knowledge which are both communicable attributes, but we do not have infinite power and knowledge because God's infinite nature is incommunicable...
  - b. So let's look at some of the communicable attributes that God shares with us.
    - 1) Take knowledge, which I have already mentioned—we can know things—really understand them—
      - with limitations—but still, we can know and understand on our level and it is reflective of God's knowledge...
        - We can distinguish between a tree and a rock, and we learn things about both of them by research and gain true understanding.
      - We can know the truth...and we have the ability to talk about things—both to write and to speak to God and to each other...
        - We are so used to all this—but it is really a very remarkable thing—and it is all what God gave us!
    - 2) And we have a moral nature—we care about other people and we want to help them (I am talking about before the fall—but there is still much that remains of this)...
      - We have the ability to give things to each other that will bless each other—to make things for each other and to say things to each other

and to write things for each other and to touch each other in ways that are pleasing to each other...

- In other words, we are able to love each other—and we know we ought to do this and we want to do it...
- This is what it means to be righteous—to do right by each other—to do good and to love each other as God does within the trinity.
  - It is a marvellous ability!

3) And then there is this ability we have to recognise God—to know Him and to worship Him and to obey Him...

- We can see His beauty and we can understand His will, and, unlike the animals who eat their food and don't know where it came from, we know!
- We are able to give thanks and to offer our lives to Him in devotion and love.

4) There are many ways to look at these communicable attributes...

- We can think, we can reason, we have wisdom and understanding, we can appreciate beauty, and just that we have power to do things...
- God even gave us the ability to manage the rest of His creation and to reproduce—to procreate...
- In verse 28, it says:
  - **Gen 1:28: Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”**
- God has given us what are really god-like powers—
  - Just think of it—we can actually make more people—a lot more people—who are also in God's image...
    - This is reflective of His ability to create...
  - And we have almost magical powers where we can take certain seeds—put them in the ground, and watch them come up as crops—a field of corn, or potatoes—a vineyard—an apple orchard—it's amazing!
  - And God gave us the ability to dig and to arrange and to build things and manufacture things and to organise...
    - and to do it all in beautiful, helpful, and meaningful ways.
    - He endowed us with power in the likeness of His power—but all on a creaturely level...

TRANS> All of this is part of what it is to be God's image!

- He made us to be the place where His glory is seen the most in all of creation!
  - You can see why Moses makes such a big deal about this.

## II. Being God's image has huge implications for us

A. That we were made in His image calls for two things in particular:

1. First, it calls for extreme gratitude!

- a. The very idea that God has set us apart from all His other creatures to be His own image bearers!
  - It is the highest of privileges!
  - We owe everything to Him!
- b. Over and over again, failure comes to man when he ceases to be grateful.
  - As soon as he starts to complain as if God has somehow mistreated him or done wrong to him—
    - or as if God has not done enough—
    - As soon as he does that, he loses his way—he loses all perspective.
- c. When Moses tells Israel the reason that God's curse will come upon them in the years to come, he says:
  - **Deut 28:47: Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything,**
    - That is simply ingratitude—it ruins us!
      - It ruins us because we miss God—and God is everything!
  - And likewise, when Paul wants to explain how the nations ended up in their foolish idolatry and ignorance of God, he puts it like this...
    - **Rom 1:21: they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful...but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.**
      - When you stop seeing that God has given you all things, you soon stop seeing God at all.

➤ So the first thing that being made in God's image calls for is gratitude...

2. The second thing it calls for is total dedication to exhibit Him well!

- If He created us to be His image bearers where His glory shines forth—more than in any other part of His creation—
  - If we have this exalted place among all the creatures...
    - We ought to step up to the plate and do what we were made to do!
    - It is our duty to let the light shine in us—
      - to let it be seen by our good works as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount—that the Father may be glorified!
      - to do beautiful deeds in a beautiful way, reflective of Him.
- If we had even half a lick of sense, we would be eager for His glory to shine forth from our lives!
  - We would see that this is our chief end—that there is nothing else like it—it is excellence of the highest order!
    - It is the most noble of noble things and we would be ashamed to do anything less than that.

- And of course this also has to do with taking dominion and subduing the earth—we are to do that in beautiful, useful, kind ways that glorify God.
  - We are to plant things and make things and produce things for each other—from diamonds to houses, from crops to automobiles, from smart phones to steak suppers on the barbecue!
- We should join with Moses in saying:
  - **Ps 90:17: And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us! And establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.**
  - We are here, as God’s image bearers, to take dominion of the earth and to subdue it for each other and for God’s glory.

