September 12

Happy Monday, everyone.

Lately I’ve been pondering what exactly it means to be created “in the image of God.” This is how it is recorded in Genesis:

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).

This is an intentional and culminating act of creation by the Creator, but what exactly does it mean?

I think to understand this, we first have to ask, “What is the image of God?” Note that this is not the same as asking “What does God look like?”

To try and understand these questions, and perhaps try to get at an answer, it’s important to start with who God is in these Creation passages. In our mind’s eye, we tend to think that God the Father, looking like some great bearded old man, reached out and created mankind. This is how the great Renaissance painter Michelangelo imagined it in his painting on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel:

I suppose that if I let my hair and beard grow and wore a really long t-shirt, I would look like a balder and less muscular version of this and would come close to bearing the physical image of God, at least as Michelangelo envisioned Him. The fact is, however, that nothing could be further from the truth.
To start with, the Hebrew word used for “God” in the Creation story is *elohiym* (pronounced el-oh-heem). As we have discussed before, and without getting too technical, this word is what’s called a “plural intensive,” meaning that it refers to a singular thing comprised of more than one part. Think of a flock of birds. The word “flock” is singular, but the flock is comprised of more than one bird. That is what the word “elohiym” means. In referring to God, it refers to Father, Son and Spirit. The three persons of the Trinity, all present together in eternity, and all present together at Creation. Now we’re getting somewhere.

So, as we begin to understand this, we start with the understanding that we bear the image of God the Father, and the image of God the Son, and the image of God the Holy Spirit. And that image is decidedly not physical.

Tomorrow: God steps back.

IHS,

Pastor Lou

**September 13**

Grace and peace to you this day.

As we continue to explore what it means to be created “in the image of God,” it is important to understand that once God created humankind, He did something else: He stepped back. Not away, but back. This is what happens next:

“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day” (Genesis 1:28-31).

You might ask yourself, “OK, so, what's the big deal?” Here’s the big deal.

Imagine that you planned out and created the perfect garden in your back yard. You spent days excavating to put in a pond with a pump that would create a little waterfall over rocks you found and placed just so. Koi fish swim in the pond and a pair of ducks call it home. A beautiful path leads from your back door the the garden, where there are flowers of all types, some fruit trees, and hand-crafted wooden bench you made from carefully selected lumber. The garden is home, and a source of food, for rabbits,
squirrels, bees, butterflies, and all types of birds, all living in perfect harmony. It is perfect. It is beautiful. And it is complete.

Now imagine that you want to “step back” and hand off your perfect garden’s care and maintenance to someone. Would you entrust it to just anyone, or would you do so to someone who is like-minded? Someone you are confident would take the same care of it that you would? Someone who would honor you and your beautiful garden? Someone who, in effect, would represent you, and your ideals and values? Someone who would not let the garden become overgrown with weeds and thistles and animals that would destroy it?

I think we all know the answer. And now we start to get a sense of what it means to bear “the image of God.”

Tomorrow: What God intends.

IHS.

Pastor Lou

September 14

Greetings, DGCC Family.

“What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas” (Psalm 8:4-8).

Continuing with what it means to be “created in God’s image,” we learn from the psalmist that God intends a place of high honor for mankind. He entrusts Creation to him. He creates men and women such that they are just below the heavenly beings in the divine hierarchy. We are crowned with glory and honor and are given the task of ruling with grace and care over God’s Creation.

We bear His image at Creation, and because of that, we bear His image over Creation. Because God has created us with the same values as Him: with a moral code, knowing right from wrong, and the ability to love, act justly, and seek mercy, He gives us the authority to rule over Creation and, in a sense, to act on His behalf, bearing His loving image.
Of course, when sin enters the world, that image is stained. And that stain can only be cleansed by one thing, and one thing only: the blood of Christ shed on Calvary, for you, and for me.

Tomorrow: It’s in our DNA

IHS,

Pastor Lou

September 15

Shalom to you this day.

As we finish our look at what it means to be “created in the image of God,” it is important to understand just how complex human life, and indeed, all of life is. For example, the late scientist late George Wald stated that the genetic code of a single bacterium, and the information contained in its DNA, is so vastly complex that it cannot possibly have been created by random. He further stated that if the creation of a single bacterium were left to chance, it would take “more time than the universe has seen.” And that is only for a single-celled organism, and the information contained in its genetic coding.

Now imagine humans. Ken Ham, in his book “The New Answers Book,” states that “life is built on information.” For humans, our genetic information is stored in our DNA. God created us in such an intricately and complex manner such that not even the largest or fastest computers could have come close. That DNA, that genetic information, makes us who we are, at least in a physical sense. But we are something more than just our physical make up.

We understand that God embodies perfect knowledge and wisdom. The information He imparts is perfect and holy. In fact, the writer of Proverbs, discussing God’s wisdom, says this:

“The Lord brought me [wisdom] forth as the first of his works,
   before his deeds of old;
   I was formed long ages ago,
   at the very beginning, when the world came to be.
When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
   when there were no springs overflowing with water;
   before the mountains were settled in place,
   before the hills, I was given birth,
   before he made the world or its fields
   or any of the dust of the earth…
   Then I was constantly at his side.
   I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,
rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in mankind” (Proverbs 8:22-31).

In other words, before God begins the work of Creation, He “brings forth” His wisdom, and then He instills it into all of Creation, including mankind, and “delighting in mankind.”

Said another way, as we are created in His image, we are created out of His wisdom. His wisdom is embedded in our spiritual DNA, just as the complexity of our physical DNA is the product of His perfect wisdom and knowledge.

And so, we bear His image. We are the pinnacle of His Creation. Out of His wisdom He delights in us. Our physical presence and our spiritual presence bear the imprint of our perfect and holy Creator. And one day, because of the sacrifice made by His Son, that imprint will be restored to its flawless and holy image: the image of God.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

September 16

Happy Friday, everyone. Here’s your music devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf6jBP4YXwo

IHS,
Pastor Lou