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A publication of  **DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Starter Question

- ❶ From Sunday's sermon, what did you **like best**, or what **caught your attention most**—and **why**?

Observation—*What do I see?*

- From Genesis 1, list some of the characteristics humans and animals have in common.
- ❷ In what ways are we different—and what is the significance of those differences?
- ❸ According to Genesis 3:17-19 and Romans 8:20-22, **how consequential** are humans and our actions?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- ❹ How does the fact that Jesus, who **eternally is** God (John 1:1), also **became** human (John 1:14) shed light on how consequential humans are? How does this show his humility (Philippians 2:5-8)?
- Discuss the meaning of the "image of God" in terms of human **abilities**.
- ❺ Discuss the meaning of the "image of God" in terms of human **responsibilities**.
- For which of those are we accountable—our abilities or our responsibilities? Explain.

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Together look over the list of eighteen ways man's mental/moral/emotional/volitional faculties have become corrupted (found in the "**Digging Deeper**" feature of today's *Talking Points, Walking Points*).
- ❻ Which of those evidently make sense to you—and why? Do you dispute any of them? Which ones?
- ❼ Which of those attributes help account for the observations made in the following passages:
John 3:9-12
John 9:39-41
Romans 3:9-18

① This is just a starter question. Enjoy it, but don't spend too much time on it.

② **Similarities:** Both animals and humans are...

- created by God (aka "creatures")
- called "**living** creatures" (Genesis 1:24 cf. 2:7)
- limited (ie, not "omni-anything"!)

Differences: Only humans are...

- God's image-bearers
- moral, rational, volitional
- to rule over non-human creatures

③ So very consequential that one act of disobedience resulted in the cursing and corruption of the entire universe. All suffering and groaning is the result of one single act of disobedience.

④ Nothing less than God taking on human nature, suffering and dying, was sufficient to undo the curse. All of creation came into being simply at the command of God ("Let there be...and there was."), yet the redemption of mankind required the incarnation, humiliation, death and resurrection! We tend to think that humans are "top dog", but God humbled himself to become a human!

⑤ Responsibilities require abilities. [a] So mankind had to be equipped with abilities/capacities suitable to the fulfillment of his responsibilities. Those abilities include a moral nature, intellect, creative ability, volitional capacity, etc. [b] We are to use these abilities/capacities in order to "image" God—to represent him in the absence of direct, divine rule. So we are to rule in God's place, managing creation, using the earth's resources to honor God and evangelize people. [c] God holds us accountable for obedience. None of us is held accountable for how smart we are, but we are held accountable for how we use our intelligence. None of us is held accountable for possessing the power of will, but we are held accountable to use that will to the glory of God rather than for self-aggrandizement. etc. We are held accountable to fulfill our responsibilities, not for the "amount" of abilities we possess.

⑥ Discuss these eighteen attributes of fallen man, making sure that folks understand them...but let group members do the talking as you discuss which ones they accept or dispute. Follow up with any group members who show resistance to accepting the clear teaching of God's Word. Don't assume that they are saved (1 John 2:3-6). If you need training in sharing the gospel, e-mail Pastor Dan.

⑥ **John 3:9-12** Nicodemus, though thoroughly trained in religious studies, could not grasp Jesus' teaching about the necessity of regeneration. His mind was darkened. See 1 Corinthians 2:14.

John 9:39-41 The pharisees were spiritually blind. They were filled with unrighteousness, they needed salvation—but they just couldn't see it (even when Jesus explicitly pointed it out).

Romans 3:9-18 We are in rebellion against God. No human being seeks for the One True God (we pursue idolatrous gods who give us what we want, on our own terms). We are corrupt through and through.

Sermon Summary

Throughout July we're looking at mankind as God's image-bearer. Being made in God's image endues every human being with dignity, regardless of our capacities or social status. Last week we looked at the haunting question found in Psalm 8: "God—what is man, that you take thought of us?" We saw that there is an organic connection between any human being and the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the fact that he is the perfect man, the man who showed what Adam should have been, and who we, through salvation, will become. Today we answer the question: "What WAS man—before he fell into sin?"

Non-human creation is "after their own kind of things", but humans are a totally different "kind" of creation. We're not of the "earth" kind, we're of the "God kind". And, we're distinctly "above" all non-human creation—but we're below God. Genesis 2 also reveals that mankind was created innocent—yet able to sin. Sub-human creatures are instinctual; people are rational and moral creatures. And, of course, we failed God's test.

