

Sermon Text for April 26, 2015

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

II Corinthians 4:1-6, Genesis 1:26-31

“We are made in the image of God”

You need to know that I have the best job in the world. Every day people tell me how much they appreciate me and even drop off little reminders of their love for me. You know, I thought it was going to be difficult especially over these past couple weeks with all that was happening in the world of football, what with my favorite player of all time Tim Tebow deciding to come to Philadelphia, and then half the roster of the Eagles now being filled with Cowboys, I thought you might not be so nice to me. But you were wonderful, and really showed me how much you loved me...Let's see, you said, in a poem: Now that Tebow is with us so should you and I got a bumper sticker. Someone went all out and got me a t-shirt. It is so nice to know that I'm loved and cared for and that you all are looking out for me.

I hope you came here to be uplifted in heart and soul, to be filled by Jesus Christ. We have a great message for you today. You need to hear this loud and clear...We are made in the image of God. Wow, pause and think about that, you, you, and you all of us here have been made in the image of God.

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? Genesis makes that very, very clear that this is not a guess, but a fact. Three times in our verses in Genesis it is repeated, it is repeated who made us, and Corinthians clarifies what it means to be made in the image of God. We only need to look to Jesus and understand that he is the perfect model of what it means to be created in the image of God. Today I am here to tell you that what makes the biggest difference in our lives is that we are made in the image of God.

God and a genetic engineer got into an argument one day and the engineer said: I bet I can clone a human just as well as you can make one. So God knelt down in the clay, formed a human figure and then breathed life into it. “No problem, the genetic engineer said,” and started to pick up some dirt. God took the dirt from him and said, “sorry, you've gotta get your own dirt.”

I hope you've been enjoying this series of sermons on creation. Soon we will be moving on to the people of Genesis, and their stories which are so familiar to us. The stories that really reflect the incredible love and care that God has for us. I don't want

you all to get confused and bogged down with all of the details that we have been seeing over the past weeks as we have been examining the different days of creation. When our kids are were small and they would say their prayers it wasn't always clear what they were saying right? I remember Naomi was classic she would just talk and talk and talk it would sound something like this: safadgrasfDADDY afdaeeefljlMOMMY aodhoRACHEL jadjljdjfiiejddsjfdsBETHANY. Amen.

We certainly don't understand the details or the words for that matter in the prayer except for the key ones. And they tell us what the main emphasis and focus of her prayer is. She was praying for her family. We don't know what exactly she was praying for for her family, but that's okay, we trust. Even though we may not understand all the details of the Genesis account we do get the main point and that is that God is our Creator and the one who gives us life. Today we arrive where all of the details were heading to, the main point. God gives us life in these verses. When that happens we find the very first encounter that God has with man and woman. Our very first encounter with God. This first encounter should show us how important we are in the eyes of God. First of all the Scripture mentions 3 times that God creates us, and then another three times that we are created in a very specific way, in the image of God. It is plainly clear that we, humans, are the focus and the main players in this creation account. As these 6 days have passed by, we have arrived today at the culmination, the reason for all of creation, and that is the creation of man and woman. Everything else may have been a blur but it is clear that the focus has been on us the whole time.

This is important to remember. We were not just one of the many creatures that God created. We were and are His masterpiece. We celebrated earth day this past week, which is fine and nice, but let us not ever confuse the fact that we have been made in the image of God, we are able to have a special relationship with our Savior that no other creature or creation is able to have. That should make us feel good.

After each day God said it is good, but do you know what he said after we were created? Now that is very good. Can't you see that God is made very happy by creation and that by the time he gets to us it seems as if it puts him over the edge and he is just ecstatic. It is obvious that we are the culmination of God's work. And, this is the real kicker, we find that God loves us so much that he made us in his image. If you ever have one of those days when the world seems to be against you. You know as if nobody really

cares or that you seem to have a sticker on your back that says disrespect me. We'll read this passage again and see the trust and the love that God has for us. God loves us so much and trusts us so much that he made us in his image. I could repeat that over and over again and it wouldn't get old.

A lot of people have debated back and forth what exactly it means when we say that we are made in the image of God. In Scripture we find a God who shows emotion, movement, change. God exhibits sadness, anger, gladness, joy. God is able to love, as we are. God speaks and acts, as we do. God creates, just as we are able. This certainly goes a long way to describing what we mean when we say we are created in the image of God.

But II Corinthians goes even further and states point blank: Jesus Christ is the image of God, take heart. Paul states this to encourage and provide some confidence in a group of believers who were a bit down and maybe even flailing around in their spiritual walk. Do you want to know what you were created for? Look at Jesus Christ and make him the goal of your life. In Jesus we find the person after whom we are to model our life. We have heard this before, but just think of what a difference it would make in your life if you could consider yourself made in the image of God and so we are expected to follow Jesus' lead. Yes, a lot is required and expected of us if that is the case. Yes God did place a tremendous amount of trust in us by creating us in His image. But Paul states take heart, you can do it. Whenever you get to the point that you are asking yourself if this Christian living is really worth it or does it make a difference then just remember that God loves us so much that he made us in his image. It is in Jesus Christ where we see, as Paul states, the light of the glory of God. It is in Christ where we need to put our trust and our confidence and not those things that make us feel assured of ourselves in this world such as our economic fortunes, our popularity, our skills or anything temporary.

We've all had bad days, right? Even bad seasons in our lives. We had the blessing of the animals this past week, it was great, thanks to all who brought their animals. Rosie, our dog, needed a blessing, because she had recently had a really bad day. Sometimes she gets out of our yard....

So, if you need a pick me up, remember, you have been made in the image of God and Jesus reflects that image perfectly. Having a relationship with our Savior reclaims that image in which we were created.

We find in Genesis our first encounter with God and now Paul is telling us that we are able to encounter God every single day. Through Jesus Christ whose death eliminated our sin and whose resurrection recreated God's image within us we are able to live in that image every single day with Christ. Not only are we able to see in Christ God, but we are also able to have confidence in Christ because through him we know that we are made in that same image. Take heart and know that there is hope and that we can have hope because God continues to create and transform us into his image.

If you are thinking, this image of God is almost non-existent in me. I don't feel that holy at all. What possibly do I have within me that could remotely contribute to God's kingdom here on this earth. Some people have a hard time believing that God could actually care for them and trust them so much that he would create them in his image with the potential to be as Christ Jesus was. In fact currently we are having a hard time finding elders because I think some people feel that maybe they are not worthy, or able.

You know, they are right. Nobody is worthy or able to serve God on their own. Just like nobody ultimately is able to be happy on their own without Jesus Christ. But we can with confidence because of Christ within us. It is easy in a church not to serve and then we will feel isolated no matter how large the church is. If you are not involved in any of the activities of the church or active in any ministries then it can be lonely spiritually to just come to church on Sunday and then go home for another week. Look around you and know that you are surrounded by people who are made in the image of God. Take heart and get involved in a program and if there isn't one for you then start one.

It may sound trite but the machine of VBS is starting back up and that could be a great place to get involved for the first time after a long time, or to begin to feel out where you feel called. Let's not hesitate to contribute our time and talents to God's church so that others may hear the good news that they are also made in the image of God. This is an appeal, in case you missed it.

We can be encouraged today and we can take heart because each and every one of us has been made in the image of God by a God who loves us as a father, who cares for us as a brother, and gives us the energy to work as only the Spirit of God can. Amen.