**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 12-10-2023
Essentials of the Faith #2 – God as Creator & Humanity** **as Image Bearers**

One of the things that I love to do is to be out taking walks. I often find myself at Chestnut Grove Park right down the road. I have taken walks in the heat and in the cold. I have taken walks in the sunshine and in the rain. Though, I must admit that those walks are usually shorter ones. And I’ve witnessed numerous sunsets there as well. But every time I walk around that path, I see creation pointing to an amazing Creator. This is true no matter the weather.

In fact, everywhere I go, I see a beautiful creation that is pointing to an awesome Creator. Driving on Front Street in Harrisburg, looking over at the beautiful Susquehanna River. In the mountains and at the beaches and over farm lands, creation testifies to an awesome Creator.

The truth is that when you see a beautiful painting, you realize that there must have been a highly gifted painter. It is assumed that the beautiful painting did not paint itself. Or a sculpting must have a sculptor. The same is true for creation. Creation testifies to a Creator.

Take a moment to think of the order of the universe and earth’s place within it. If it was just a tiny bit different, life would not be possible. The likelihood of life in its rich variety and fullness just happening by chance or good luck is enormously small to say that it is essentially an impossibility.

It is common sense to believe in a Creator God. And it has been common sense throughout history until just recently.

I share all of this with you today, because as we continue on our Series entitled *“The Essentials to the Christian faith,”* this connects with one of these essentials, which is that God is our Creator and we are His image bearers.

Even without the Bible, creation testifies in at least 3 ways to the nature of its Creator. First, this Being must be incredibly intelligent. To make a world with such precision and order reveals an incredibly intelligent mind behind it. For example, we can think about the complexity of the human eye and how profound it was in its design. So there is incredible intelligence behind creation.

Second, we learn from creation that this Creator must be enormously powerful in making all the things that have been made. We think of the sun and the moon and the stars and oceans and deserts and mountains and waterfalls and trees and animals, and of course, people. What power this Being must hold to do these things as their Creator.

And third, we also think of the creativity of this Creator. This being did not just make one kind of this and one kind of that. He made tremendous variety of everything. How many of you have eaten parsimmons before? I just did for the first time. It is a tasty fruit. But that is one of perhaps thousands of fruits that this incomparable creative Creator has made. The same is true with vegetation. Plants and vegetables and animals of all different kinds and colors and sizes.

All of these truths are confirmed in Scripture. The Book of Genesis describes the living God as Creator and sovereign over all. In the first 3 verses from our entire Bible, Genesis 1:1-3 we read this: **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the water. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.**

As this chapter goes on, we see God systematically creating the earth and everything in it. And we see the story build and build with God not only bringing forth the earth, but also its many creatures. And finally, there is a pinnacle. In verses 26-28 we read of a very special creature.

**26Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+1%3A26-28&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26a)**] and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”**

**27So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**

**28God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”**

These verses are so amazing. Of all the many things that the Lord chose to make, we are told that He created mankind in His own image.

This should not surprise us as humans have long realized that we are unique among God’s creatures. But here we are told directly from God’s written Word that mankind is made in a way that distinguishes us from all the other creatures.

So why do I view acknowledging God as our Creator and we are His image bearers as an essential of the Christian faith? It is because this truth is a profound reminder of how we are called to see God, to see ourselves and to see others.

***First, how are we to see God based on these verses? We are to see God as the One who made us and who owns us and whom we owe everything towards***.

Our lives are not meant to be lived for ourselves, but for Him. He is our Maker and we are His special creation. We are not our own.

What are the implications of this? It means that our lives are not meant to center on us, but on getting to know this Maker and to make Him known. He has given us His Word to help us get to know Him. He has given us His Son – Jesus Christ – to reveal Him perfectly and to bring us back to Him by His grace. And He offers to give His Holy Spirit to live within us, to empower us to do this well.

Truly, we owe everything to Him and we are to give Him every day and every moment of every day as worship. We are not here to promote our will and to make a name for ourselves. Rather, we are here on earth to point to our Creator in all that we say and do.