Ever since Genesis 3 mankind has not been all that we were meant to be—or, by the grace of God, all that we someday will be. We all are "abnormal". "Normal" means "according to the designated standard"—something that none of do since sin entered the world. Only Jesus is "normal"; only he measures up to God's standard for how humans are to behave.



Today we're asking the question, "What was man?"—what were we created to be? And the answer is, we were created to bear the image of Jesus—the perfect, the normal, man. Defects have now crept into God's good creation. We're no longer what we were created to be. But the good news is that we're not now what we're gonna be (2 Corinthians 3:18 & 4:16-18). Those of us who have repented of our sins and are relying on Christ as Savior are being transformed, bit by bit, into the image of God as originally intended.

In order to see where we no longer measure up to God's designated standard, we look at the only "normal" example of a human being still existing—Jesus Christ. In the "**Digging Deeper**" feature of today's *Talking Points*, *Walking Points* is a list of the ways, compared to Jesus, we're "rusty and dented". Let's look at a few of the ways we fall short morally.

Where we now are arrogant (#1), Jesus said that he is "gentle and humble of heart". Adam and Eve were created to be gentle and humble. They were normal. Since the fall, we all now are arrogant, but someday all genuine believers will be transformed into that humble image.

Sinful man is blind to his own sin (#2), but Jesus saw with perfect moral clarity. We have sin-darkened minds (#4), which are easily deceived (#5). For a brief time, Adam and Eve saw reality with perfect moral clarity. If we would have been in the Garden of Eden with them, we would have too. But Eve was deceived by the serpent, and she began believing the lie that God was being stingy, that he was withholding something good. Eve lost moral clarity, and so now, so have we all. But some day, all who are in Christ, will have our moral sensibility fully restored. I can't wait!

We are morally corrupt (#3) and defiled (#6). Jesus is pure and holy. Adam and Eve were perfectly innocent. They walked in perfect authenticity, with nothing to hide from each other or from God. But when they sinned, they instantly sensed their shame, their defilement, and the foolishly thought it could be covered up with fig leaves. Later, when God came to the garden for their daily walk together, they foolishly hid from the only One who could cleanse them of their defilement. We do the same thing today—until we come to Christ, and admit our corruption. Then he cleanses us and clothes us with his righteousness.

We sinners are hostile toward God (#14) and hypocritical (#15)—presenting on the outside things which are not true within. When God confronted Adam and Eve regarding their sin, they both "passed the buck", blaming each other, and even God—"that woman you gave me"—for their sin. We do the same thing, don't we? We don't want God or anyone else suggesting that something we've done is wrong. We resent moral accountability and we hypocritically present ourselves as "in the right". But some day, all of us who have fled to Christ for cleansing will have the same mentality that Adam and Eve had before they rebelled, owning up to our accountability before God and actually appreciating his instruction.

We are insubordinate (#17). Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' but do not do what I say?" Jesus, on the other hand, delighted to do his Father's will. Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve also delighted in their subordinate place as creatures, rather than Creator.

Here are five "take-aways" from this overview of what humans were meant to be:

1. From the very beginning of creation, humans have been—and always will be—more than mere animals. We're God's unique image-bearers. Most people today deny this truth, believing that all life evolved from a common ancestor. The Bible insists that we are special among all of God's creation.

2. Although we are more glorious than animals, we, like the animals, also are creatures. Only God is God. We are not. We must live in submission to God.

3. The image of God in man became corrupted when Adam and Eve craved to be something they weren't designed to be—and we no longer are all God intended. Just as every road has ditches on either side, this truth about the fallenness of mankind has two errors we can fall into. One "ditch" would be to not to realize that we are not all God intended. Those who make this error fail to acknowledge corruption within themselves, saying: "I'm good—this is how God made me!" Yet none of us are as God intended. All of us are fallen. Others fall into the ditch on the opposite side of the road: they readily acknowledge their moral failings, but they excuse them, saying: "This is how God made me." They blame their immorality, lack of truthfulness, lack of love—whatever—on God. He should have made me differently. But—he did make us differently. It is we who have rebelled and corrupted the image of God.

4. As creatures, we have limitations built into us. We are designed to be dependent. And, our dependency is not removed when we come to Christ, when we become saved. We remain dependent upon God—and each other. God has not designed us to be "omni-competent". We each have certain spiritual gifts—and we each lack spiritual gifts. In the metaphor of the New Testament, if you're an "eye", you desperately need others who are "ears", otherwise you cannot hear. But the "ears" among us need those who are "eyes", and the "eyes" need to provide sight to those who are "ears". Before an after sin corrupted the image of God in us, we were designed to be limited creatures, dependent upon God and interdependent on each other. This is part of our glorious design, and not to be resented and resisted.

