

Becoming Human
Genesis 1-2
Aug 30th, 2015 Brian Miller

Well folks, its the end of summer! i don't know about you but summer is not really the time of year that i hone my mental acuity. IF it wasn't for work id probably say that my mind lapses into some form of lazy coma where it tries to accomplish as little as possible and just relax. So when i was asked to speak at the end of summer i didn't realize how difficult it was going to be to shake the rust from my brain and attempt to talk about something that i am deeply passionate about. I will do my best to keep this as a simple over view because talking about what it means to be created in Gods image is a vast topic, something far to large to address in a single message.

but honestly i hope you are as excited as i am to open up this topic. I am particularly excited because i get to talk about the Old Testament (or as one of my prof's like to call it the "first testament"). In order to talk about being created in the image of God we are going to climb down deep into the cellar of our theological world view open up the crawlspace and go in. (im a big picture guy...expound a bit) You see this topic really boils down to why we as humans (why u and me have value) what is it about you or me that makes us valuable?

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We are at a critical point in our north american culture technology has so rapidly changed the way we connect and interact with one another in such a short span of time that we are struggling to understand our selves in light of it. You see we now have the option to not only control to a significant degree the people we communicate with but the nature in which we communicate to them. We can talk to thousands of people all at once through streaming media, post thoughts in places that millions of people from all around the world will instantly see, yet what sounds like something that would unite us together under a banner of collective humanity like never before has really pushed us farther away from one another than we have ever been in the history of humanity.

we are more isolated, depressed, anxious. Why? i believe that its because we no longer know who we are. In an age when the lives of lions seem to mean more to our culture than the lives of children it would seem that somewhere along the way we have lost (or never knew) how to answer why i have value? i hope today that we can leave here understanding a little better not simply why we have value, but how to value others.

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because truly at the heart of this matter is not only our humanity, but the heart of the gospel.

As christians we believe that God created us, and he created us in his image. Because of this we have value, intrinsic value (thats value that we dont have to earn, its just there). But what exactly does it mean to "bear the image of God"? Where do we first hear about this, and what does it tell us about our selves? The first mention of this in in Gen 1:26

[3]

Where God says “let us make man in our own image” There are many things that encompass this “image of God” that we bear but today we are going to focus on what i feel is one of the most essential aspects of it and the part that i believe speaks strongly to our current cultural crisis of identity.

In order to understand this we need to understand what it means to be created.

[4]

Genesis 2:7 has this to say about it “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being”. So what does that mean?? It means that we physically exist God scraped us out of the dust of the ground and physically created us. In english the word play here is lost in this section of scripture but the hebrew word her for “man” is adam, and the word here for “ground” is adamah. Kind of neat, This wordplay is not lost on the original audience of this scripture, it shows the deep connection we have to the world around us that God has created. We were scraped together from dust by divine hands and raised up.

[5]

Physical existence is intentional and therefore necessary. We cannot be human, we cannot have value in (non-existence) If God created us, he did it intentionally, it wasn't an accident (as is the case with many creation narratives in the ancient world of the middle east) God didn't slip when he was making something else that resulted in us. (make a joke?) we are here on purpose. God intentionally crafted us and made us physically and thats very important. This combats a gnostic view of humanity that states we are simply spiritual shells waiting for something to release us.

The idea that we are simply suffering through this life to escape to heaven is not true, we have been intentionally created to physically exist. which consequently is also important in the belief in a bodily resurrection. not only do we exist now but we will be raised to new life in christ physically as Jesus was raised. So we are not souls waiting to be released from our mortal shells. The physical world around us isn't bad, damaged by sin yes, but not bad.

[6]

Ok so we exist, its intentional and its important now what?

Now we look a little deeper and we will find 2 more things things from genesis. in 1:26 God says “let us make man in our image” and next we see God say in Gen 2:18 “it is not good that man be alone i will make him a helper comparable with him”. So we can gather 2 very important additional things to physically existing.

[7]

1: when God said “let us make man in “our” likeness” we are individually created in the image of a heavenly community.

2: We are created (physically) to exist within an external community.

You See....

