

A few months ago, working on a project with an engineer member of the congregation, I learned a cool new word: “charrette.” A charrette (*shuh-ret*) consists of an intense period of design activity, usually resulting in some kind of document that describes the solution for a problem. The design can be of an engineering sort, with drawings and specifications for the building of a bridge. Or the design can be of a sociological sort, dealing with organizational dynamics, like how to solve the problem of unemployment.

We continue to dig deeper into the idea of the ‘Family,’ we’re going to go all the way back to the beginning and look at God’s charrette – the Lord’s design plan – regarding the family. We’ll be doing this over the next few weeks in several ways:

- God’s well-intended design, particular as it speaks to relationship with Him and with each other.
- We will also see what happens when we don’t go by God’s blueprints and try to “fix” things on our own.

When I say “the beginning,” I do mean all the way back. Please turn in your Bibles to Gen 1 and we’ll take a look at God’s charrette for the family.

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 heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens 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. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.¹

My thesis statement today is this: God has built into the human family the fundamental need for relationship with Himself. God’s desire to be in relationship to us is reflected in the way that He made us.

Uses Of The Phrase ‘God’s Image And Likeness’

God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The “image of God in man,” as theologians call it, is too vast a topic to cover fully in one day – never mind one of three points in a sermon. But here are a few of the treasures behind this phrase.

The word “image” comes from a root meaning “to cut,” signifying the idea of being cut from the same cloth. For example, false gods of wood, or stone, or metal are called images in the

¹ Gen 1.26-31

OT. *When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places.*² Those false images pretend to be “cut from the same cloth” that God is, but they are not, thus God’s anger at the offense.

And the word “likeness” means a similitude, like a pattern for a dress or a pattern for a piece of equipment. The word is even used in the Bible once to describe what one can only understand to be something like a set of drawings that were drawn to scale – a pattern to be used for construction.³

In Gen 9, we read *whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.*⁴ Murder is so serious, not so much because it’s about safety, but murder is a personal, physical blow against God Himself. This one creature – the human – is made so like God, that killing him is an offense against God akin to blasphemy. And that fact gives us a context for Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:

*You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.*⁵

And the phrase itself – “likeness and image,” with the two words used together for emphasis – is only used one other time in Gen 5.3: *When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.*

Seth was not Adam, but he was like Adam. He was cut of the cloth from which Adam was cut. By the way, that cut of cloth not only included the nature of sin and death from Adam, but also continue to carry on the blessings and benefits of being made in God’s image and likeness.

Meanings And Senses Of ‘God’s Image And Likeness’

There are long definitions and descriptions about what it means to be made in the image of God. One of the best I’ve heard is that God has built into our being the characteristics and traits we need to understand Him. Don’t forget, God is not just the big man upstairs, a version of ourselves but pumped up like the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man in Ghostbusters. He is not of the same stuff as we are. He has omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

But God made us an analogy of Himself. An analogy is “a comparison between two things ... for the purpose of explanation or clarification, a partial similarity, a thing that is comparable to something else in significant respects.” We are not God, and God is not his creation, nevertheless the highest expression of God’s nature in creation is ourselves. We can find meaningful comparisons between ourselves and God.

² Num 33.51-52, also 2Ki 11.18.

³ 2Ki 16.10.

⁴ Gen 9.6

⁵ Mat 5.21-22

Into humans alone have God given the ability to be “spiritual,” to have a self-conscious personality, to be aware both of temporality and eternity, and to be an explicit inheritor of eternity.

Reasoning in the abstract, a conscience regarding moral consequence, a will that is aware of itself, a free agent that is not driven by instinct – these all belong to humans alone. So while we don’t have omnipotence, we can abstractly grasp very powerful. We don’t have omnipresence, but our imaginings regarding incredible speed, or immensity of scope are an analogy of it. And we don’t have omniscience, but we at least understand that degree to which knowledge is interrelated.

Could even the smartest animal attempt to understand what Galatians 5:22: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* I’d love to see the look on a cat’s face when I read Romans 8:29 out loud to it. Um, Mr. Cat: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Think about these texts of Scripture being applied to a mouse or a turtle: *Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.*⁶

Applications

It’s a great deal to try to wrap our heads around. God is not a created being, but in us as created beings He has imprinted enough of Himself that we can relate to Him, even though he is wholly and utterly different from us. We are not and will never become uncreated God, but we have imprinted in us enough of God’s attributes and character that we can step outside of ourselves and relate to what is wholly and utterly other than ourselves.

