

## **Week 2:: God created Adam and Eve...**

If you were here last week - there was a health warning for this series - the risk is as we go through the story of the bible we engage our heads but not our hearts - so that's why - last Sunday we said we need to look **back** at the bible - to see the promises God has made in history - to look **up** to see Christ - and what he's done for us and look **forward** to the joy set before us. Today we are going to use our heads! And I want to say - persevere because the question we will really be asking... is what is THE purpose of your life... Why were you made?

Have any of you listened to the News Quiz on Radio 4 - they find mis-prints of adverts and silly things...

One of the ones they read out was for Christian Union event at a University saying: come and find the meaning of life... with free lunch 1pm at the student bar! And everybody laughed - because it was such a given that no-one could explain the meaning of life over lunch, in a student bar!

I think Genesis 1&2 says some purposeful things for us... and these 2 chapters tell the same story twice... up to 2v3 is one set of events... Then you notice chapter 2v4 starts:

*4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.*

And that second story of creation (in chapter 2) really focusses on the story of Adam and Eve. We're dipping into both stories...

Because we're not quite starting at the start - so let me underline some key ideas from Genesis 1:

### **God created everything OUT of NOTHING...**

So in the beginning was not nothing - but there was only God... and God made everything that is.

**God created by SPEAKING...** this is very important - because his voice and his Spirit are always linked... His word is powerful And as God speaks - things immediately happen - God achieves his goals by speaking!

**God created good for good** - at the end of each day God sees what he has made and declares that it is good (v4, v10, v12, v18, v21, v25! At the time the bible was written - as an explanation the violence of life it was commonly believed that the various gods made humanity (either as slaves) to do their work of cultivating the world or as a by-product of some terrible argument between different warring gods.

It's commonly believed in our time that the world is not good - creation is neither good nor bad - it just is.

So what were we made for? 2 things!

**We were made to display the glory of God.**

**We were made for relationship with God.**

Image and Likeness - what does it mean?

### **1. We were made to display the glory of God.**

It's clear from the amount of time spent on talking about humanity (and day 6) in comparison with the other days, and the fact that the second creation story really does just focus on humanity that making people is THE centre of God's creation. The description of Eden with gold and resins and rivers - describes a world made for humanity. Not just functional world with materials to make food and shelter - but with beauty and resources for trade and craftsmanship.

But it really clear in ch1:v26 when *God said, 'Let us make mankind in our **image**, in our **likeness**, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'*

*So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.*

So what does it mean to be made in the **image** and **likeness** of God. Most Christians say: it means we are different but united - as men and women, and we create and make and we are self aware - we are high functioning beings - more than just animals.

All of that is true - but probably the most important thing about being in the image and likeness of God is about our status in the world... is that we are like mirrors of God's glory... that as creation, as the angels look at humanity - they see a reflected glory...

The reason why the Pharaoh's in Egypt or the Caesars in Rome, and most other emperors at the time of the bible's history were worshipped as god - was because they were considered to be THE image of God - god's representative on earth! So made in the image of God meant to rule as god (because that one individual was the son of god) - the living embodiment of divinity.

Now what is so different between every other culture at the time and the world of the Israelites - is that every other culture held that just one person (nearly always a man) was THE offspring of their god to their generation.

The bible overthrows that and says: NO! Everyone was made to be image and likeness of God! Collectively, humanity images God!

That's why Moses told the people not to desire a king - because they were ALL the image and likeness of God... And this is much more familial than just saying we share some characteristics with God! We were made to be the children of God and to be his representatives on the earth.

In some ways it's what we do that shows we are the image of God: Look at chapter 2:  
*5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth[a] and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was **no one to work the ground**,*

god never intended humanity to maintain the world as a museum - we were always intended to make something of the world... to bring change... but there were always restrictions...

*15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden **to work it and take care of it.**  
16 And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'*

*2:19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.*

The naming of the animals is a god-like action - an act of ruling and caring... working it and taking care of it.

This is why we feel a burden for our lives to count for something. Do you feel like you want your life to leave its mark? Almost all of us do - don't we? That might be why you work hard, it might be why your desperate to be a parent, or a grandparent, or desperate to be intensely creative or have something to show for yourself. It might be why you feel such an intense loss - if some of those desires haven't materialised - if your career hasn't quite taken off how you would have liked, or how

you handle things when your children misbehave... because you feel like you're not doing what you are cut to do in life - you feel like you are robbed of life's purpose in some way.

All of us have a thirst for cultivation... even the people who play computer games all day long... the most popular computer game franchise in the world (until recently) was Sim City... where you start with a blank canvas and make a city, or a world... in a weird way it expressing our desire to cultivate.

Only after chapter 3 - when God curses the world in response to our sin does work become hard and unfruitful. But even now we are still making something of the world, still pushing to leave our mark.

