

## ***“You Were Made For This”***

*John 1:1-18 • Genesis 1:1-2:3*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • August 18, 2019

It seems that inside each of us is a desire to make things, to be creative. For example, I enjoy working with my hands. Whether it's making things out of wood or building models, fixing up my house or taking photographs, I just really enjoy making things and seeing the finished product. Think about the things you make. Whether you enjoy knitting or sewing, painting or pottery, gardening, scrapbooking, or making music, you are wired to create. That doesn't mean we are all artistic and we certainly aren't all equally talented. But creating means that we use the resources available to us and arrange them so that something new exists that wasn't there before. It might be fixing something that is broken or solving some kind of problem. Where does that desire to create come from?

When we look at the very first sentence of the Bible we discover that God creates. “In the beginning, GOD created.” The very first thing we learn about God is that he is creative. And this creating that God does is different than what you and I can do. God creates everything out of nothing. Verse two says “the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.” This is the Hebrew way of saying there was nothing but chaos. There was nothingness. But then God speaks. In our New Testament reading the Apostle John makes it clear to us that Jesus is the very Word of God that created the universe and continues to create today.

The beginning of Genesis is probably one of the best-known and most profound passages in the entire Bible. God created the heavens and the earth. Unfortunately, too often people get sidetracked trying to turn the first chapters of Genesis into a science report or a history book. The way we usually understand history is as a story of dates and places and events in time. We want to know who, what, when, where and how. But this creation out of nothing is a story

of divine action. It's not the particulars of how or when that are important here. This is more like poetry than history. If we spend our time arguing whether creation happened in six days or millions of years, we've already missed the more important message of Genesis 1. Rather than some cosmological theory, the doctrine of creation out of nothing is an expression of our adoration for the transcendent majesty of God and our utter dependence upon Him.

From Genesis 1 we understand that everything that exists is the creation of this God who creates and he creates in an orderly, purposeful manner. The world is comprehensible because it existed first in the mind and plan of God. And it's precisely because the physical world is orderly that we are able to study it. Science can only exist because the world was created and operates in an orderly manner. What's known as the “scientific method” is a process of observing and hypothesizing, testing and verifying parts of our natural world. In this process, however, what science arrives at is a description of the reliability of God. Science merely adds details to the basic fact that “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” In fact, for centuries scientists were Christians studying God's handiwork and in the process they believed they were interacting with the mind of God. As Psalm 19 puts it, “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.”

The second thing I want us to notice in this passage is summed up in verse 27: “So God created man in his own image, **in the image of God he created him**; male and female he created them. 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.’”

There has been a tremendous amount of discussion about exactly what this verse means by the “image of God.” What part of us really is the image of God? I believe that the image of God in each one of us is that thing which sets us apart from all other animals. An awareness of God and the ability to respond to Him is what makes us uniquely human. God has given us an ability to think rational thoughts and to have a relationship with Him. And the image of God in us is what gives us the ability to be creative. That means *our* creativity is really an extension of God’s creativity. Our desire to create is a big part of the image of God in each of us.

As I’m sure you’re aware, this command for mankind to subdue the earth and have dominion over the animals is another area where we have too often gotten ourselves in trouble. Some people have such a negative reaction to this idea that humans have any right to have dominion over nature that they turn away from God altogether. At the other end of the spectrum, we have often used this verse as a license to do whatever we want to the environment. But that’s not what God is telling us. The message here is that you and I get to partner with God in His creativity. We have been placed here as stewards, charged with caring for creation and that means managing the earth’s resources responsibly. If you are a parent, you (hopefully) understand that you have dominion over your child, meaning you are responsible for your children’s care and nurture, but you do not have the right to exploit them.

One of the great results of humans subduing the earth over the past several thousand years is the amazing farming and ranching techniques that provide unbelievable amounts of food every year. The creativity of humans has allowed for the hybridizing of plants that produce more and larger vegetables and fruits, but also an amazing array of flowers as well, simply by partnering with God in His creative process.

There’s another important facet to this command to subdue and have dominion. Verse 26 says that we are to “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.” Notice what is missing. We are not to have dominion over one another. You see, every one of us is created in the image of God. As one commentator put it, “Whenever we seek to extend our influence over others solely for the purpose of dominion, blight rather than blessing is the result.” Our relationship with one another is a horizontal relationship rather than vertical. When you begin to see every person as being created in the image of God, you will begin to understand the eternal worth of every human being and this is truly the basis for true ethics.

The final thing we want to learn from today’s passage is the rhythm of creation that serves as the pattern for our lives. In Genesis 2:1-3 we read, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” Later on, when God tells his people how they are to live, he tells them to follow his pattern. They are to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. The word Sabbath in Hebrew literally means “stop.” As Eugene Peterson says, “whatever you’re doing, stop. Whatever you’re saying, be quiet.” But Sabbath is more than just not doing anything, it’s about stopping long enough to see with wonder, with resurrection wonder. It’s stopping long enough to see what Christ is doing in the world around us. And it’s stopping to listen to God speak.

Somehow we have lost the idea of Sabbath, of a day of rest. Some of you may remember when all the stores were closed on Sundays. You didn’t have much choice but to rest. There

wasn't anything else to do. But today Sunday is just another day. Another busy day. And busy days make it hard to hear from God or experience his presence. Sabbath and work are not opposites, but rather are part of the rhythm of creation from the beginning. Notice that God rested in the midst of working. God called His work "good" seven times in six days and when He had finished he called it very good. We cannot understand Sabbath apart from the context of work, nor can we understand work apart from Sabbath. Without this God-ordained rhythm of life, work becomes an end unto itself and it becomes a breeding ground for idols. By keeping Sabbath we not only attend to creation, we adore the creator.

We might be tempted to think that the best way to do this would be to spend time alone in nature. But we were created for community and we were created for worship. The Sabbath is the only part of the creation story that becomes one of the commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. As we come together every week

to worship and as we live as a community of faith, we get to participate in God's ongoing creative work. We get to see the miracle of newborn babies. We see Christ heal bodies and marriages. We see addictions broken. We see people come to know and love Jesus Christ, who is the very incarnation of God's creative Word which was active from the beginning of creation. We get to partner with God to create.

So now we understand that everything exists because God created it out of nothing and in an orderly way according to His plan. We see that each one of us is created in the image of God and are therefore more valuable than anything else. And we see that as we pattern our lives according to God's plan, we participate in His ongoing creativity. As 2 Corinthians says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away and the new has come." And that's far better than anything you or I can create.

*Amen.*