

Created for a Purpose

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Y. Joe Kim

Genesis 1:26-31

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to 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 wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' ²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ 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 God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that 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 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

1. 2017 Vacation Bible School

Starting tomorrow and until this Friday, we will be hosting our 2017 VBS. We are so grateful to Pat Frost, our teachers and volunteers who will help with this exciting outreach program. Please keep praying for our teachers so that the children can learn about who God is and who they are.

This year's theme is "Maker Fun Factory." In the Leader's Manual, the author says, "God hasn't retired. He's as busy now as he's ever been. But until you see that with your own eyes, it's tough to have a vibrant faith. God can seem distant or impersonal" (page 6).

Do we feel that God is active in our everyday lives? Sometimes we can feel like God is distant. It can be hard to see the evidence of God's presence, power, and passion in our daily lives. But God is always active in our lives. Sometimes we may miss what God is doing, but God is often working throughout our days in ways that are leading us towards him even when we don't immediately recognize it.

Throughout this week, our VBS children will learn how to develop a God-focused view and a grateful heart. After VBS, my personal hope is that the children will be able to see God in Scripture, in people, and in their circumstances. I pray that the children will see God at work in their lives not only at church, but also at home, at school, and everywhere they go.

I'm excited to see what God will do in the lives of these children. I pray the children realize that God has created the entire planet and that the children discover that they are one-of-a-kind creations of the Most High God who loves them dearly.

If you have any time, please come and stop by even for a minute to see what God is doing in the lives of the children in our area. I pray that we are all inspired as the children learn that they are created for a purpose and that God is preparing them every day to do something amazing with the gifts that He gives to each one of them.

2. The Creation Story

The author of Genesis tells us that after God created the universe, God created male and female in God's image and likeness. What does it mean that man and woman were created in the image of God? And how do we know that this happened?

Let us first look at the intent of the author of Genesis. The author uses this phrase to convey how awesome and wonderful the creation of humanity is. But the Bible does not explicitly define what it means in that humanity is made in the image of God.

The author instead wants to point out that in the creation of human beings, God has a specific idea and plan. When people were created, God said, "**God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good**" (verse 31). God created male and female and was pleased with his creation. Like parents with a newborn baby, God saw man and woman and was happy.

In Psalm 139:14, David says, "**I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.**" David praises God's creation, acknowledging that he himself was also created by God. Today, the world's population is estimated at over 7 billion people. Each person is unique, with unique traits, fingerprints and characteristics. In the same way, God creates each person as a masterpiece, a wonderful work as David puts it, as a creation made by God himself.

3. The Image and Likeness of God

What then does it mean to be created in the image of God and God's likeness? Scholars suggest different interpretations. For me, instead of trying to distinguish between the two phrases, image of God and God's likeness, I believe that this note is made to tell the reader that God has created humanity different from other living creations. God doesn't have a body in the same way that you and I have a physical body so the likeness that the Bible references is probably not regarding physical likeness. Rather, the author is

telling us that man and woman are uniquely created for a purpose by God. Man and woman are made to be like God, sharing in God's traits and characteristics and sharing in God's creativity, or His ability to create.

We see the depth of God's creativity when we look at our own human body. The brain is the most complex part in the human body. Scientists say that it is made up of about 100 billion nerve cells, called neurons, connected like wires in a giant telephone exchange. We know messages pass down them like electrical signals, and jump from one neuron to the next by release of neurotransmitter chemicals. We even know where many of the different brain functions, such as memory, sight, and smell, reside. But we don't comprehend how the pattern of electrical and chemical signals results in such amazing things as consciousness, intelligence, and creativity. God's creativity is beyond our comprehension.

If our God is a creative master who brings beauty out of chaos and if we are created in the image of God, the creative gifts are given to us by God. God created us as creative people. Every man, woman, and child is creative. Creative people do creative things. When we create something, we reflect God's image. John Piper wrote a book entitled *Create: Stop Making Excuses and Start Making Stuff*. He tells us to stop making excuses and start using our creative gifts. Do you know that we are gifted musicians, mechanics, teachers, dancers, woodworkers, organizers, landscapers, quilters, planners, and preachers? God does not want us to waste creative gifts or hoard them. God wants us to use them to benefit those around us and to bring God honor. Do we use God's creative gifts?

These days I've been asking myself whether I'm serving our church using creative gifts. I've specifically been praying for God's wisdom in reaching out to our community with more creative ideas. How can we be more creative? Jesus tells his disciples, ***“Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened”*** (Matt. 7:7-8). And James 1:5 also says, ***“If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.”***

Even in times when we don't know the answer, or can't see a solution, the Bible tells us that God will teach and guide us in every aspect of life. I hope especially this week as we serve the children of our area, that God empowers our teachers so that teachers can teach the children with more creative ideas and help the children learn that they can be more creative.

4. Created for a Purpose

As Christians, we believe that we are created in His image. But why do you think God created us? I've heard a lot of different reasons over the years. However, in Genesis 1:28, God says to the first man and woman: **1) "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." 2) "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."** In this we see that God's purpose for creating us is to have children and to take care of God's creation in this world.

Recently, I've been asking myself and perhaps you have as well, "Why am I here?" Everyone on earth is born and will likely one day pass away. But we are reminded this morning that God has put us on this earth, in New England, and in the Sagamore Beach area for a purpose.

God created each of us for a reason. As much as we are all uniquely created, God gives us each a unique way to care for His creation and to serve the people of this world like Christ first served us and to help God's people grow in their faith.

5. Conclusion

One of the most important missions for Jewish people is to teach their children God's commandment. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, "**These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.**" By teaching God's commandments, children can learn what their missions are.

The greatest joy for parents and grandparents is to help their children and grandchildren to live their lives according to God's purpose. We may not have our own children and grandchildren, but there are many children and grandchildren in our community who need someone like us to teach and share with them how to become more creative people.

6. Application

Mary Hunt-Cifrino has a great story of God's goodness. She will share with us this morning why she was so happy and grateful last Sunday.

Romans 10:17 says, "**Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**" We are called to teach those around us, especially our children this week through VBS, the truth that they are created for a purpose. The common purpose for Jesus' followers is to share the constant love of God that will allow God's children to grow in their faith to be used for God's kingdom and for His glory. Amen.