

## Made In the Image of God

Genesis 1:26-27

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** It is my sincerest hope and great desire for Westside to grow!
  - A. Last Sunday's AM sermon was: "Let's Make Westside Grow!" Two types of growth:
    - (1) Numerical growth: **Acts 6:7**: "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."
    - (2) Spiritual growth: Rev. 2 & 3; **2 Pet. 3:17-18**: "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; *18* but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
  - B. I promise to work for Westside to promote grow in both ways!
  - C. Our adult Bible class is designed to help in this regard: "Evangelizing the Lost." I hope:
    - (1) The class will help us develop and sharpen our skills to reach the lost with the gospel.
    - (2) The class will help motivate each of us to share the gospel with others.
    - (3) If you also desire Westside to grow, you will come and participate in the classes.
2. Recall last week I challenged all of us to develop a list of six people in our personal "sphere of influence" that we will commit to sharing the gospel with in 2017.
  - A. As we move through 2017 I want to give all of you as much encouragement as possible so we all will fulfill this commitment.
  - B. I plan on focusing my preaching on topics/ themes that will help us develop skills, bolster our confidence, and encourage us to "*press toward the goal*" of sharing the gospel with others.
  - C. I don't have a specific series of sermons planned, or even a list of topics I plan to preach.
    - (1) What I do propose to do is share information with you (Bible class, sermons, *Words of Life*) that I think will help us as we all seek to share the gospel with others.
    - (2) I want your help too! If you have information or ideas along these lines, please share them with me and the rest of the congregation.
    - (3) I'm convinced we can accomplish great things if we work together as a team (Eph. 4:16; Neh. 4:6).
3. Recently I was reading my e-mail and I ran across an article sent to me by brother Ron Halbrook.
  - A. The article was written by a man I don't even know (Guy Roberson).
  - B. The article jogged my own mind, so I've added some of my thoughts as well.
4. **3** Today's lesson is entitled: "*Made In the Image of God.*"
  - A. I believe the concepts in this lesson will help us as we seek to share the gospel with others.
  - B. These are also concepts we as Christians need to be reminded of and use to guide our lives and encourage us as we seek to serve God.

### II. DISCUSSION:

1. **4** God made man in His image:
  - A. To say we are made in God's image is really to say we are like God.
    - (1) James 3:9 says we've "*been made in the similitude of God.*"

(2) Vine on similitude: “a making like”; so we are made like God!

B. How? Spiritual beings:

**Gen. 1:26-27:** “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

**Jn. 4:24:** “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

**Lk. 24:39:** “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”

C. To be sure, in many ways God is very different from us (**Isa. 46:5:** “To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal and compare Me, that we should be alike?”; **55:8-9:** “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. 9 ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”).

- (1) But, I would suggest that everything we are reflects God to some degree.
- (2) Every character trait He possesses He does so to an infinite and perfect degree (e.g., holiness, righteousness, mercy, love, knowledge, wisdom, etc.).
- (3) We potentially possess the same characteristics but only to a finite degree (requires our obedience).

**Eph. 5:1:** “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.”

**1 Pet. 1:16:** “Be holy, for I am holy.”

**Lk. 6:36:** “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”

**Col. 3:13:** “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

**Jn. 15:12:** “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

**1 Jn. 1:7:** “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light...”

**2 Pet. 1:4:** “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

**Gal. 2:20:** “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

D. What a great blessing! What a great responsibility! What a great aspiration!

2. **5** Ways man is made in God’s image:

A. An important impact of us being made in God’s image is that it separates us and makes us different from the rest of His creation.

- (1) What are these special godlike qualities which man is permitted to share? (**2 Pet. 1:4:** “partakers of the divine nature”).
- (2) I don’t propose to exhaust the ways we’re made in God’s image but I shall mention nine. You will probably be able to add to this list.

