

## CCH 26SEP21 Genesis 1:26-31 “Introducing Humanity”

v31

Start with a question: What do you see when you look in the mirror?

You might say, what a silly question, I see my face as I brush my teeth or put on my make-up, or dash out of the door on the school run.

But what is your view of yourself? Are you happy with what you see? And who are you? Do you tell yourself that you are just a “naked ape” as one scientist described humanity. Do you see a mistake, or a meaningless statistic, a monster? Or do you see a precious royal child of God?

We are in week 3 of a 9 week walk through Genesis 1-4, and I've been saying that I believe these foundational passages of Scripture give us a lens to view God, the Creation, and everything around us.

But as we come to Day 6, the creation of humanity, we are given the lenses by which we can begin correctly to view **ourselves**: our family, society, our neighbours. There's much more that we will see about humanity as we look at chapters 2 (when we come to look at sex) and 3 (when we come to look at the fall), but this section is really helpful, because it teaches us that fundamentally...

### WE ARE MADE TO REFLECT GOD.

Look at v26a and look at v27a

Of all the things that could have been highlighted about humanity when we were created, this is the first. We are made in the image and likeness of God.

In other words, in some way, we are like God in a way that the other animals aren't. We reflect him. When you see a human you see a godlike person!

So what exactly is it that makes us like God in a way that the other animals aren't? Our appearance, our faculty to think or reason or speak? There have been many suggestions throughout church history.

Well, we shouldn't be surprised that the passage itself tells us, so let's do some careful Bible study. Let me first overview the 5 paragraphs with you, and then let me suggest two ways in which the passage highlights how we reflect God.

First a quick overview, and we do this by looking at the verbs and seeing God doing 5 things. In fact in the first 34 verses of Genesis, God is the subject of the verbs 35 times. In our 5 little paragraphs alone we have

- v26 GOD SAID- an act of **deliberation** as God talks with himself (very interesting!)
- v27 GOD CREATED- an act of **creation** as God made humanity.
- v28 GOD BLESSED AND GOD SAID- an act of **benediction** as God gives his divine fatherly blessing on this highpoint of creation.
- v29 GOD SAID- an act of **provision** as he gives us food
- v30 GOD SAW- an act of **observation**. It was VERY good.
- In fact that Hebrew word can be translated “exceedingly!” (Mr Kipling!)
- It was good x6..... It was **very** good v31.

Genesis 1 spills more words on the creation of mankind than on any other aspect of creation, and it culminates in what he thinks of you in this 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph- with humanity Creation is now exceedingly good.

Do you see straight away, that you are not an accident, even if your parents tell you so?

You are not random chance, the result of some evolutionary fluke. You are here because God has decided, created, blessed and provided for you. You are incredibly precious, and incredibly important. Made in the image of God.

Well let's zoom in on how the passage shows we are like God in two ways...

### **I) We are made to reflect God in our relating.**

Did you see a little hint of plurality in God in v26? "Let **us** make mankind in **our** image". We've already seen the Spirit of God hovering over the waters (not hoovering as one young lad in a bible study I was in misread one day!), and we know from the NT that all things were made through Jesus (Col 1).

There's a plurality in God. The rest of the Bible unpacks this. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So there's a diversity in unity.

And so we're not surprised as we look at v27 that .... "God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created him (MANKIND- SINGULAR), male and female he created them (DISTINCTION OF PERSONS- PLURAL)".

Humanity reflects God to the world in our diversity in unity. We'll see that more in a couple of weeks in marriage. Our sex is important. Difference brought into oneness. Not least because we are called to be fruitful and increase- the gift of procreation within the gift of marriage (where God grants it).

We are made in the image of God. Yes, the animals have this male/femaleness, but they don't relate in the same way, at such a level of complexity and intimacy.

We are relational beings. Whether married or single. We're like God in that. It's why lockdown was so hard. Being isolated is not good.

And whenever you see a little old lady at a bus stop, a young man in a café, or a teenager on their phone, you are seeing a little picture of God. Hugely precious.

It's why the Bible (in the second commandment) tells us not to make an image and bow down and worship it as your God. There's already an image that does a wonderful job of showing God, and that is humanity.

So the first implication is that we should **treat one another with respect?**

Whether it's at the **start** of life (the unborn child in the womb) at the **end** of life (palliative care), or in the **middle** of life (your difficult colleague at work), every human being is precious, and we must treat one another with love and care.

It's rather sad when you see signs in a surgery saying "abusive behaviour towards our staff will not be tolerated".

If you came into my house and saw a photo of a me and started drawing a crazy moustache on it or big ears, or even worse if you started ripping up that picture or shouting abuse at it, I personally would be pretty offended. You can say, "I don't mean anything, it's just an image", but it's an image of ME!

How much more is God offended, when we he has put in your school, your workplace, your family a precious image of himself and you mistreat, demean or abuse that person. You are mistreating God. He takes it personally.

### **We are made to reflect God in our relating.**

#### **So treat humanity with respect.**

There's much more to be thought through here in terms of implications, and do make the most of Lifegroups this week to do that, but see how precious each of us is. See how precious you are, as you look in the mirror.

But we need to move onto the second (and perhaps more obvious way in these verses) in which we reflect God as his images on earth.

