

SERMON NOTES

Genesis 1:24-27; Leviticus 19:9-18, 33-34; Psalm 146:9-10; Proverbs 14:31

“Honoring the Image of God in the Weak”

Intro:

- **Show Wells Icons of Evolution slide of apes into humans**
- According the Darwinian evolution – humans are nothing but animals, and we are not the preordained goal of a directed process
- *Humans are merely a slightly more intelligent cousin of the chimpanzee*
- *This picture has gotten into the heads of most people today more than we might care to believe*
- For the average man on the street – and for many church-goers – this picture shows our ancestry – proving that we are nothing more than primates who climbed down out of the trees
- Darwin: *“My object is to show that there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher animals in their mental faculties. All higher animals have similar passions, affections and emotions... The difference in mind between man and the higher animals certainly is one of degree and not of kind.”*
- **Turn off slide**
- **Show Red & Rover comic slide**
- *That pretty well sums up the difference between humans and animals, doesn't it?*
- Now, of course, I know that there are some humans who like to eat more than they like to think – *but nevertheless, the difference between “I think, therefore I am” and “I think I’m hungry” is a difference of kind and not merely of degree*
- **Turn off slide**
- In the 1960s and 70s, Francis Schaeffer wrote extensively about the separation of the rational and scientific from faith
- **Show slide of Upper Level and Lower Level**
- *This is the dominant worldview of most people today – not only outside the church but also far more inside the church than we might think*
- *Many people – even many professing Christians and church-goers – live with a major disconnect between their religious faith and the real world of nature and science and business and finance and history and reason and education*

- The Bible is kind of like Aesop's Fables – a collection of stories that convey good morals and wholesome values to live by
- **And when it suits us to live by a particular moral of a particular story – we do so – and when it is inconvenient or undesirable to live by that moral – we disregard it**
- **After all – religious beliefs belong to a compartment that has been severed from science and life in the real world – and so your beliefs in your religion box may be true for you, but my different beliefs in my religion box are true for me – and none of them has anything to do with reality or absolute truth**
- When people are in church, they believe the biblical myths about creation and being created in the image of God – *but in the real world their view of reality and man is shaped more by this image:*

- **Turn off above and Show Icons of Evolution -- apes evolving into humans**

- No wonder so many evangelical Christians say they believe the Bible and yet live lives that are virtually indistinguishable from the people of the world
- **Becoming a fully devoted follower of Jesus requires an integrated Christian worldview that integrates biblical teaching and values with science and history and reality**

- **Turn off slide**

- Applying Jesus' metaphor of the Vine and the branches a little differently: ***Think of Christian behavior as the branches and think of a Christian worldview as the vine***
- *Or think of Christian behavior as the living area of a house and think of a Christian worldview as the foundation walls of that home*
- If all we do is teach our children and youth how they ought to behave as Christians – *but we don't teach them how to think and develop a coherent Christian worldview so that they can connect the Whats with the Whys – it's just a matter of time until their worldly thinking will produce worldly behavior*
- ***The Foundation of a Christian worldview is Creation***
- Francis Schaeffer: *“The early chapters of Genesis are more important than anything else we could have. They are the very foundation on which ALL knowledge rests.*
- *“We learn that before the creation of the universe, the infinite-personal God existed and that He created the universe by choice, out of nothing.*
- *“We learn also that man was made in the image of God, a person.*