B. Man is made in God’s image as evidenced by our:

- (1) **\*\* Religiosity:** Rom. 1:20-22
- (a) Every society, every culture has some sort of “religious instinct.”
  - (b) The desire to worship is universal in mankind.
  - (c) Modern man credits evolution, but that’s pure baloney (We are ‘wired’ for it!).
- (2) **\*\* Reasoning:**
- (a) I love my dogs dearly, but when my computer acts up I don’t ask their advice on how to fix it.
  - (b) I’m not saying animals cannot solve problems, in fact, animals often surprise us with their ingenuity (especially in obtaining food!).
  - (c) However, they cannot solve complex problems as we do (Calculus, Physics).
  - (d) An important aspect of our ability to reason is “free moral agency.”
    - (i) God has given man the ability to choose (Gen. 3; Josh. 24:15).
    - (ii) Unlike man, animals are ruled by instinctive behavior.
- (3) **\*\* Moral excellence: Rom. 2:12-14:** *“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law 13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; 14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,”*
- (a) Free moral agency: Freedom to make choices, esp. moral choices.
  - (b) Built in sense of right and wrong: e.g., murder, adultery, stealing, etc. are universally recognized by every culture as “wrong.”
  - (c) Built in sense of morality: e.g., sexual immorality universally recognized as wrong by every culture.
  - (d) Built in sense of purity: e.g., virginity prized by every culture.
  - (e) Most societies value and praise godly character traits (e.g., kindness, faithfulness (loyalty), self-control, humility, etc.). Although many people don’t possess these character traits, most societies find these character traits admirable in their heroes (e.g., Abraham Lincoln and George Washington’s humility and kindness).
  - (f) Holiness/righteousness: ditto as humility. Most societies praise their heroes for “doing the right thing.”
- (4) **\*\* Language:**
- (a) Animals communicate with barks (dogs), meows (cats), and tail slapping (beavers).
  - (b) But, to my knowledge, no animal has ever authored a novel or written a poem.
  - (c) The ability to communicate with words is unique to God and man (Jn. 1:1-3).
  - (d) The acquisition of language by babies has received a massive amount of study by scientists, but most experts agree that despite all this study it remains a “miracle.”
- (5) **\*\* Creativity: Prov. 22:29:** *“Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men.”*
- (a) God is the Creator of the Universe, but man mimics God, to a degree, in this arena.

- (b) A pig or a cow will never be caught painting a “Mona Lisa” or sculpting a “David,” or building a “Taj Mahal”; a spider always follows the same pattern when spinning its web; a bird always follows the same plan when building its nest every spring.
  - (c) Man is a creative being: literature, art, architecture, music, sewing, business, etc.
- (6) \*\* Love:
- (a) Can animals truly love? I hope my little Yorky’s adoring gaze into my eyes is indeed an indication of his love.
  - (b) I believe animals are capable of love in the sense of an intense liking, e.g., my dog; but I’m doubtful they love in the sense of the *agape* love unique to the Scriptures.
  - (c) Love in this sense is the quintessence of God’s character (God is love; 1 Jn. 4:16).
    - (i) His love for man far outstrips human comprehension and is the major theme of Scripture.
    - (ii) Even when man sins again and again to the extent that God must destroy him (Gen. 6ff; , God still he loves him; **Ezek. 33:11**: “...’As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...’”).
    - (iii) Man, being made in God’s image, has the ability to love in the highest *agape* sense.
- (7) \*\* Holiness:
- (a) Man’s holiness has been greatly tarnished and largely suppressed by the entrance of sin into the world.
  - (b) But, I don’t believe it is a stretch at all to assume that most folks have at least a spark of desire to be holy (perverted and often expressed as self-righteousness).
  - (c) The trick is to get folks to understand that true holiness comes only through obedience to God (**1 Pet. 1:16**: “Be holy, for I am holy.”).
- (8) \*\* Freedom:
- (a) In many respects, man’s desire for freedom is related to being a “free moral agent.”
  - (b) Freedom of choice: A responsible moral agent with a thinking mind and powers of choice and action, able to commune with God and respond to him, he could love and worship God—or not, as he chose.
  - (c) Man could rebel against God. And the tragedy for the human race is that man, with such a golden start, used his freedom to turn against his Creator.
  - (d) Man desperately desires freedom, but usually seeks it in the wrong place (e.g., drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality, easy divorce, women’s rights, gay liberation, etc.).
  - (e) Man’s freedom of choice really has only two alternatives:
 

**Rom. 6:16**: “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”
  - (f) Only Christ can set men and women free:
 

**Gal. 5:1**: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,”

**Jn. 8:32**: “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
  - (g) Modern man has it wrong; freedom is liberty, not libertinism (disregard for authority).

- (i) We are called “into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:2); Christ came to set men free.
- (ii) The yearning for freedom is part of the image and remains unsatisfied unless we are redeemed from the slavery of sin by Christ.

