

## IT WAS VERY GOOD

Genesis 1:26-2:3

Key Verse: 1:31

*“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.”*

Last week we learned that God created the heavens and the earth (Ge 1:1). We learned that our lives are not an accident, but that we are created by God according to his sovereignty and purpose. In today's passage, we learn that man was created in God's image and was given a mission. After creating all things in the universe, God appointed man to be the steward of his creation. When God saw all that he had made, it was very good. May God help us to learn why we are the objects of God's glory!

### I. GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE (26-27)

On the first five days of creation, God created the universe and all material things, as well as plants and animals. He shined light into darkness; he filled the empty world with life. God looked at each act of creation and saw that it was good. Then he turned his attention to the crown and glory of his creation: man. In verse 26, God unveiled his ultimate plan. It was to create a unique and special creature named man. God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.” His purpose in creating man in his own image was to make man the steward and shepherd of his creation. Verse 27 tells us that God carried out his plan. He created man in his own image; he created them male and female. This teaches us about man's nature and his position in God's world.

**First, man has two natures.** The creation of mankind took place on the sixth day, the same day as the creation of the animals. So man has an animal nature. Like animals, he must eat and sleep; he gives birth to children that resemble himself. But, at the same time, man was created in God's image. So, men are different from animals. “Image” here refers to God's attributes. Man has in him the attributes of God. Man can appreciate beauty, write poems and songs; he can think, reason and make plans; he can make decisions. Man is also creative. He can operate a computer, build an airplane, and explore outer space. Most of all, unlike animals, man is a spiritual being, as he was created to be both physical and spiritual being (2:7). Spirit is the principle of life. When the spirit of God leaves man, man is nothing but flesh (6:3). Through this spirit man can maintain an active fellowship with God.

Look at verse 27 again. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” There are two additional meanings which can be found in the fact that man was created in the image of God: (a) We human beings resemble God. God is holy; there is something holy about us. God is love; there is also godly love in us. God is almighty; man's possibilities are limitless. A lion has great strength, but because he is only an animal, he uses all his great strength in

catching his prey. (b) Man can grow in the image of God. He is the lord of creation. He rules over all things. God made man in his own image so that he might rule over the whole world. The hope of God's children is to become more and more like God, to grow more and more in his image.

**Second, man's position.** Because he was created in God's image (1:26-27), man is in a position just under God. Only when man keeps his position can he be a true man. In many areas of his physical ability, man is inferior to other animals. If a pan-animal-world Olympic games were held, man would not win all gold medals. In a 100-meter dash, man would be hopelessly behind a cheetah. But man became the caretaker of everything in this world, as God elevated him to the position (Ps 8:4-8). Man is not God; nor is he an animal. The humanists imply that man is above God. The materialists brought down man to the material level and regarded him nothing more than a tool. The evolutionists claim that man is the descendant of a monkey. They take away from man the value and dignity of human life. But the Bible teaches us that man was created in God's own image. This teaches us that there is a clear creation order -- God the Creator first, man the steward next, and all other creations last.

Only when man maintains this creation order, he can be truly happy. Some people have an upside-down order in their lives. They put things such as money and fame above the Creator God. We see imbalance and disharmony in their personal and family lives (Ro 1:25). Only when man has the image of God can he be happy, because he can grow in the image of God. When men and women don't grow in the image of God, they fall down to the level of animals, and become like animals. They become like living dead men. When mankind slips from his position and falls down to the level of animals, he becomes like an animal. He becomes flesh (6:3). When man fails to keep his position and falls to the level of animals, God is very sorry (6:5-8). Man is originally "Adam." "Adam" means dust or clay. Man is a lump of clay--he is weak. For him to keep his position as a man before God is very difficult, as difficult as for a small sailboat to keep its course as it crosses the ocean. But man is the lord of all creation. It is his sacred duty to keep his position as a human being.

## II. GOD BLESSED MAN WITH MISSION (28)

Look at verse 28. "God blessed them and said to them, `Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" God had a purpose in creating man in his image. He wanted man to rule over, to have dominion over all other created things. "To rule over" the world means that God has appointed man to be the steward of the world, to oversee and care for all creation. God created man to have a mission. He did not bless man with many things so that he could only enjoy his selfish life. Men must not be selfish. One young man received very much help from others during his time of need. But when he made some money he used it all up on himself. Such a man is not a steward; he is a selfish man. A selfish man is an animal man. He is

like a father tiger who, all by himself, before the eyes of his hungry tiger cubs, eats up the prey the mother tiger hunted. It is a great blessing to be given the task of being the steward of the world that God has created (28). And this is the mission that God has given to us human beings. So at his birth, a man enters the world for a definite purpose in God.

No one is happy until he finds the purpose of his life in God. Man has a definite mission for which God created him. There is something that God has given him to do in this world. We can almost say that man equals mission and mission equals man. Each one of us has a mission which God has given him. If one would fulfill his mission he must work. So the person who doesn't like to work is giving up his divine right as a human being. David's greatness did not lie in the fact that he was a king or that he had great ability. He was great because he served the will of God in his own generation (Ac 13:36). Paul's greatness does not lie in his great scholarship or in his zeal. He was great because he obeyed the world mission commission given him by God; he gave his life to fulfill his mission (Ac 20:24). Many say that Abraham Lincoln's greatness lies in his honest character. But in reality, he was great because he received from the Bible God's mission to protect human rights, and he fulfilled that mission.