TRANS> So being made in God’s image calls for these two things that we have seen... extreme gratitude and extreme dedication to letting His light shine in us...

B. That we fail miserably calls for a response from us...

- I don’t have to prove to you that we have failed miserably, do I?
  - Look around you!
    - Do you see the beauty of our glorious creator shining forth in the human race?
    - Do you see the love and purity and goodness and justice?
    - Do you see people out for the true good of all their neighbours?
    - Do you see people delighting in God and giving thanks to Him in heartfelt worship?
  - And now look at your own heart...
    - You know about the malice in there—the bitterness—the immoral thoughts that you would be ashamed for people to know about...
    - You know about the things you say that you never should have said—the manipulative words or the hostile words, the cutting words and the boastful words, the divisive words and the gossiping words...
    - You know about the neglect of others’ needs.
    - You know about your own lack of true gratitude toward God...
  - And we are made in God’s image!
- 1. This calls for humility and confession—such as we see in Psalm 51—that great penitential Psalm where we say things like,
  - **Psalm 51:3-4: For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.**
  - You and I both constantly come short of the glory of God—our sin is always before us—
    - And ultimately, it is directed against the most high God—
      - Don’t kid yourself—that is what it comes down to—we are not right with God—our sin is always against Him.



- It should greatly humble us, but that is not all!
- 2. That we fail to shine for Him also calls for fear—even terror—until we have obtained pardon...
  - God is repulsed when He looks upon us as His image—and He sees corruption and vileness and vanity instead of glory...
    - I mean, think about it! We were made in the image of God and look at us!
    - He is perfectly just to sentence us to death and eternal misery...
      - Our whole race has turned away from Him—broken our relationship—to go our own way.
  - If we have any sense about us at all, we will be terrified that we have turned away from Him, Hebrews 10:30-31 says:
    - **Heb 10:30-31: For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.”<sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**
  - We will hear the cry of John the Baptist to:
    - **Matthew 3:7: “Flee from the wrath to come.”**
    - For we know that **“our God is a consuming fire.” (Heb 12:29)**
- And seeing the predicament we are in...
- 3. We ought then to turn to the Lord in desperation and plead for mercy!
  - Like the tax collector, we will stand afar off and we beat our breast and we will say:
    - **Luke 18:13: ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’**
  - And as we are taught in Psalm 51, we will say:
    - **Psalm 51:1-2: Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.**
  - What else can we do?
    - Here we were made in the image of God—and look at us!

TRANS> And there is some very good news for those who truly want God’s mercy.

- The good news is that:

### **III. Jesus Christ came to restore us as image bearers who truly exhibit God.**

A. He started a kingdom of perfect image bearers of God...

1. It is called the kingdom of righteousness—because it is a kingdom of people who have been made right...
  - And it is called the kingdom of God because it is a kingdom of people who have been restored to God from whom we fell away.
    - Jesus is the One who started this kingdom in this sinful world!
- a. Isaiah prophesied that He would come with these words in Isaiah 9:6-7:

- **Isa 9:6-7: For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.**
  - When Isaiah says “us”—unto *us* a child is born—he is talking about himself and God’s people to whom God promised this righteous kingdom.
    - He shows that God’s Son is the One who comes to establish it.
    - This was something that nobody else could do.
- b. When Jesus came into the world, John the Baptist announced that the kingdom of God or the kingdom of righteousness was at hand.
- He said that because Jesus the king had come!
  - And then Jesus came showing by signs and wonders that He was the One the prophets had said would come—the Son of David—the Messiah—the Christ—the anointed One—who would establish God’s righteous kingdom forever.
2. He is the first member of this kingdom—and how lovely He is!
- We read about His loveliness in Hebrews 1:3 where He was called:
    - **Heb 1:3: the brightness of *His* [God’s] glory and the express image of His person!**
      - You see that His beauty consists of being the perfect image of God!
  - He is the very Son of God who has come in human flesh, and He is just what we were created to be—the image of God in human flesh!
    - No one ever spoke like He spoke!
    - No one ever gave himself for others the way He gave Himself for others!
    - No one ever loved the way He loved.
    - No one ever worshipped God and obeyed God the way He did!
  - While He was on earth, the Father spoke from heaven a few times, and when He did, it was to tell how pleased He was with Him.
    - He said it at least two times as recorded by Matthew—
      - In Matthew 3:17 at His baptism, in Matthew 17:5 at the transfiguration—
        - **Mt 3:17: And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**
      - In Him, the Father saw His image undefiled, undefaced, uncorrupted!
        - He was the only man who had ever lived so as to be a member of the kingdom of righteousness—so He is the first!
3. But He was not sent to be a one man kingdom of righteousness.
- What kind of kingdom would that be?

