

CHRIST AND ADAM'S RIB Genesis 2:7-25

Sometimes our view of sin (especially those of us in Reformed circles) can become glorified loathing, something like: "Do you believe yourself to be a dirty, rotten, despicable worm with no hope, and ugly too?" Now, I believe we're born sinful and can't do anything to merit our salvation. But if that's the *only* anthropology we get in church, no wonder so many people want nothing to do with it- "I already feel bad enough about myself, why would I want to go to church and feel worse?"

What if they heard this: "Do you believe yourself to be made just a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor [Hebrews 1, by the way]- you're so unbelievably precious that God would go to the greatest lengths imaginable to find and rescue you?"

I keep talking about Genesis 3- a rich chapter for understanding sin and human nature. But we need to sit and soak in Genesis 1 and 2 for a while. Because while Genesis 3 tells us the truth of why the world is like it is, Genesis 1 and 2 tell us the deeper truths of our condition and our destiny. It tells us that we were designed for *dignity* and *intimacy*.

We were designed with dignity.

Let's set up the scene. Chapter 2 seems, on first reading, to be a rambling description of the condition around the garden and the creation of Adam and Eve. But there is a flow to this narrative. First, God forms Adam out of dust and breathes life into him. Then God makes a place for Adam to live and thrive.

Then we see rivers flowing out of the garden. What's that about? This is a picture of the creation mandate- Adam and Eve filling the earth- the eventual blessing of all the nations of the world with the gospel. Then God elaborates for Adam his purpose- to work and to live in the light of God's wisdom and commands, including trusting God to be the source of good and evil rather than eating from the tree to try to gain that illicit knowledge.

Then we see the great search for a helper. I mentioned this a few weeks ago, but let me say again, the word 'helper' is not a put-down for women. It doesn't mean 'slave' or 'grocery-getter.' In fact, God is usually the one described as a helper in Scripture. The Hebrew word here means an expert in other areas. We know that men are limited and need the gifts and expertise of women, just as we see a compatibility the other way around. After a humorous episode of going through all the animals we read, "But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him." And so God creates Eve out of Adam's side and we have the first couple and the first marriage.

Do you remember what God said in 1:26, on the last day of creation, after He's made everything else, "Let us make man in our own image." And part of the reason the Bible goes thru all that about the animals is to show the glory of the woman- nothing else compares! Do you think about the fact that you're made in God's image? That you bear His image and likeness? And, do you also realize that the smelly guy in line, the condescending store clerk, and the school bully are all pictures of God?

Eugene Peterson, one of my favorite writers, brought this home for me recently when I read this: "Creation on its own seems perfectly capable of furnishing us with a

spirituality that exults in beautiful beaches and fine sunsets, surfing and skiing and emotional states... But for all its considerable attractions, it is considerably deficient in person... The Genesis story of creation begins with 'heaven and earth,' but that turns out to be merely a warm-up exercise for the main event, the creation of human life, man and woman, designated 'image of God'... If you want to look at creation full, creation at its highest, you look at a person- a man, a woman, a child."

Nature is great, but we are God's masterpiece. You can spend thousands of dollars on an Alaskan cruise, but you would see a clearer picture of God's glory and beauty from a people-watching trip to Walmart.

We were designed for intimacy

Verse 23 is the first love song, with millions more to come in a world of hormone-driven men and women. Can't you just picture it, Adam is ecstatic! That's a good thing- we were designed to know another person in the deepest way. What a great summary statement in verse 25, "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." That's how Christian marriage should be! I don't know where the idea that Christians are prudes comes from, but not from the Bible. God created love, sex and intimacy- they were His ideas. And we who know that have the greatest tools for a great marriage.

But that intimacy is only a picture of the kind of intimacy we can have with God. Your husband or wife cannot meet all of your needs. Yet we so often expect them to do that and we get angry when they can't. Your husband or wife is a *helper- not a savior*. We're constantly making idols. We don't usually recognize that we are making things more important than God, but we do. God demands and deserves to be first, and his hopeful promise to those of you who are single or in a difficult marriage is that He is the source of the greatest intimacy.

Let's look at a deeper question before we finish with this section of Scripture: Why would God create Eve out of Adam's rib? Why not use dust again, or just say, "Let there be Eve"? Usually we understand it means 3 things: leadership, compatibility, and permanence.

But I think there's a deeper reason. It seems likely that in the creation of Eve, Adam gave his literal blood. God opened his side and this implies blood-shed. This is a picture of Jesus, who gave life to the Church through the shedding of His blood.

We learn a great deal about humanity in Genesis 2. We're both Dust and Rib- dirty and glorious. We should delight in who God made us to be and in the One who's restoring us back to that initial beauty and perfection. The amazing thing about the Gospel is that it makes us both humble and confident. Humble because we're bad enough Jesus had to come and die. Confident because we're loved enough that Jesus would come to die for us.

We need to teach our children this biblical worldview. Too often today they only get the positive self-esteem- but ironically, too often, they grow up with little to no self-esteem. The answer is not to tell them they're perfect (they know they're not). It's to tell the whole story- Creation, Fall, Redemption- we were created good, and although we've marred the image of God in us, Jesus is restoring us, and we are headed for nothing but good.

That is the only thing that will give us hope for the future. D. James Kennedy, a prominent pastor who passed away about a week ago wrote not long ago: “Now, I know that someday I am going to come to what some people will say is the end of this life. They will probably put me in a box and roll me right down here in front of the church, and some people will gather around, and a few people will cry. But I have told them not to do that because I don’t want them to cry. I want them to begin the service with the Doxology and end with the Hallelujah chorus, because I am not going to be there, and I am not going to be dead. I will be more alive than I have ever been in my life, and I will be looking down upon you... who are still in the land of dying and have not yet joined me in the land of the living.”

Some of the resources I used for this Genesis series were *Last Things First* by JV Fesko, *Creation and Blessing* by Allen Ross, *Genesis 1-4* by C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-11* by JM Boice, *Patriarchal Saints* by James B. Jordan, sermons by Tim Keller, Ricky Jones, and various other resources. As usual, the reader should assume that little, if any, of this material is truly original.