- *“All the information given by the Bible flows out of the information given in the early chapters of Genesis. If we are to understand the world as it is and ourselves as we are, we must know the flow of history given in these chapters.*
- *“Take this away and the flow of history is lost. **Take this away and even the death of Christ has no meaning.**”*
- Genesis 1:24-27 are among the most important verses in the Bible
- ***The reality – not the myth, but the reality – that any and every person is made after the likeness of God – is the basis for the two Greatest Commandments to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself // the basis for the dignity and sanctity of human life // the basis for Christian ethics and morality // the basis for social justice and compassionate ministry to the poor and needy // the basis for the Good News of Incarnation and Redemption // the basis for hope of a meaningful and purposeful and everlasting life***
- Think back to Lori Major’s presentation last week of Urban Edge Ministries’ outreach to inner city kids living in poverty, neglect, abuse, hopelessness
- *The only worldview that will motivate and empower that kind of compassionate ministry to what Jesus called “the least of these” is an integrated, coherent Christian worldview that can survive the tests of being true in the real world*
- The Doctrine of Karma in the Eastern religious worldview – *increasingly popular in our New Age culture* -- teaches that we reap in this life not only what we sow in this life but also what we have sown in previous incarnations
- *Everything in life is cause and effect – therefore people are responsible for their station in life*
- **Therefore, the inner city kids living in poverty and neglect and abuse are simply reaping what they have sown in a previous life**
- *The Hindu worldview – dominated by Karma – is not conducive to showing mercy to those in need*
- **Nor is a Darwinian worldview**
- *Not all evolutionists are Social Darwinists – but the doctrine of the survival of the fittest does not logically lead to the strong and healthy and successful devoting their lives to caring for the weak and poor and needy*
- According to Darwinism – all living organisms, including humans – exist for only this purpose: *to survive and reproduce*
- *Strong animals have absolutely no moral obligation to help weak animals survive*
- **In fact, it would be better for the genetic progress of the species if such losers would die before they reproduce**

- *That application of a Darwinian worldview is called eugenics – explained as **the self-direction of human evolution – involving human intervention to improve the human gene pool by weeding out inferior individuals and groups***
- *Eugenics can be traced to Darwinism and has been most famously espoused and practiced by Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, and of course by Adolph Hitler and the Nazis*

The plan was to breed a genetically superior race, just as agronomists would breed better strains of corn.

The victims: *poor people, dark-skinned people, African Americans, immigrants, Indians, Eastern European Jews, the infirm and really anyone classified outside the superior genetic lines drawn up by the racist eugenicists.*

- *Now, of course, most people who believe in Darwinism do not advocate genocide*
- *Just as there are kind and compassionate Hindus and Buddhists, so also there are evolutionists and atheists who are kind and compassionate people – but their compassionate actions do not flow from their worldview – in fact, there is a disconnect between their behavior and their worldview*
- *Many people are not able to overcome that disconnect*
- **Show Icons of Evolution slide of apes into humans**
- *This picture does not produce a cultural value for the dignity and sanctity of human life nor for compassionate concern for the weak and poor and needy*

I. THE UNIQUENESS AND DIGNITY OF MAN AS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

- Natural selection may be able to explain how cheetahs could gradually over time modify their body shape and muscles and cardiovascular system to improve their running speed from 60 mph to 70 or 80 mph
- *But Darwinian natural selection would not be able to explain cheetahs suddenly accelerating from 60 mph to 600 mph*
- **But that is exactly what happened intellectually and artistically and scientifically and religiously to the animal kingdom with the appearance of Homo Sapiens a few thousand years ago**
- By Darwinian scientists own reckoning, all major animal phyla suddenly appeared on earth about 500+ million years ago in the seas of the Cambrian age
- *So, by their reckoning, all the major branches of the animal kingdom have been evolving on earth for at least 500 million years*