- No, He was sent to establish a whole kingdom of image bearers in whom the light of God's glory would shine!
  - As Titus 2:14 says,
    - **[He] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.**
    - And Romans 8:29 says that God chose certain people to give to His Son to be in His kingdom...and that He:
      - **Rom 8:29: predestined [these people] to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.**
      - They are going to be like Jesus—conformed to God's perfect image!
- B. There was much that Jesus had to do to bring this about because His people are such sinners.
1. First, He had to go to the cross to secure the pardon of His peoples' sins
    - In Mark 10:45, Jesus says of Himself:
      - **Mark 10:45: For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**
      - This is talking about how He had to go to the cross to pay for our sins!
        - We had no way to pay for them—how could we?
        - But He went to the cross to bear the curse for us so that instead of being condemned and cast into Hell, we could be members of His righteous kingdom.
    - Isaiah explained this very clearly when He said,
      - **Isa 53:5-6: But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**
    - Laying our iniquity on Him means that it came crushing down upon Him—the weight of the sin of the world!
      - It was a horrendous thing, but it was also a marvellous act of love!
      - Isn't that marvellous—Jesus bore our sins—He was charged with them all and sentenced to their just penalty...
        - all that we might be forgiven—
        - all that we might be accepted into His kingdom of righteousness!
    - He has already finished this work—as it says in Hebrews 1...
      - Hebrews 1:3 again...
        - After it says that He was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person,
          - It says that He sat down after He had **by Himself purged our sins.**
          - He did all that was necessary to secure the pardon of all who come to Him...
- That is the first thing He had to do—and He has done it...

2. Then He has to call us and make us willing to come to be restored.
  - If He doesn't, we will never come.
  - In 1 Cor 1:9, Paul tells us that God is the one who calls us and brings us into union with Jesus and all His benefits.
    - **1 Cor 1:9: God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**
    - To have fellowship with Jesus means to have a share in His kingdom and in the saving work He accomplished for His people!
      - Jesus said that He would not cast out anyone who comes to Him.
  - The problem is, though, unless He has made you willing,
    - you don't even want His righteous kingdom—you might want to be forgiven, but you won't want to come and be a part of His kingdom...
    - It is a very foolish thing to reject, but that is what you will keep on doing unless He draws you in because of your sin...
      - In John 6, He explains that God's powerful drawing is the only way anybody will ever come...
        - **Joh 6:44: No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.**
      - He makes us willing to come by the working of His Spirit so that all the praise goes to God...
        - In 2 Thess 2:13-14, Paul shows this when he speaks of how God saved the Thessalonians:
          - **But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, <sup>14</sup> to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**
        - You see what the end result is—
          - He chooses us and causes us to believe the truth so that we obtain the glory that God created us for!
3. Once we are brought into His kingdom by believing—then He gets on with the work of renewing us into His glorious image...
  - We read about this in 2 Cor 3:18 which we read earlier—it says:
    - **2 Cor 3:18: But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**
    - God's image is being restored in us as we look upon Jesus Christ...
      - We are being changed into that glorious image!
  - Colossians 3:10 says this of us—that we have:
    - **Col 3:10: put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him!**
  - And 1 John 3:2 assures us that Jesus will complete this work...

- **1 John 3:2: Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**
  - Isn't that fantastic!
    - He is going to make us completely like Jesus!
- As we saw before in Romans 8:29, He has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son...
  - Isn't that a wonderful thing?

**Conclusion: So come to Him and be what you were created to be—**

- An image bearer from which God's glory beautifully shines!
- You can't do this yourself—but God has made provision for you in Christ.
  - Jesus has gone ahead of us to start this kingdom of righteous image bearers...
  - He has gone to the cross to secure our pardon so that we can enter this kingdom, even though we are sinners...
  - And once we do, He works in us powerfully until at the last day when God's image is perfectly renewed in us.
- What are you messing around for!
  - This is what life is all about!