

In His Image

This morning, I want us to see what God has to say about human life. I think His perspective should be considered as we think about matters like the right to live, the right to die, abortion and euthanasia. In fact, not only should God's perspective be considered, it should be the final say in these matters. So, this morning, let us examine life from God's perspective. There are three statements I would like to consider regarding this topic:

God is sovereign in the creation of life.

God is sovereign in the continuation of life.

God is sovereign in the conclusion of life.

Let us now begin by examining how God is sovereign in the creation of life by reading Genesis 1:26-31 [RSV] and Genesis 2:7 [RSV].

26. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the Earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon 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.

28. 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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the Earth."

29. And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the Earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30. And to every beast of the Earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the Earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. 31. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

" . . . 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."

The fact that man holds a unique place in creation and that man was made in the image of God and has the capacity to know God proves that man is a singular creature in the eyes of the Lord. This establishes the fact that God is sovereign over the creation of human life.

In recent days, the subject of life and death has been front and center due to the issue of health care preoccupying the administration, Congress and the media. Just a few years ago there was the case of the starvation death of a brain-damaged woman in Florida named Terri Schaivo. Because of what that poor woman had been forced to endure, and because of the current health care debate, people around the nation and around the world are thinking about the issues of life and death.

Sadly, we are living in a world where human life has become a cheap commodity. It has become effortless to throw human life away before it ever appears in our world through abortion. And it is becoming easier to discard those individuals that are seen as worthless and as being a drain on society.

In the Netherlands, which has a policy of legalized euthanasia, in 1990 alone there were 11,800 euthanasia deaths. These accounted for 9% of the total deaths in the Netherlands that year. In other words, nearly 1 out of every 10 people who died in the Netherlands in 1990 died by euthanasia, at the hands of a doctor, a nurse, or a family member. Of these 11,800 deaths, some 5,491 were performed without the patient's consent! (Source: *Medische Beslissingen Roknd Het Levenseinde: Rapport van de Commissie Onderzoek Medische Praktijk inzake Euthanasie [Medical Decisions About the End of Life: Report of the Committee to Investigate the Medical Practice Concerning Euthanasia]* The Hague, 1991)

We are unique. The real trouble with the world today is that man does not know who he is and what he is; he does not realize his own greatness. For instance, the theory of evolution is an utter insult to man from the standpoint of the biblical account which clearly shows that man is great and glorious and wonderful in the mind and conception of God, and the place God placed man in the creation process.

Human beings are not a product of chance. We are specially created. God knows you! He knows your name! With the psalmist we can declare, “. . . **for I am fearfully and wonderfully made**” (Psalm 139:14). This is what sets us apart. God created us and proclaimed us “**very good.**”

As we have seen from Genesis 1:26-27, we are told how God created man, and He did so by making man in His image. What that means is that we are not here simply by happenstance. It is not an accident or a random act of evolution that brought us into the world. I, for one, do not have the kind of faith one needs in order to believe that we can from nothing! Even modern science, which tries so hard to destroy the very thought of God, confirms for us that we cannot be the product of mere chance. Notice these facts about your body:

The average body contains some 7.5 trillion cells. It is far more complex than the most advanced computer.

Each of those 7.5 trillion cells cell has 200 trillion tiny groups of atoms called protein molecules. The largest of these protein molecules is called deoxyribonucleic acid, or DNA. DNA carries hereditary information from the parents to the offspring. It also carries genetic code. It determines if you will be a man or a mammoth.

DNA in one cell is 6 feet long. Total DNA in a body would fill a box the size of an ice cube, but if it were joined together, it would reach from the Earth to the sun and back 400 times!

All of our cells contain the information found in all the other cells. Each cell in your body carries all the necessary information for another you to be created.

If the coded DNA information and instructions of one human were translated into English, it would fill a 1000 volume encyclopedia.

In cell division, the cell forms a rotating double helix. It rotates at 75 turns per second. This is equal to straightening out a cathedral full of tangled microphone wire in under a split second. Yet, the cell's duplication process is so accurate that it is equivalent to a rate of less than one letter for an entire set of *Encyclopedia Britannica* being wrong.

What I am trying to get us to understand is the fact that every human that is conceived in the womb is unique! Every person, whether born or unborn, is conceived with for a purpose. Every human life is precious and none are to be discarded out of hand. Life must be protected and preserved at all costs!

That unborn child in that mother's womb is precious! That mentally incapacitated person in that institution is precious! That terminally ill individual is precious! Regardless of their condition, every human life is precious in the site of God and it must be defended from those who look at it as something that can be thrown away!

This uniqueness of human beings is why God takes acts of violence we do to each other with great seriousness. Genesis 9:6 [RSV] says, "***Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in His own image.***" The Bible tells us that if we kill another human being (I would argue that this includes a pre-birth child) **we have taken violent action against Him**. These people are declared guilty of a capital offense in the Bible and given the death penalty by God.

This is why we stand against: abortion, the disposal of "defective children" and physician-assisted suicide. We have no right to take such action against that which was created in God's image. When we do such things we demean what God esteems. Our act of violence is not only against another human being . . . it is against God! God calls us to cherish and respect life.