Adam was created into perfect relational community with God, Yet in this something was lacking there was no community for him to express himself in. SO God creates eve, so that together The image that he designed us to reflect is fully expressed, internally and externally.

so now we can start to build a picture here of what it truly means to be human from a biblical perspective. Which i often find is such a great way to talk to people, why do you think you are important? what makes you valuable? Because honestly how many of us really think about that consciously, or on a regular basis? Its usually something that we have thought about at some point and then just operate in, very rarely thinking about the implications that concept of value has on how we live our day to day lives. But as you can see if you start building a tower on a faulty foundation of what it truly means to be human, you can have a very distorted view of the world around you and how you view your self.

[8]

To be truly human is to function as we were created to be. We were created to physically exist in relationship with God and in relationship with each other. That is fundamentally the key to our humanity and the nature of our value.

Are you following me with this, To physically exist IN relationship is essential to what makes us truly human.

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This is what stands out in the creation narrative about God creating humans, we are created into a specific relationship like nothing else in all of creation. The relational connection that we are created to represent and we are created into are unique to us as humans. There are lots of other things that are part of being created in the “image of God” but i believe that this is key that we understand this. The essence of the fall of humanity is that the relationship that we were designed to function with is broken, between us and God, internally with our self and externally with others. We no longer reflect the humanity that God intended us to be, what he created us to be. You see we retain the image of God “structurally” but not “functionally” we are slaves to sin, to functioning in a way that God never intended us to function in.

You don't have to look very hard to see how our culture is struggling to understand its answer to why we have value. If we look to current pop culture to give us an answer it will say “buy more, live it up, have fun” because the foundation of our belief system has cracked. All they know how to do is bandaid their worldview because they want to think that we are all valuable but they cant really say that we have value because It has been broken by a neo-darwinian evolutionary point of view that says you are only as valuable as you are useful. Either for what you produce, or what you acquire. You see we cant have our cake and eat it too, we cant have utilitarianism as a foundational belief culturally but still believe that all are created equal. Because in that system its not true, some are bourn better than others either due to location or social standing. There is a disconnect we say “everyone has value” but then act like “only those who have truly have value” We have lifted our self importance up so high as a culture that all those around us exist to fulfill us, to satisfy us. we build our humanity, our worth on the backs

of others. isolating people to the point that they are no longer human and we can use them however we like. We want more, so they must have less, we want more so they must give us more for less.

Our entire economy and the value of our dollar is built upon growth, eternally forever up up up. how do we do this? buy forcing others to not have so we can "ignorance is not bliss my friends", we close our self off from people around the world, we look at our stuff and we say buying this 2\$ shirt is more important. sorry garment worker in bangladesh you will probably die in a factory making this because its the only work you have. But I'm more important than you, and i really want it, and the only way i can have this is if you keep doing what you are doing.

relationally we isolate our self from the pain of others by soothing our selves with the next shiny thing that falls on our consumption radar. We have become so selfish in the way that we operate as a society that everything from shirts to relationships all serve a single purpose, to make me happy. Everything is about me, the world revolves around me. Do you see how this so quickly spirals out of control? When we abandon a worldview that says that we all intrinsically have value we are left to operate how ever we best can determine our own value; which currently is "i am valuable because of what i have" The acquiring of "stuff" has now become our central source of value.

You would think that technology would help us identify with our fellow man around the world better, but instead it has simply removed us farther from one another because we have mistaken "social media" for something that its not. we somehow find the connections with others online more enriching at times that the physical relationships we have with the people around us. we consume relationship almost like a virtual currency, to feed our online hunger for validation. (how many responses did i get, who liked my post...) relationships are no longer what enrich our lives and draw us together as we are intended to be it fractures us apart, and isolates us to the point that we communicate through a hunk of plastic and glass and metal and love it more than we love each other. How sick have we become where this (hold up phone) has replaced this (gesture to all of the people) the sad thing is that some of you are sitting here going "my friends online are just as real as everyone here" no, no there are not. i am actually here, I'm physically standing in front of you, you are looking at electricity fed through a small computer that generates images. social media is great, but it has let us down, it has failed to deliver what our culture wants it to do. It is not relationship it is simply a tool.

Story about my friend with the super nintendo (i was only his friend because he had what i wanted.)