This is very against the grain in our world today. Since the fall of humanity written about in Genesis chapter 3, humans have been naturally self-centered. We are born that way. We are born self-focused and self-centered.

But God is a God of transformation and He can change us from the inside out. By His power, we are able to live a God-centered life dedicated to our Maker.

How do we do this well? Prayer must be top priority in our lives. And right behind that, being regularly in God’s Word is essential.

***Second, these truths that God is our Creator and we are His image bearers should help us to see ourselves in a healthier way.***

We are God’s masterpieces. Have you heard of a Stradivarius? It is considered the most valuable violin and has been sold for millions.

We are all Stradivarius in God’s eyes. We are each of extraordinary worth and value. Elsewhere in Scripture, we are told that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. God carefully fashioned us in our mother’s womb and His thoughts towards us are more than we could ever count. And He is for us and not against us.

Certainly, because of sin, we are all broken Stradivariuses. We are all in need of God’s redemption and mercy. We are all sinners in need of a Savior.

But we are still not any less valuable to God. This is why God sent Jesus to rescue us. We are that precious to Him. And so while we should see ourselves with humility we should also recognize that we are precious in God’s sight and our lives are very important. And if our lives are important to Him, our lives should be important to us as well.

This means that we are to love ourselves and recognize our immense value. God doesn’t make junk. Sometimes we can be our own worst enemy. God has given us personalities that are all different. He gives us different gifts and talents. He has made us male and female and given all us different features. But sometimes we don’t embrace these things as good.

When we are wishing to be someone else or to be taller or shorter or blond or brunet or red-head or female or male, instead of giving thanks for the unique Stradivarius that he created us to be, we are bringing harm to ourselves and to others. And most importantly, we are insulting our Maker as we do this.

To put it another way, these passages from Genesis reminds us that we need to love ourselves and recognize our value.

***And third, these verses teach us that we are to see others as equally valuable and precious***. Every person you meet is a Stradivarius in God’s eyes as well. And this means that we are to view that in the same way.

Again, this does not mean that everyone is not equally in need of forgiveness of these sins through God’s amazing plan of salvation. We all need Jesus and His mercy. We celebrate this coming Savior at Christmas and give thanks for His sacrifice for us especially around Easter.

But these verses teach us that every person should be seen with our respect and love. It is so common to see people from a worldly perspective. It is easy to be quick to judge others. It is easy to look down at others.

But these verses remind us that we need to see people from God’s heavenly perspective. These verses also should remind us that dignity and value are inherent in all people. Every person holds incredible value as an image bearer of God. And these truths should remind us to view every life as sacred. Every life matters. Lives in the womb are equally sacred. People of every nation are equally sacred and valuable.

In this world there is so much hate. Many people are raised to hate others just because of their ethnic background or various other reasons. But if we are to follow God and put His words into practice, we are to recognize the dignity and value of each person, each life. And we are to seek to be peace makers in this world, as Christ enables us.

God instructs us in His Word to love our neighbor as we love ourself. This is the 2nd greatest commandment. In order to love our neighbors, we need to love ourselves. And in order to love ourselves and our neighbors in the proper way, we must obey the greatest commandment of loving God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

Friends, the goal of the Christian life is to become more and more and more like Jesus Christ until we go to be with Jesus Christ or He comes to be with us. And this all begins by standing on this essential of the faith. We must remember that the LORD our God is our great Creator and we are His representatives on this earth.

We are His and we owe Him everything. And we are to recognize our value and the value of everyone as God’s image bearers in this world. Whether or not you are into being out walking at the park, like I am, I trust that you will have many glimpses of God’s awesome glory. He is perfectly intelligent and all-powerful and incredibly creative. But as Scripture and history reveal, He is also perfectly good and full of love.

May our life live by an offering to Him, not only by the way we love and honor Him, but also by the ways that we love and honor ourselves and others as His image bearers.

Let’s pray…

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