Human culture - bears its name from this idea of cultivation... its like (Gemma in the lab grows stuff) she grows cultures... something bigger from something small...

We still have the mindset that there is a great divide between the sacred and the secular - I remember hearing of a pastor who told a judge in his congregation that the most significant work he did was teach the Sunday school. Now on one level that's true - there is a propriety for sharing the gospel - which is excellent... but that ought not diminish all other work to the level of the insignificant.

After all, as the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper once wrote: there is not one square inch of this earth over which Christ... does not say - this is mine. And when he said he meant it - and became Prime Minister of Holland for a time!

And that includes your nappy changing table, it includes your boss, it includes your garden, it includes your TV. And as such you have enormous freedom to experience pleasure in sport, to appreciate the arts, have fun with friends, make things that are beautiful, cook things that taste good... as such you are making something of the world - in bringing form and order from chaos. You are making culture. And that is what you were made to do. Indeed that you make culture is almost inevitable - but the question is - what is the kind of culture that you are making... does it image God. Because the culture that Adam makes is constrained by God's word... *2:16 And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'*

And after the fall - And when we were cast out of Eden - we became a cursed rebel breed - fatherless. Failing in our most basic purpose to be the children of God! The culture we began to create opposed God... Cain worships inappropriately - or the Tower of Babel is a celebration of godless design.

Through the rest of the bible's story - there is longing for this reinstated glory - a recognition that the culture humans create is so tainted by sin and often is made in flat rejection of God. In our imagining - our distorted culture images distortions of God. So all the way through the O.T. there is a question: when will humanity ever do what we were made to do - and display God's glory?

And its only when Jesus arrives - as John boldly says in John 1 - those around him didn't just see that reflected glory - of the perfect man - a new Adam... they say the glory itself... *14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Its only Christ who perfectly rules as God's representative. But when we are joined to Him in faith union we also are children of God... and only now as Christ commissions us to live distinctively Christian lives that once again we are called to image God by making culture that is utterly altered by our faith - once again the mirror reflects glory to the world. Our faith in Christ cannot help but change how we create culture. We want the stories we tell our children to be reflections of reality.

We treat people differently in the supermarket - because we see the staff stacking the shelves as people with value -

Because we see in a shelf stacker at Tesco more image of God than we do when we stand on the edge of the coast or the top of a mountain to admire God's handiwork - we treat a shelf stayer differently because of their imagedness of God.

we have a different ethic in our approach to class, and ethnicity, towards abortion, euthanasia, politics, to adoption, to parenting, our approach to the internet, to social media, to conversations about Jesus, to work - to life - because we realise we are now able to image Christ. And this is why we were made. This is why we were saved. This is how we live. This is why we aren't just Christians in church - but our faith is the primary influence of who we are outside church.

But this is immeasurably complex. to display the glory of God... an to figure out not just what things are good at doing that - but figure out which this I am able to do we'll - is immeasurably hard. It is a life long goal to figure out how imagine Christ changes how we live...

## 2. We were made for relationship with God...

The relationships within Genesis 1 and 2 are key to understanding the rest of the bible - and really appreciating who God is - and what God has done!

In chapter 1:

God speaks clearly to human beings commissioning them to be god's ambassadors on the earth... in v28-30 he gives clear instructions about how humanity is to live... and even in the rest of day 7 there is a sense that everything is where it should be. God has spoken and humanity is living within God's word.

There is the description of God's breath (his Spirit) in chapter 2:7 forming Adam - Setting Adam apart in much the same way Jesus does with the disciples in in John 21 - that we saw a few weeks ago.

And there are hints throughout this passage... in chapter 3:8 God is walking through the garden - that God is so close to his people - enjoying his creation. Its rather like the description of Aslan, in the Narnia books - strolling around, singing everything into life... But this idea that God is at the centre of his creation is absolutely fundamental to the way we think... and different from how almost everybody else thinks... and this is huge! It changes everything...

Because - think about the world... the universe... the universe contains both people (the **personal**) and **impersonal** things - the stuff; like trees and water, and movement and all the natural laws... what we call MATTER.

Now which of those things are more important - more significant - which explains the other one? Most secular ways of looking at the world says the matter (the impersonal stuff is most important) because people (the personal) are only the products of matter - if you want to know why we love - the impersonal will explain it. if you want to know where we came from, if you want to ask questions of why we do what we do - then look at the natural world - the IMPERSONAL explains the PERSONAL. To most scientists and philosophers, to most teachers in school - the primary importance of the impersonal goes without saying. No one questions it?

But if you think like that what happens to your understanding of life - and relationships, and people and purpose, and hope and peace - if this is your **foundational** way of looking at the world. Let me read you something the English Philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote...