Its this type of relationships that our culture is sick with, we come to people secretly asking "what do you have to offer me" the same way we go up to the sample people at Costco. "ohh what you got there? cheese mmm thanks! oooo sardiesn?? uhhh no thanks." (where has this left us? a culture that uses technology to connect with one another so we don't have to leave our house, and values self above all things. we

dehumanize others to rationalize the way we treat them, we are more important so its ok. Sorry God that person looks like a lot of work to love, ill pass. Uhh, my neighbour is so annoying, I'm just gonna pretend I'm on my phone every time he comes around.

every single person here in this room does this, we all use people, or minimize others value. You look around this room and you see people that you are better than, people who are better than you. why? because they have this, they are good at that, **Or if we want to pull this farther into our christian social sphere im glad i dont do that, or struggle with this because man they sure do.** (play with this a bit) we are like the pharisee that prayed in the temple (luke 18-10-14) thank you God that im not like that person...

[10]

John is very clear about what God thinks of this. He says in 1john 4:20 "If anyone says, "i love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen "

we cant say we love one another and in the same breath "but dont take up my time"... why? because im busy earning my value. Are you trying to earn your value for your self? before one another? Before God?

You ever get tired of working for your value? Remember at the start of this how i stated that we believe that we have intrinsic value? why don't we feel like that? why do we struggle with it?

because we dont believe it. We have allowed a false cultural worldview to seep into the foundation of what it means to be human. Are you an accident? do you believe that you are only here randomly because a certain mix of chromosome came together and your here? You cant hold conflicting views on this issue, either you are here randomly or you are not. IF you are here because a random cold un-compassionate world spit you out then work hard because only the strong survive and they do so at the expense of others. You are only as valuable as you are useful. Or to put it as Richard Dawkins stated on twitter

[11]

"If your morality is based, as mine is, on a desire to increase the sum of happiness and reduce suffering, the decision to deliberately give birth to a Down's baby, when you have the choice to abort it early in the pregnancy, might actually be immoral from the point of view of the child's own welfare."

or in other words, Your utility is all that makes you valuable. Existence has no value in and of its self because nothing made you, you are simply a product of random chance. It is better for you to not exist than to exist broken.

how does that statement sit with you? does it make u upset? frustrated? or are you fine with it?

If we as a church (the people sitting right here, around you) are called to love one another as Christ has loved us and bear witness of his death and resurrection as proof of the reconciliation of God and men cant love people around us and enter in to meaningful, respectful, enriching relationships with them WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE!!!!!! we are wasting our time!! Pack up your things get up and walk out those doors because sitting in here is a wast of time. This here, does nothing if we don't go and DO SOMETHING!

we cant say to those around us as James points out “go in peace, be warmed and be filled” yet we give them nothing of what they really need. We get so caught up in the words of this book (hold up the bible) and we read and read, or don't read and just assume and forget the entire point of it some times! its the best news in the universe, what was broken is now fixed, the relationship that was fractured at the very beginning of time has been reconciled by the blood of jesus! The humanity that we were designed for is possible! We can truly be human.

[12]

As Jesus says in John 13:34 “A new commandment i give to you that you love one another as i have loved you” Why is this new? because we could not do this the way we were supposed to before jesus! ITS BRAND NEW!! We can love one another as God has loved us because he has shown up! In flesh and blood and loved us the way have been dying to be loved since we left the garden in genesis. We broke our selves off from the very thing that made us complete, that made us human we became isolated from God in a way we were not intended to be.

You cannot exist as an island no matter how hard you try, no matter how much you have, it will never be enough. You will never be as you were intended to be without first having the most important life-giving relationship reconciled.

As God opens his floodgates of love in our hearts it should DO SOMETHING, not cause us to sit here thinking about how great it is that he loves us. We should turn to one another, serve one another, love one another, look upon a world that is lost and alone stumbling around in the dark and weep for them, enter into life with them and physically show them the love of Jesus. We are his hands, his feet, we as a community of believers are to love each other so that “all people will know” that we are Christ's disciples.

we are not simply to love people because we are “supposed to” we are to do it because its what makes us human. It is the gospel, the relationship that was broken is renewed through the blood of jesus, come enter in, be who you were made to be. (continue this? community and how we represent the gospel through relationship is how we reach people who are alone and afraid?)

[13]

“As the Father loved me, I also have loved you; Abide in My love” John 15:9