In fact, Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:21-22 [RSV], **21. “You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' 22. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the Hell of fire.”**

Did you hear what Jesus is saying? He is saying that because we are created as unique people in His image, we should not even speak with violence towards another. To do so is to offend the Holy God Who made that person.

I dare you to try a little experiment. Go up to some parent who loves his or her child and act harshly toward the child. Watch and see what happens! The parent will take personal offense. Why? You are not doing anything to the parent! But of course you are! The tie between parent and child is unique and special. That child was created "in the image" of the parent in one sense. They are a special product of the parent's love. If you attack the child you attack the parent. That child may not be perfect. They may be doing a number of stupid things, but he or she is still our child. And we love them.

Every human is a spiritual being. God's word tells us that man was made **“in the image”** of God. We were not created in the image of the Hollywood star (or starlet). We were not created in the image of the super-star athlete. We were not created in the image of the power-laden executive or the consumptive consumer. We were created in His image. We were created to reflect God's greatness.

We were created in God's image. This does not mean that man looks like God; or that God has a body like we do. It does mean that man was created like God in that man is a tripartite being. In the Godhead, there is the Father, the Son and the Spirit. In a man, there is the body, the soul and the spirit. God is a three part being; man is a three part being. God has intellect, will and emotions, and so does mankind.

Every human being is a distinctive being. We are unique. One of the primary truths that come from these verses is the fact that man is the product of God's creative power and not the result of random evolution. Man did not evolve from a single-celled organism over the space of millions of years; he is the exceptional creation of God. You will notice that all the other animals were spoken into existence by the word of God. Man, however, was formed by God out of the dust of the Earth and God breathed life into the nostrils of man. The fact that God singled man out for special care in the creation lets us know that there is a vast difference between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom.

Here is one of the greatest dangers in the entire system of evolution, as it is taught to our children in public schools. If people can be convinced that mankind

is nothing more than the product of random selection, then human life loses all of its value. If man simply evolved, then he is no different than a dog or a cat. You kill him and he simply ceases to exist. There is no God. Man does not have a soul or a spirit that live on. There is no Heaven to be gained or a Hell to be shunned. Man is nothing more than an animal and he can be eliminated if it becomes necessary.

Those who hold to this view of things believe that man should live until his quality of life is over, then he should be ***“put out of his misery.”*** Once we start down this slippery slope, there will be no turning back. Today, it is babies and brain-damaged people; tomorrow, it will be the mentally and physically challenged, as well as the old and the infirm. That is exactly where our world is headed! There is more than one way to save Social Security and Medicare and to cut costs in medical care, and that is to stop providing health services for those who are costing too much money to keep alive!

This is the primary way in which mankind can be distinguished from the members of the animal kingdom. Every person who ever comes into this world has three parts. They have a body, a soul and a spirit. A very good passage that seems to show this three part differentiation and makeup of each person is found in Hebrews 4:12 [RSV]: ***“For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*** 1 Thessalonians 5:23 really makes this three part distinction clear: ***“And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** Let us take just a few moments to examine each of these parts.

The biblical testimony is that God made men and women with a uniqueness that was not present in the other things He created. Only men and women were created in God's image. Only human beings have this special honor and privilege. Only mankind had the privilege of God breathing life into them. We are, indeed, unique among all creation.

At night you can look up at the stars. When you gaze at the vastness of the universe and the wonders of the cosmos, it is easy to begin to feel very small and very insignificant. But at the same time, viewing the heavens also makes one aware and very cognizant of the One Who made it all. David did, and he was moved by the Spirit of God to write, ***“The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork”*** (Psalm 19:1 [RSV]). The universe we live in is beyond our comprehension. But the God Who made the stars and everything else in the universe also made us. In the midst of this overwhelming universe, God made us in a way that sets us apart from everything else He created. We may feel insignificant, but we are very significant, indeed!

Every man that is born into this world eventually dies spiritually when we sin. The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 2:1 [RSV], ***“And you He made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins. . . .”*** But when the Spirit of God comes into us and brings us to life when we are immersed into Jesus Christ, that person will find his spirit reaching out in faith toward God. After salvation, the new spirit of life within a person begins to transform the soul part of man. These changes within the spirit and the soul demonstrate themselves in the action of the body. This is what Paul was referencing when he said in Romans 12:1-2 [RSV], ***1. I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.***

When we leave this world, the soul and spirit return to God to be dealt with accordingly. The Wise Writer tells us in Ecclesiastes 12:7 [RSV], ***“and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God Who gave it.”*** The redeemed go to glory, while the lost are condemned to Hell as can be seen in the following passages.

1. "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2. In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3. And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.” (John 14:1-3 [RSV])

“The wicked shall depart to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.” (Psalm 9:17 [RSV])

5. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are suffering – 6. since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7. and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8. inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might, 10. when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 [RSV])

God is sovereign in the continuation of life. God determines the dawn of every life. As we sing, “God holds the germ within His hand.” God is in charge of when life is created within the womb, and He is sovereign over death. Where will you spend your eternity? The choice is up to you!