(9) \*\* Immortality:

- (a) God is immortal:

**I Tim. 1:17:** “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

**Psa. 90:2:** “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

- (b) God has given man immortality:

**Eccl. 3:11:** “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts...”

- (c) Animals don’t build pyramids or seek the “fountain of youth”; man talks often of “immortality.”
- (d) Have you ever been to a funeral where the deceased is not talked about as living on (usually in heaven regardless of their character!).
- (e) We talk of great statemen, sports heroes, great actors, poets, artists, etc. as being “immortals” that will be remembered forever. (But this is not what Solomon was talking about in Ecclesiastes 3:11.).
- (f) Man “has...eternity in...[his]...heart” because God made man an eternal spirit:  
**Eccl. 12:7:** “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”

**Jn. 5:28-29:** “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

3. **6** Impact on reaching others with the gospel:

- A. All of these ways in which man is made in God’s image are “positive” character traits that can only be properly and fully expressed by one totally devoted to serving God.
- B. When sin is present in one’s life attributes of the “divine nature” are suppressed, distorted or perverted into something never intended (e.g., Seeking immortality by building a great tomb.).
- C. As we seek to share the gospel with others we need to remember these ways in which our fellow man is made in God’s image.
  - (1) If you think about it, the gospel is designed to help man express these attributes of the “divine nature” in his/her life which sin has suppressed or perverted.
  - (2) As we seek to share the gospel with others we don’t have to worry that these attributes are missing; even in the most hardened of sinners they are there.
  - (3) They may be like smoldering embers, but they are there just waiting to be fanned back into flames (Rom. 1:16).
  - (4) Thus, it is our job to try our best to “push the right buttons”:
    - (a) Try to identify the areas in which they are most open to discussion.

- (b) Tailor our teaching to capitalize on this “opening.”

D. **7** Example:

(1) **\*\*** Moral excellence:

- (a) Most people admire men/women of “good character” (e.g., esp. people in positions of authority); but in their personal lives they descend to worldly standards of “moral excellence.”
- (b) We must stress that the “moral excellence” standards of the world do not meet the standards of God (e.g., Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius still needed the gospel despite impeccable moral excellence by worldly standards.).

(2) **\*\*** Love:

- (a) Everybody wants love, but love by worldly measure is often shallow and fleeting.
- (b) Our job is to convince them of the depths and enduring nature of God’s love:
  - (i) In spite of the fact that God is self-sufficient and needs absolutely nothing to be complete He loves us so much He wants us to benefit from His abundant blessings (**2 Pet. 1:3-4**: “*as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*”).
  - (ii) Our God who created us, sent His Son to die for us, because He longs to have a personal relationship with us (Rom. 5:8).
- (c) Despite the estrangement between us and God, He has provided the means of reconciliation (Col. 1:21-22).
  - (i) God doesn’t make us crawl on our hands and knees but if we willingly submit He forgives everything, regardless of how terrible it may be.
  - (ii) And our loving Lord promises to dry our tears, comfort our hearts, and welcome us with open arms into His love and care for eternity!
- (d) Who wouldn’t want this Almighty God loving them in this fashion?
  - (i) All of the baubles of this world cannot love you and care for you but God can.
  - (ii) God doesn’t love us out of constraint or coercion; He overflows in joy to bless and help those who seek a relationship with Him.

(3) **\*\*** Eternity:

- (a) Mankind hungers for what cannot be supplied by this world—a quest for eternity.
  - (i) Anthropological evidence suggests every culture has a God-given, innate sense of the eternal—that this world is not all there is (e.g., Every funeral I’ve ever been to there was the mention of life beyond the grave.).
  - (ii) Blaise Pascal said, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man that cannot be filled by any created being, but by God alone made known through Jesus Christ.”
  - (iii) The problem the world deals with is that humanity attempts to fill this restlessness for eternity with things other than God (i.e., temporal/fleshly).

- (b) Another problem is, most believe that in the end everybody goes to heaven; we need to correct that misconception (e.g., Jn. 16:8: sin, righteousness, judgment; justice; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 7:13-14).
- (c) We need to convince people God understands life often leaves us unsatisfied and that He addresses this in His word.
  - (i) Solomon, who had all the riches, success, esteem, and power in the world — in short, all that men seek after in this life — and none of it fulfilled his longing for eternity.
  - (ii) He declared it all “*vanity*,” meaning that he sought after these things in vain because they did not satisfy.
  - (iii) But in the end he learned the meaning of life: “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil*” (Eccl. 12:13-14).

### III. CONCLUSION: 8

1. Remember, ***Let’s Make Westside Grow!***
2. I hope all of you will commit to sharing the gospel with six people in 2017.
3. I hope the thoughts in this lesson will:
  - A. Remind us God has made all of us “*partakers of the divine nature*”; what a great blessing that is!
  - B. Provide us a measure of courage to carry through with this important work.
    - (1) Everyone possesses these marks of the image of God.
    - (2) Our goal is to help others discover them and use them as God intended.
4. Invitation

Inspired from an article, “*God Has Placed ‘Eternity in Man’s Heart’*”; by Guy Roberson.