We’ll never understand with God’s understanding, BUT as I said before God has created us with the capability of learning what we need to know about Himself while on this earth. That’s why we go to church, study the Bible, and commit to Christian fellowship. We should be constantly learning about Him so that we can better understand what he wants from us.

So I say again; inherent in the design work of humanity, at the most fundamental and central core of our makeup, God said: let’s be sure that we make this one, this creature enough like I/we are⁷, so that we can be sure this creature can be in relationship with us.

We cannot exist, without expressing the need, the desire, the compulsion to be in relationship to God. At its base, every longing, desire, passion, want, need is aimed towards relating to God; either in a true and helpful way, or in a sin perverted and destructive way.

What is it, then, that this desire and this inability proclaim to us, but that there was once in man a true happiness of which there now remain to him only the mark and empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his

⁶ Col 3.9-11, Rom 8.29

⁷ a reference to Trinity through the use of the majestic plural, see Keil & Delitzsch re use of majestic plural in Gen 1.

surroundings, seeking from things absent the help he does not obtain in things present? But these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say, only by God Himself.⁸

Any attempt to ignore relationship with God, is an attempt to not be what we are in our most basic being. Saying or living like we don't need God, is like saying to a fish: don't swim, like saying to a bird: don't fly, like saying to a pastor: don't talk!

One more way to look at this. When God created, one might say that He was starting a story line. In the story that he began to tell, He designed in beauty to be enjoyed, the art of mountains, the music of streams, the symphony of the eco-system. The relationships between animals and plants, or water and cellular metabolism, or any of countless ways in which there are brilliant little gems just waiting to be uncovered in how creation works. In fact, the artistry is so interwoven into the stuff of creation, that the simplest acts of waking, sleeping, working, eating, procreation are themselves acts of creativity and art!

But for the most part, the artwork is unaware of its artistry. A painting does not appreciate itself. Bach's most majestic pieces do not sense their glorious nature. And Bach's pen, ink, and paper – though they contained the musical notes and the words *Soli Deo Gloria* – cannot revel in the pleasing sound of the music or make sense of the words and give glory to God.

So God made an audience just for all this artistry and said: enjoy this with me! You can't see the story quite as well as I can, but that's all right, you'll learn to see it better over time and we can enjoy it together. In fact, I'm looking forward to the joy of teaching you!

Of all creation, we are uniquely made and gifted to see God's story writ large. We alone are privileged to get a sense of the story line, the art, the music, the symphony. And, I might add, we alone are responsible for taking a bucket of paint and a knife and marring the whole grand work.

So as a disciple of Jesus, get this image. Are you a child and under the authority of your parents? That is an expression of God's relationship with us and he designed it that way. Are you married and in relationship to each other, both in headship and submission, as well as mutual submission? That is a reflection of the image of God in man as well. Are you single and desire a mate, or desire deeper relationships with friends? That is the image of God in humanity being played out.

We'll be looking more at what this means next week, when we see that God has delegated authority to us, and give us moral responsibility. But in the meantime, realize that you – in your every day work and play, solitude and relationships, are playing out the story, the artistry, the image of God in you – either well, or badly.

⁸ Pascal, Blaise, *Pensees* (Meditations), #425, Section VII

Genesis 1.26-31

The Image of God in Man – God’s Design Plan – I

1. Introduction

1.1. A charrette is a design _____.

1.2. We’re looking at the charrette of creation, a design plan for _____.

plan, relationship, Himself, cloth, God, murder, Adam, understand, humanity

1.3. God has built into the human family the fundamental need for relationship with _____.

2. Uses Of The Phrase “God’s Image / Likeness”

2.1. The word “image” comes from a word signifying “cut from the same _____.”

The word “likeness” signifies a “pattern.”

2.2. False images are an attempt to make a created thing as if it were cut from the same stuff as _____ (Num 33.51-52).

2.3. God punishes _____ because of His image in mankind (Gen 9.6, Mat 5.21-22).

2.4. Seth was made in the image and likeness of _____ (Gen 5.3).

3. Meaning of “Image And Likeness”

3.1. God has built into us an analogy of himself, so that we can _____ Him.

3.2. This is a characteristic of _____ alone.

4. Applications / Thoughts