In our times, men and women of mission look like strange people. But God sees them as great. No matter what we are called to do, we must not let what other people think of us influence us too much. We must seek to accomplish the mission that has been given us by God.

What is our mission in this fallen world? When God said, "Be fruitful and increase in number ...," he certainly did not mean multiplication of sinful men and women. He wants us to bear spiritual fruits that he is pleased with. He wants us to expand the kingdom of God in people's hearts. Jesus told us to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt 6:9,10) Therefore, our main mission in this fallen world is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to sin-sick people so that they may be restored in the image of God through his precious blood.

Look at verses 29 and 30. God provided vegetables and fruit as food for man and animals. Man worked hard to accomplish God's mission, and God provided his daily needs. Man did not have to sweat for physical bread. Even in a fallen world, Jesus will provide what we need to eat and drink and wear if we seek first his kingdom (Mt 6:33). When man ignores his mission and only struggles for physical needs, he becomes full of fear and his life becomes meaningless.

### III. "IT WAS VERY GOOD" (31)

God was happy to see man whom he created in his own image. Look at verse 31. "God saw all that he had made and it was very good. And there was evening, and there

was morning--the sixth day." On the first five days of creation God made all things. On the sixth day he made man. He created the heavens and the earth and all things, and after each day's work, "God saw that it was good." But when he finished creating man on the sixth day, "God saw all that he and made, and it was very good." The adverb "very" is added. There are two meanings that we can find here. In the first place, God is saying that of all his created things, man is the creature in which he has special joy. In the second place, God thinks that each of us is the best, and very good. When we consider this, we realize that we exist because God created us. In God's creation, there are all kinds of people. Each person thinks that he or she is the best one or the worst one. One lady thought that she was too tall and slim. But after studying the Bible she realized that although she does not have Arabian beauty, she has North American beauty. Since then, she has studied the Bible harder, and she was convinced that she was the most beautiful woman in the world.

One finds his own individuality as he comes to know God personally and experiences God's life. He finds his individuality in God's word of truth. There are many people who have very good human backgrounds and good human circumstances, but who have never become individualized. Unless one finds himself in God and lives before the eyes of God he cannot form his own individuality. So they have no individual personality. They do not know who they are. They cannot be true to themselves because they have no inner integrity. In the end, they do not know how to live or why they live. They do not know why they work so hard. But their most serious problem is that they do not know who they are. It is because they do not know the truth of God who created mankind and said, "It was very good." Some people try to find themselves--their own individuality--in their human background and conditions. One American woman's meaning of life was her kind husband. One day he died in a car accident. She sought meaning in her career as the director of the auditing department in city hall. But she was dismissed when the administration changed. She was empty and her life was without meaning. Then she found herself in God.

Verse 31 says, "It was very good." Human conditions cannot be the problem. God made everyone an individual with his own special characteristics and qualities. He made each person for a purpose, so there is no one whom we could do without. The one who, to us, seems ordinary-looking may have a heart like beautiful satin. When one young man was in college, he lived for three years with his aunt. She was a rather ordinary looking woman in her outward appearance, but her heart was as beautiful as fine silk. Her beauty came from her faith in Jesus. In God's sight there was meaning and purpose for small Israel as well as for the large and powerful Roman Empire.

One does not need to worry about what others think of him. Each one must think rather, what do I think of myself before God? Most importantly, what does God think of me? God created me and was very pleased. We must receive this truth in our hearts. We must realize that out of the more than 5 billion people in the world, God made each of us with a special nature and character and gave a special meaning to each life. It's a

wonderful thing to discover one's self. When I believe that God made me and was very pleased, then new possibilities appear for amazing and wonderful self-discovery and great self-fulfillment. I begin to find the real joy of being human.

Each of us must accept himself or herself as God's good creation. We must not hate ourselves or despise the way we look or the talents and abilities God has given us. When we accept ourselves as God accepts us, we can deeply respect others. And we can grow and discover the good purpose of God for each one of us. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

#### IV. GOD BLESSED MAN WITH SABBATH (2:1-3)

Look at 2:1-3. "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." God worked hard for six days and God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. On that day, God rested. God gave the Sabbath day to man as a day of rest. The Sabbath is a holy day. "Holy" means "set apart" or "different." God set the Sabbath day apart from all the rest of his creation and gave it to man as a day of fellowship with God. If there is no rest through fellowship with God, man withers. The word "Sabbath" means "rest." On the Sabbath we must stop doing worldly things and go to God for a new filling of spiritual strength, love and joy. We can receive God's love and strength from him by studying the Bible and praying and by serving God and his sheep. People of our times have forgotten the law of the Sabbath. As a result, the people of our times are overflowing with tiredness--even though they have longer week-ends and holidays than their fathers did. Many things people do make them weary and tired. Above all sin makes them weary and burdened. So Jesus invites us in Matthew 11: 28-30, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." When we work for God's mission and rest in God, accepting his loving sovereignty in our lives, we are full of the joy of living. We must keep the Sabbath holy and on that day have deep fellowship with God. We must prepare to enter the eternal Sabbath rest that God has prepared for us.

In this passage, we learn that God the Creator appointed man to be the steward of the whole world. We can find a true meaning and purpose in life when we accept this mission and maintain the creation order. When God made each of us, he said, "It was very good."