*Man is the product of causes which had no pre-vision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental*

*collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.*

Do you see what he's saying - because of the primacy of the IMPERSONAL everything will die! All humans will die. And because everything is ONLY matter - nothing about human experience is ultimately purposeful! The foundational answer to any serious question - is: THERE is no fundamental reason. We are just hopelessly drifting in space.

And it is leading to a redefinition of the nature of humanity as a just a lowly accident - a freak of nature that redefines all our ethics that leads to every other kind of social ill!

Friends - does that not cause your heart to weep - when he writes that... because this is the belief of our age...

But Gen 1&2 I know we think science makes this non-credible, Genesis 1 isn't interested in answering scientific questions particularly... but one of the KEY things we are to see from Genesis 1 - is that the IMPERSONAL - is lower the PERSONAL.

The reason why anything exists at all - is because human beings are made in the image of God. Those feelings of love are not some byproduct of an animistic urge - they are the foundation blocks of why anything else exists at all. That you and I were made for God, and made for one another to image God is the great and only alternative to the hopelessness that surrounds us.

This is the great lie of humanism that says - in the end the physical world will outlive us all... it wont. You've never looked upon a mortal human being... because all of us - live on to eternity... heaven and hell are real. The rest of creation doesn't outlive us... and we cant find answers to our existential longings from examining creation - thats looking to explain the personal from the impersonal.

The reason its the great lie - is because Genesis 1:1 - in the beginning God - before there was anything, because there was nay stuff at all - God was and is and is to come. Before the Impersonal was made - there was God (a personal NOT impersonal God) - three persons living one another!

You and I image the Trinity!

Have you ever thought how dark it would be at night if there was no moon and no stars art night. To declare the glory of God's greatness - he made our planet, he made our sun... he put that sun in a galaxy along with (not like 10 other stars) - 300 billion stars. But he couldn't bear to just make one galaxy to declare his greatness - he made 100 billion of them... thats roughly 70 billion, trillion stars. With countless planets. Sometimes I stare at a star at night and think - the photons of light have been travelling for up to a thousand years before they happen reach our planet... make it through our atmosphere, into my back garden and hit my eye. And that makes me feel very small...

And yet -God made all these stars and yet - you know how astonishingly huge space is, how unimaginably big these numbers are... right now - they are just the nightlight for the pinnacle of my creation that actually image me.

And thats You! The Personal is greater than the impersonal - You carry more worth than any of those stars...

And you were made for relationship with God. And if you don't know him - you are denying the central purpose for which you were made!

And that changes how you think about everything... but 2 things stand out...

### **1. See the importance of God's love!**

I said near the start God creates good for good. The only thing he says in creation that is NOT good is in chapter 2v18 where Adam is alone - that is not good - his creation is incomplete because by making ONE man God has not 'imaged' himself... God is Trinity, that's why Adam alone cannot image God... because Adam alone cannot love.

See - this is really important... in our day lots of people might say - God is love, and assume something about God's loveliness. In fact why is love such an important quality at all?

A Muslim does not say about God - that he is love? A Muslim says: Allah is great, says Allah is merciful, says Allah is all powerful. But he is NOT love! Why not? Because before anything was made - who did Allah love? Allah is unity, before creation - there is nothing for him to love.

We, as Christians, only speak of a God of love, because we worship God who is Trinity who has always been Trinity. Our God is truly a God of love because he has always had someone to love! Love has always defined all of his relationships for all eternity.

And if the personal is centre - if the personal is foundational to everything - that means material stuff ought not at the centre of our lives in place of relationships...

Actually this explains why love is foundational to our society, foundational to expectations of life, our sense of wholeness and well being - or what it is to be a human - this is why our society values what it values... because we are made in the image of a God who eternally is love! This is why we have marriage - because we are made in the image of God - who makes and keeps covenant promises!

### **2. How you relate to God!**

Everything that has been made - all of it is just the backdrop to your relationship with God... Most of us (and I include myself in this) have think about this entirely the wrong way round most of the time... for most of us: Our lives, things that are tangible, solid, in front of us are the things that most important and valuable to us most of the time - to which we bolt God on to... so we pray - God help this situation, God I need hero with us, God please heal so and so... And we relate to God to call him to act into the material world. That's not wrong - but it ought not be centre, because...

The personal matters more than the impersonal... In the end it's your relationship with God that will make sense of the rest of life - not the other way round. God didn't save you from sin to make your circumstances easier - but to restore a relationship... This is why sin is so serious... because it doesn't merely transgress a rule God establishes - what Adam does, what we do - is deny a relationship. In sin we doubt God's goodness, we ruin a relationship - the primary relationship that makes sense of life. This is why forgiveness is central to what the gospel achieves...

This is what it all achieves... this is what it was all for... everything was made for the glory of God - that you might relate to him and know him.