- To put it into perspective: *suppose January 1st represented the Cambrian age and today was the last second of that same calendar year*
- **No arts or sciences or religion or any of that from January thru November**
- *The days of December pass – still no sign of even a cave drawing*
- December 31 dawns – still nothing
- 11:00 pm on December 31 – *and still not a trace of any art or science or religion*
- **Then, finally, at about 11:50 pm on New Year’s Eve – homo sapiens makes its appearance on earth – and coincidentally – suddenly there are prehistoric paintings of reindeer and other animals that appear on cave walls**
- **And then a couple of minutes later – the full-blown civilizations of Egypt and Babylon – complete with art and science and literature and history and technology and architecture and agriculture and religion and government and laws and ethics and music and everything else that characterizes human society today**
- *There was nothing primitive about those first ancient civilizations – we still marvel at the pyramids today*
- And how are the chimps and their fellow apes doing after their 8 million years of evolving?
- *Still no signs of the arts or sciences or religion*
- And does anyone seriously think a few hundred thousand more years are going to make any difference?
- How is it that animals have been evolving for 500 million years – *and no other species – past or present – has ever produced so much as a cave painting of a reindeer – let alone a Michelangelo or Shakespeare or Einstein?*
- **How does one account for this sudden explosion of culture and civilization – uniquely among one species – homo sapiens – that just arrived on earth a few thousand years ago?**
- Darwinian evolution has no explanation – *but the Bible does*

Genesis 1:26 - 27 (NIV) ²⁶Then God said, “*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.*”

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

- *After God created the heavens and the earth – the entire material universe – out of nothing / and after God prepared the solar system and Earth for life / and after God produced sea animals and plants and birds and land animals – **then God did something unprecedented and unique – He created a species to reflect His own image and likeness // He set that species apart from and above the animals to***

exercise authority over the animals // He created one species to enjoy a love relationship with Himself – namely, human beings

- He made man’s body out of the same kind of stuff that He made the bodies of animals – so, yes, *there are anatomical similarities and DNA similarities – but there is more to man than our bodies – out of all the species, God gave man – and only man – an immaterial soul or spirit or mind that cannot be reduced to atoms and molecules and brain cells*
- *Whatever physical similarities there may be between man and the animals – man is unique in being a soulish or spiritual creature*
- **And it is this spiritual nature of man that enables man to do science and the arts and religion and everything else that is unique to human existence**
- GK Chesterton – The Everlasting Man: *“Man differs from the brutes in kind and not just in degree; and the proof of it is here: that it sounds a truism to say that the most primitive man drew a picture of a monkey and that it sounds like a joke to say that the most intelligent monkey drew a picture of a man... Art is the signature of man.*
- *“Monkeys did not begin pictures and men finish them; Pithecanthropus did not draw a reindeer badly and Homo Sapiens draw it well. The higher animals did not draw better and better portraits; the dog did not paint better in his best period than in his early bad manner as a jackal; the wild horse was not an Impressionist and the race-horse a Post-Impressionist.*
- *“This creature, man, was truly different from all other creatures – because he was a creator as well as a creature.”*
- **That is what it means to be created in the image of God – that we are both creatures and creators who have the capacity to create because we bear the image of the Creator.**
- **The image of God is the source of art and it is the source of science**
- What were the first two tasks that God gave to Adam?
- *Agriculture and science*
- We see agriculture and horticulture in Genesis 2:15

Genesis 2:15 (NIV) ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

- And we see science in Genesis 2:19-20

Genesis 2:19 - 20 (NIV) ¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

- *What do we call the work of studying, naming and classifying animals?*
- Science, right? Zoology to be more exact
- *Animals do not till gardens and plant and harvest crops – and animals do not study and name and classify other species of animals*
- As I mentioned last week, this is the irony of *The Evolving Planet* exhibit at the Field Museum in Chicago – *highly intelligent humans trying to prove that humans are nothing more than animals by creating an exhibit that only humans could possibly create – or appreciate*
- No one had to guess whether that exhibit was created by humans or chimps
- *That exhibit had human genius and human creativity and human inquisitiveness stamped all over it*
- ***The Evolving Planet could be Exhibit A proving that man is set apart and different from all animals by virtue of being uniquely created in the image of God***
- Not only the arts and sciences, but religion is a uniquely human activity that sets humans apart from the animals
- GK Chesterton: *“There is not the faintest hint that anything short of the human mind feels any of these mystical or religious associations...”*
- *“While it is true that a dog has dreams, we have waited a long time for the dog to develop his dreams into an elaborate system of religious ceremonial. We have waited so long that we have really ceased to expect it.*
- *“It is not impossible, in the sense of self-contradictory, that we should see cows fasting from grass every Friday or going on their knees on Christmas Eve.*
- *“It is not in that sense impossible that cows should contemplate death until they can lift up a sublime psalm of lamentation to the tune the old cow died of. It is not in that sense impossible that they should express their hopes of a heavenly future in a symbolic dance, in honor of the cow that jumped over the moon... But common sense must long ago have told us that the animals are not to all appearance evolving in that sense.*
- ***“The mind of man is unique in that it can make creeds as it could make cave-drawings.”***
- *Why?*
- ***Because only human beings are created in the image of God – that is man’s glory and it is the source of man’s dignity***

