

Sermon Outline

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

THOSE OF THE DIVINE IMAGE: THE GLORY OF CHRIST THROUGH THE CULTURAL MANDATE *Genesis 1:26-28*

I. Evangelization and the Making of Whole Persons

II. God Announces His Plans to Make Man (Genesis 1:26)

- A. Genesis 1 is that part of the Bible that shows us how the universe was made.
- B. But Genesis 1 also shows us *why* the human race was made.
- C. We had already learned in Colossians 1 that we were all made for Christ.
- D. *But how are we to serve the purposes of Christ?*
—Genesis 1 gives us some clues.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Genesis 1 show us? (2) How does Genesis 1 fit with Colossians 1:26-28?

III. “Then God Said” (Genesis 1:26)

- A. In Genesis 1:26, the first words we encounter are: “Then God said...”
- B. These words come after a series of creative actions that were performed by God.
—And for each of those acts, God created the world and its components by his *word*.
- C. Each time God was set to create something, this phrase, “then God said,” appears (1:3, 6, 9, 11, etc.).
- D. “Then God said” is a majestically heavy phrase indeed.
 - 1. It tells us that God is about to do something.
 - 2. It represents God’s action through his speech.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What are the first words we encounter in 1:26? (2) How have these words been used before? What great acts have they preceded? What great act is about to happen now, in verse 26?

IV. God Decides Mankind’s Nature and Purpose (Genesis 1:26)

- A. So, what does God say now, at this point in the creation week? He says two things.

1. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”
 2. “And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth...”
- B. God is doing two things here.
1. God is stating his intention to create mankind in his image.
 2. God is defining mankind’s responsibility to exercise dominion over the creatures of the earth.
- C. But two questions emerge:
1. What does it mean for man to be made in God’s image?
 2. What does it mean for man to exercise dominion over the creatures of the world?
- D. *What does it mean for man to be made in the image of God?*
1. This question is partly answered by the phrase, “after our likeness.”
—To be made in the image of God is to be made *like* God, or *resembling* God in some way.
 2. But what ways are we humans created to be like God?
 - a. The Bible does say that God has a form.
 - i. Numbers 12:8: Only the prophet Moses could see “the form of the LORD.”
 - ii. Philippians 2:6: Prior to his incarnation, Christ was “in the form of God.”
 - b. But God himself does not tell us what this form looks like.
—And Deuteronomy 4:15 warns us not to make images of God because we do not know what God looks like.
 - c. It is safest to say that our likeness to God is, at the very least, in terms of *function*.
—The image of God in us is our God-given right and responsibility to be a living, breathing representation of God in everything that we think, do, and say.
 - d. OT scholar Walter Brueggemann writes: “The image of God in the human person is a mandate of power and responsibility. But it is power as God exercises power.”
 - e. In Ephesians 4:24, the apostle Paul calls us to put on the new self, which is, “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”
—Paul links the image of God very closely to righteous conduct.
- E. *What then does it mean for mankind, therefore, to have dominion over the beings of the earth?*
1. Dominion is part of the image of God in us.
 2. Just as God rules the entire universe, mankind is to be like God by ruling that corner of the universe God has entrusted to us.

3. Since God's rule brings life, humanity rules the creatures of the world not by oppressing or abusing them; but by seeking their health and strength.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What two things does God say in 1:26? (2) What does to mean to be made in the image of God? How are we like God? (3) What does it mean for mankind to have dominion over the beings of the earth?

V. So God Creates Man in His Own Image (Genesis 1:27)

- A. In verse 27, God does as he had purposed:
 1. "So God created man in his own image..."
 2. "...in the image of God he created him..."
 3. "...male and female he created them."
- B. This verse summarizes the more detailed creation account of Genesis 2.
- C. The first man and woman were Adam and Eve respectively.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does God do in 1:27? (2) How did God create man? (3) What gender was the first man/human? (4) What are the names of the first man and woman?

VI. The Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28)

- A. Having made the man and the woman, "God blessed them."
—This suggests a royal ceremony of marriage and investiture.
- B. And then, "God said to them..."
 1. "...Be fruitful and multiply..."
 2. "...and fill the earth and subdue it..."
 3. "...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."
—These instructions are for the whole human race, because Adam and Eve were representative figures.
- C. There are several elements in this instruction, which has come to be known as the *cultural mandate*:
 1. The instruction to *reproduce* and to *populate* the earth.
 2. The instruction to *subdue* the earth.
 3. The instruction to *exercise authority* over all the creatures of the earth.
—The cultural mandate is a call to build human civilization, the City of Man.
- D. However, since all rulers and powers were made for Christ, the cultural mandate exists for the glory of God and Christ.