It's clear in v26 and v28, let me read them to you again.

v26

v28

## 2) We are made to reflect God in our ruling.

We've already seen that God is a ruler God. He is the subject of the verbs, the great doer in Genesis 1. He is the great organiser, manager, boss. Well he's made us in his likeness.

We are to be workers, and we are to be carers.

Workers, because we are made in the image of the worker God (who also rests as we will see next week). When you go off to work, whether that is in a factory, or in a business or in an office, or looking after young children or old folks, or managing a home, you are a tiny piece of the jigsaw of humanity ruling over the world. We are all interconnected.

The techy who programmes code so that we can watch our TV, the lawyer who represents people fairly so that society can be safe, the shop worker who sells goods so that we can eat. It's such a dignified and Godlike thing to work. It's why unemployment can be so difficult, so demoralising, so discouraging, and why we should support those in our church without work, and help them find useful activity, even if it's in a volunteer capacity for a while.

God has put humanity over the world in a way that he hasn't put other animals in charge! And the stuff (shape and content) that he's put in days 1 to 6 are all under us (though interestingly not the sun and moon and stars, we do have limits!).

You can say we are his viceroys, his stewards. He has delegated the ruling of the planet to us. It's so helpful to know this. ▲ There used to be an advert for BUPA healthcare that said "you are amazing, we want to keep you that way!" Well you **are** pretty amazing! Note a couple of verses....

Spot the difference... In v22 God blessed the animals **and said**.

v28 God bless humanity **and said to them!** We can able to listen to the voice of God! We are different from the animals, God particularly has singled out us!

Yes birds build nests, but humans build society.

Badgers dig holes, we mine precious metals for jewellery or for nuclear reactions  
Squirrels gather nuts, humans gather information and put it on millions of pages of Wikipedia (currently 6.8 million articles in English alone).

You are amazing. God has made you **work** the planet.

And God has made you to **care** for the planet.

We are to rule it, we are to fill it, we are to subdue it (which doesn't mean destroy it or mistreat it, but care for it). And a fascinating little hint even in the difference between us and the animals regarding food.

v29 Humanity is given seed bearing plants for food. Those are plants and trees with seeds. Is that a hint that we are to work the ground with agriculture?

Whereas v30 the animals are just given green plants- less complexity.

Do you realise that ruling over the planet is a good thing made in God's image?

Again the implications. **Treat the creation with respect...**

How are we doing "ruling over the fish in the seas and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground"?

Answer, we are destroying creation, we are wiping out species, we are warming the planet catastrophically.

Should Christians be concerned for the environment? Of course, we are mandated to look after it. Bible teacher John Stott wrote in his last book "The Radical Disciple" that creation care is a neglected aspect of radical discipleship. He quotes Chris Wright who says "*It seems quite inexplicable to me that there are some Christians who claim to love and worship God, to be disciples of Jesus and yet have no concern for the earth that bears his stamp of ownership. They do not care about the abuse of the earth and indeed, by their wasteful and over-consumptive lifestyles, they collude in it*".

We are to rule over the planet and that means work, and it means creation care.

It is not the only mandate we have, we have the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's gospel to save humanity as a priority even greater than to save the planet, and we trust that God will renew a new heaven and a new earth, a return to a new Eden as he's promised in the Heavenly city of the New Jerusalem.

Christians we don't worship creation, nor do we see the environmental project as the ultimate way to save the planet, as David Attenborough comes "we may for the first time in the entire history of humanity come to know what it feels like to be secure"<sup>1</sup>. But Christians should be at the forefront of ecology, conservation and care for the planet. It is not a cop out, or an accommodation to the spirit of the age, it's doing what Genesis 1 has always asked us to do. And since some applications of the Bible go against the Spirit of the age, here's an area where by and large we are in agreement with non-Christians, and therefore have something positive to say.

### **Treating Creation with respect....**

We can do that on the **macro** scale as we

- take seriously the work of lobbying and supporting governments to work together with other nations for lasting change.

On the **medium** scale we can...

- join Christian organisations like "A Rocha", and become an eco-church.

We can do that on the **micro** scale as we

- buy products that are eco-friendly.
- take the extra time to dispose of waste carefully and responsibly
- invest our rapidly increasing energy bills in sustainable fuel sources.

But as we close, we're going to turn to the NT for a moment.

How are we doing as rulers under God?

Turn to Hebrews 2 (page 1202)

*"It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. 6 But there is a place where someone has testified:*

*'What is mankind that you are mindful of them,*

*a son of man that you care for him?*

*7 You made them a little lower than the angels;*

*you crowned them with glory and honour*

*8 and put everything under their feet.'*

*In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. 9 But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

The writer quotes Psalm 8 which speaks in Genesis 1 language of mankind's place in ruling over the creation, putting everything under our feet.

But v8. The reality is that we don't rule the world perfectly.

In our relating to one another, in our rule of the creation, God's image has been marred, like a mirror that is horribly warped or scratched. We don't reflect God as we should. The fall in chapter 3 will tell us why.

But, there is one perfect true ruler. And he is Jesus Christ. And only in HIM will we find our true place under God and over creation. Communion service v appropriate! **Let's pray.**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/COP26>