II. HONORING THE IMAGE OF GOD BY CARING FOR THE WEAK, POOR AND NEEDY

- Francis Schaeffer: *“The Bible tells us who we are and who other people are. It tells how people are differentiated from all other things... People have unique*

value... and we can see that ALL people are similarly to be distinguished from nonman and that therefore we ourselves must look on others as having great value.

- **“Any person, no matter who he or she is – a stranger or a friend, a fellow believer or someone who is still in rebellion against God, anyone of any age, before or after birth – any and every person is made after the likeness of God.”**
- Listen carefully: *the sanctity and dignity of human life are not based on a religious belief or biblical teaching – the sanctity and dignity of human life are based on the historical reality that human beings are made in the image of God*
- **Human life was sacred long before the Bible was ever written**
- **The sanctity and dignity of human life go all the way back to Adam and Eve being created in God’s image in the real world in real history**
- *The Bible simply testifies to that reality – so does the concert that Beth and I went to last night -- as do the all the arts and sciences and agriculture and architecture and engineering and medicine and literature and mathematics and gardening and veterinary medicine and every other human endeavor that is uniquely human and expressive of the God-given creativity and rationality and spirituality that are part of being created in the Creator’s image and likeness*
- *Why is it wrong to kill a human being but not wrong to kill a deer or a cow or a hog?*
- Because the human is made in the image of God
- **Why is racism wrong?**
- *Because all human beings of all races trace their ancestry back to Adam and Eve and are therefore equally bearers of the image of God*
- **Racism is wrong for the same reason that abortion is wrong – that is why a pro-life racist is such a contradiction in terms**

Christian ethics are rooted in the historic reality of Adam and Eve being created in the image of God

- RC Sproul was addressing the top executives of a Fortune 500 company on the subject of human dignity when the lightbulb went on for the chairman of the board: *“Let me see if I can connect what you’re saying. What I hear is that our business life is affected by how we treat people. How we treat people is a matter of ethics. Ethics are determined by our philosophy, which reflects or theology – so respecting people is really a theological matter.”*
- **Exactly**
- Now, of course, some Darwinists support human rights and oppose racism and give to the poor and help build hospitals and so forth
- *But they do so in spite of their worldview – not because of it*
- **They act according to values derived from the Judeo-Christian heritage even while seeking to repudiate the very foundation upon which those values rest**

- *Assigning special value and dignity to humans from a Darwinian worldview is based on emotion and sentiment – not reason*
- ***Only the biblical worldview offers a rational basis for treating all human beings with special value and dignity***
- **It is because all human beings bear the divine image – going all the way back to Adam and Eve – that the Bible emphasizes so strongly the responsibility of the strong to care for the weak // the affluent to care for the poor // the healthy to care for the sick // the successful to care for the disadvantaged**
- *The responsibility of believers to care for widows and orphans and the kind of kids that Terry & Lori Major and Jan Kloss minister to*
- **Contrary to the doctrine of Karma – and contrary to the doctrine of Social Darwinism – the Bible repeatedly calls the people of God to honor the image of God in the weak and in the least of these – including widows, orphans, the poor, the aliens, the immigrants, the refugees, the powerless, the mistreated, the oppressed, the hungry, the disabled, the broken, the fatherless, the needy**