5. Finally, the image of God in mankind is damaged, but not destroyed. We still bear God's image—but it is dim and distorted. And when our salvation is complete, the image of God in us will be restored. We will share in Jesus' glory.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Adam's sin rendered mankind's mental / moral / emotional / volitional ("inner man") faculties...

1. **"arrogant"** "...**arrogant** because of their fleshly mind..." Colossians 2:18
Arrogant: Making exorbitant claims of self-importance; haughty; conceited; proud.
2. **"blind"** "...the god of this world has **blinded** the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel..." 2 Corinthians 4:4
Blind: Made unfeeling; made obstinate; confirmed in error or vice.
3. **"corrupt"** "...men of **corrupted** mind and deprived of the truth..." 1 Timothy 6:5
Corrupted: Change from sound to putrid, from good to bad; wasted, spoiled, defiled, polluted, or consumed; perverted, broken, debased, or falsified.
4. **"darkened"** "...the Gentiles...are **darkened** in their understanding..." Ephesians 4:18
Darkened: Not enlightened with knowledge; destitute of learning and science; rude; ignorant
5. **"deceived"** "...philosophy and empty **deception**—the tradition of men..." Colossians 2:8
Deceived: Caught and ensnared—and therefore misleading of a person to believe what is false, or not to believe what is true. Fraudulent, faulty and oppressive.
6. **"defiled"** "...both their mind and their conscience are **defiled**." Titus 1:15
Defiled: Made unclean or impure; fouled, dirtied, tainted, soiled, polluted, corrupted, violated
7. **"depraved"** "...God gave them over to a **depraved** mind..." Romans 1:28
Depraved: Not enduring proof or trial; not of standard purity or fineness; disallowed; rejected.
8. **"displeasing"** "...those who in the flesh cannot **please** God..." Romans 8:8
Displeasing: Not satisfying to God; disagreeable to God.
9. **"ensnared/captured"** "...may God grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, that they may come to their senses and escape from the **snare** of the devil, having been held **captive** by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:25-26
Ensnared: Caught, entrapped, entangled; seduced through strategic deception.
10. **"fleshly"** "...arrogant because of their **fleshly** mind..." Colossians 2:18
Fleshly: Corrupt, unrenewed human nature; carnality; corporeal appetites.
11. **"foolish"** "...their **foolish** hearts were darkened..." Romans 1:21
Foolish: Undiscerning, without understanding, unwise
12. **"futile"** "...the Gentiles walk in the **futility** of their mind..." Ephesians 4:17
Futile: Empty, untrue; lacking substance to satisfy desire; uncertainty; inanity. Trifling; producing no good.
13. **"hardened"** "...their minds were **hardened**..." 2 Corinthians 3:14
Hardened: Not having the faculty of discernment; destitute of intellectual light; unable to understand or judge
14. **"hostile"** "...you were formerly **hostile** in mind..." Colossians 1:21
(Romans 1:30 & 8:7; Exodus 20:5; Proverbs 8:36; Luke 19:14; John 3:20; 7:7; 15:18, 23-24)
Hostile: A foe; an adversary. A personal enemy is one who dislikes or hates another and wishes him injury, or attempts to do him injury to gratify his own malice or ill will.
15. **"hypocritical"** "You **hypocrites**! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?" Luke 12:56
Hypocrisy: To feign an outward appearance of godliness, though actually destitute of true salvation.
16. **"ignorant"** "...because of the **ignorance** that is in them..." Ephesians 4:18
Ignorant: Willfully lacking perception
17. **"insubordinate"** "...the mind set on the flesh does not **submit** itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do so..." Romans 8:7
cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14
Insubordinate: Not yielding, resigning or surrendering to the power, will, discretion, or authority of God.
18. **"lethal"** "...the mind set on the flesh is **death**...if you are living according to the flesh, you must **die**...for the outcome of [living according to the flesh] is **death**." Romans 8:6, 13; 6:21
Lethal: Deadly, mortal, fatal. From the Greek meaning "oblivion—a cessation of remembrance".

With the ultimate outcome that... "...there is **none** who **seeks** for **God**." Romans 3:11
The only solution: "The Son of God has come and **has given us a mind** so that we may **know him**..." 1 John 5:20