—This would mean that the City of Man is first and foremost the City of God.

E. Man's calling to serve God first is seen very clearly in Genesis 2.

1. God puts our first father Adam to "work" and "keep" the Garden of Eden.

2. The Hebrew words behind "work" and "keep" have religious connotations, *priestly* significance.

—In Numbers 3:5-10 and 8:15, the words for "work" and "keep" are used for the priestly task of working in and caring for God's house.

3. Also, the fact (a) that our parents met with God in the Garden of Eden, and (b) that God later expelled them out of the Garden of Eden, signals to us that this is no ordinary Garden.

—The Garden of Eden was the house of God on earth at this stage in time.

F. We can say this with great confidence:

1. God's (revealed) plan was for the human race to increase and fan out from the holy Garden of Eden to cover the rest of the globe.

2. In doing so, God's Word would spread by means of his human image.

3. In time to come—assuming that all things went well—the human race would grow into a great world-civilization with the Lord God as the Great King.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) "God blessed them." What events do these words represent? (2) What instructions did God give to the newly-created human couple? What is the term we use for these instructions? (3) Why is the City of Man also the City of God (at this stage in history)? (4) What does God intend to accomplish by the growth and spread of the human race?

VII. A Cultural Mandate to the Glory of Christ

A. We can put Colossians 1 and Genesis 1 together. *How* we were made to glorify Christ?

—*We were made to glorify God and Christ by growing God-centered communities, so expanding the Rule of God wherever we go.*

B. The disobedience of our first parents introduced complications.

1. By rejecting God's rule...

a. they stamped sin into the hearts of their descendants.

b. they brought humanity under evil cosmic powers.

2. For those reasons, God's Name can no longer be stamped on everything that mankind does.

3. Mankind now exercises God-given authority in evil ways.

- C. But the Lord Jesus Christ came to save sinners—and renew the cultural mandate.
1. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn 3:8), not creation.
 2. The foundations for a Christian culture are already visible in a few passages (Col 3:17; 1 Cor 10:31).
 3. As forgiven people, we can proceed to build Christ-centered families, communities, churches, cities, and eventually, civilizations as well.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Based on Genesis 1, how were we made to glorify Christ? (2) What complications did the fall introduce? (3) Now that we have been saved from our sins, what does God expect us to get busy doing?

VIII. The Gospel and the Cultural Mandate

Our heavenly Father is asking us to *be* world Christians as well as *make* world Christians. He is asking us to be Christians who serve Christ by participating in the cultural mandate; forming Christ-exalting, life-giving communities. He is also asking us to nurture Christians who would take their earthly responsibilities seriously. The way to do this is by teaching that Jesus Christ truly is Savior and Healer of the world!

- A. God wants Christians who will, in the light of the Gospel, use the cultural mandate as a means of serving Christ.
- B. Participating in the cultural mandate does not mean that...
1. Every person has to marry and raise large families.
 - a. Our Lord Jesus himself was not married.
 - b. God does call some people to singleness (Mt 19:11).
 2. We must become vegans.

—God gave animals to us for our sustenance (Gen 9:3; Dt 12:20; 1 Tim 4:3).
 3. We may not kill animals even if our health is endangered by them.
 - a. God calls for rampaging oxen to be killed (Ex 21:29).
 - b. Subduing dangerous animals is part of exercising rule over them.
 4. We must leave the earth undeveloped, uncultivated.

—God’s people will eventually live in a majestic city (Rev 21:10).
- C. Participating in the cultural mandate does mean that we consider the cultivation, enrichment, and preservation of God’s earth and the good in human cultures a key part of our service to Christ.
- D. To do this, we teach that...
1. Christ is both Maker and Savior of all creation.
 2. Christ has wisdom and instructions for us to engage with creation and culture.

3. Christ wants us to exercise life-giving rule over the earth.
—Christians need to be concerned with creation care.
 4. Christ wants us to engage in life-giving relationships with one another.
 - a. Relationships marked by genuine care, nurture, encouragement, and refreshment for one another.
 - b. At a macro level, this translates to...
 - i. Life-preserving sciences
 - ii. Life-enriching arts
 - iii. Life-protecting politics
- E. Yes, God will purify all things (2 Pet 3:10). But all that is good in creation and culture will survive.
—Revelation 21:24: “By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it [the New Jerusalem].”
- F. In the end, the Gospel of Jesus Christ aims at the restoration of the heavens and the earth through Christ.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does participation in the cultural mandate mean? What does it not mean? (2) What must we teach as part of our evangelization to develop “world Christians”? (3) How concerned are you for creation care? Would you grow in your understanding to better care for creation? (4) How would life-giving relationships look like at the larger, macro levels?