- Leviticus 19 is the chapter that commands us to love your neighbor as yourself – *listen to who receives special mention in the context for that command:*

Leviticus 19:9 - 18 (NIV) ⁹“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God. ¹¹“Do not steal. “Do not lie. “Do not deceive one another. ¹²“Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. ¹³“Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. “Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. ¹⁴“Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD. ¹⁵“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. ¹⁶“Do not go about spreading slander among your people. “Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life. I am the LORD. ¹⁷“Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. ¹⁸“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, **but love your neighbor as yourself.** I am the LORD.

- *And then for emphasis, the Lord again singles out the alien or immigrant or refugee for special attention:*

Leviticus 19:33-34 ³³“Do not take advantage of foreigners in your land; do not wrong them. ³⁴They must be treated like any other citizen; love them as yourself, for remember that you too were foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am Jehovah your God.”

- *Why?*

- Because we are made in the image of God and are to reflect His likeness – and this is what God is like:

Psalm 146:5 - 9 (NIV) ⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶ the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— the LORD, who remains faithful forever.

⁷ He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, ⁸ the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down, the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹ The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

- In the struggle for survival, there are winners and losers – *there are those who are privileged and those who are disadvantaged // there are those who are powerful and those who are weak // there are those who are successful and those who are downtrodden // there are those who treated with great respect and those who are treated with great indignity*
- **The Maker of heaven and earth made all human beings in His image – and He gives special attention to those who are most vulnerable to experiencing indignity**
- *He upholds the cause of the oppressed and lifts up those who are bowed down and watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and widows*
- And He expects His people to do likewise

Proverbs 14:31 (NIV) ³¹ He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

- *We either honor God or show contempt for our Maker by how we treat the poor and needy*
- *Why?*
- **Because the poor and needy are made in the image of God just as surely as the wealthy and powerful and successful**
- *When we are merciful and generous toward the poor and needy – we are honoring the image of God in them – and thereby we are honoring their Maker and ours*
- *When we treat the poor and needy with contempt – thinking that they deserve their fate as with the doctrine of Karma – or thinking they are genetically unfit and therefore unworthy of dignity as with Darwinism – we are not merely showing contempt for the poor but also for their Maker whose image they bear even in the midst of their poverty and disgrace*

- **It is a real world truth that God created Adam and Eve in His image and likeness and that any and every human being descended from Adam and Eve – no matter their race or nationality or age or intelligence or social-economic status – is made after the likeness of God**
- *That is why abortion is wrong // that is why racism is wrong // that is why it is wrong to treat the poor with contempt*
- *That is why we are called to be kind and generous and compassionate toward the least of these -- that is why we are called to honor the image of God in the weak and poor and needy*
- It all goes back to Adam and Eve being created in the image of God in the real world in real history

III. THE IMAGE OF GOD AND REDEMPTION OF MAN

- *Showing mercy to the weak and poor and needy is godly behavior – because the Maker of heaven and earth is a merciful God*
- **And having made us in His image – He is not about to give up on us even though we have sinned and rebelled against God and have mistreated His creatures and defaced His creation**
- *God takes man's sin seriously because we bear His image and it is a serious thing in the eyes of God to mistreat other image-bearers*
- **It is God's purpose to restore by salvation what was marred by sin – namely, to restore the image of God in man**
- *For that reason and purpose, God sent His Son in human form – the visible image of the invisible God – in order to cleanse and liberate us from our sins and to renew the image of God in us*
- *Salvation is not just the forgiveness of our sins – salvation is all about being renewed in the image of our Creator in true righteousness and holiness*
- **God values us so much – every one of us – that He sent His Son to suffer horrible indignity and crucifixion in order that we might come to share in the glory of becoming sons and daughters of God being transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ**
- Prayer of Salvation
- Hymns # 512 & 513