

Introduction:

Good morning, my name is Noah Joyner. I help our church take steps forward toward Jesus through equipping North Wakers for their day to day ministry in our community. I also do the same for other churches here in the US and internationally. I also help establish the church through teaching God's word here from time to time. I am honored by the opportunity to teach alongside such world class and varied teachers.

I hope you don't miss that. On Sunday mornings you and your children and teenagers get some excellent teaching from highly trustable and humble leaders. If you have not made the leap into one of our Equip classes on Sundays, I would encourage you to do that. If you are not sure how to find those, come ask me after the service or we have a meet and greet after the service where one of our leaders can help you find your way.

We are in the middle of a series this morning that is designed to help us find our way in this world. To consider...Why are we here? And the most direct way to find that out is to go to the source. To see where we come from as humanity... as men... as women.... And it is God's kindness to us to give us clear explanation of our origin in detail. Not just where we come from but why we exist.

Over the last few weeks we have learned that humanity is to image God... or reflect him in our being and activity. That our likeness with him shows him off for all to see as we live lives of true worship and loving obedience. Like our mirrors at home reflect us, we reflect him.

That origin story is broken into 3 parts. Part 1 is the wide lens version that shows the big picture (Carson covered that 2 weeks ago). Part 2 and 3 are the close up version where the man is created, then the woman.

Larry covered part 2, the creation of the man, last week. And as we saw the end of part two has a bit of a wrinkle in it. All is going well, God created man, he is showing him around the place and telling him about the expectations for life in the garden. God tells him about all the trees and how they will give him food... but then there is this one tree... that if you eat from it, it will bring death. It will ruin everything. Here the reader notices something of a wrinkle in the otherwise smooth narrative. Like if you were enjoying an excellent meal and noticed a grain of sand in your food. Tiny, but it's hard to ignore. It's halting and seems out of place. It's a dark spot in an otherwise bright story. It seems to be foreshadowing gloom.

This week is part 3- the creation of woman- and that wrinkle I mentioned lays over into our passage creating a bit of drama for the reader.

Before we look at that wrinkle, I want to make mention a couple of things. There will be a lot that I don't get to this morning in my message. 2 things specifically that you may still have questions about when we are done.

First singleness and how that relates to creation and life in the body of Christ. -Singles in the Body of Christ 3/2/08

Secondly, Specifics of the relationship between husband and wife.

-Col 3:18-4:1 9/11/22

You can find better resources out there.... But at least if you disagree with those you can take me to lunch and straighten me out.

As we begin let's pray and ask God for help as we open his word together.

(Holy Spirit you powerfully guided the writing of the words we consider this morning. May you give us eyes to see and ears to hear how they reveal Christ and our need for him today. May Jesus be honored and worshiped through what is said and thought here now. Amen

Look with me at Gen 2:18

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

After days of creating, then declaring things good, we see a break in this pattern with the words "It is not good". It seems that verse 18 is a companion to verse 17 creating a bit of drama, leaving the reader thinking, what will come of this.

First let's address the idea of alone. Don't think Tom Hanks in Cast Away with only a volley ball as a friend. No... he has God as his nearest companion, a forest full of food, a bountiful paradise full of pleasures.

So what was this aloneness and why was it not good?

As we work our way through the passage the notion that something is lacking will come into focus. Lack rather than

disorder will be presented as what is not good. Something missing rather than broken.

Much like if one were building a machine that need a spark plug. Before the addition of the spark plug, the machine would not be able to function as intended. It would in effect be not good. And if the machine of humanity was intended to **“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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** ... then that objective would be severely hindered if man were to remain alone or without the woman. Something is missing. Someone must be added for the image of God to be fully carried forth as described in Gen 1:27

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

It is a matter of both essence and function. Humanity can't be or do what God intended without the addition of the woman.

So God gets to work. He announces how he will address the issue of Man's aloneness. He says, “I will make a helper fit for him”

The word helper here is used 22 times in the Old Testament, twice in chapter 2 of Gen. Once here in verse 18 and once in verse 20. Every other time it is used, it refers to those from whom Israel seeks help. 17 times it refers to how God helps his people. Each time as a protector or deliverer....A shield or keeper... On 3 other occasions, it is used when Israel seeks the help of other nations for protection or deliverance. It often denotes an alliance

or partnership. Don't think Santa's little helper, water boy, or the one who makes sure the boss has the tools he needs. A better analogy might be the type of help one would seek from a Navy Seal, if we want to be consistent with the other uses of the word in the Old Testament.

So a helper here could easily denote one who will be in an alliance of partnership with the man, offering some sort of deliverance.

There is another aspect of the coming helper we must consider. She will fit or she corresponds to the man. We will see in the coming verses, that in creation, the animals all have one that fits or is like or corresponds to them. But not for the man. As mentioned before something....someone... is missing.

So in summary we might say that the notion of helper is meant to denote that she will be that which God uses to deliver man from his aloneness. She will fill in what is lacking in her absence. Humanity is designed to include her presence, so she will be the deliverance from that present reality. Bringing a sense of wholeness upon her arrival.

19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

As part of establishing humanity and creating this fitting helper, God includes man in the creative process. He does so by giving him specific work to do. He is to name all the beasts of the field and birds of the air.

As people who have probably heard this story before, it's easy to miss the significance of what is happening here. So, as a way to take this verse in, I would like to highlight a few things I see in this section.

First, God partners with the man in a working project. God does a part in forming all the birds and beasts, and then he invites the man to do a part in naming. Second, God seems to have an interest in what man will call the birds and animals... he wants to see what man will do. So, for a God who knows everything, why does he want to see. It's not so he can find out... but rather I think, because he takes some joy in seeing him do the naming. Third, God allows the man to have final say on what they are called. There is an open handedness God has in his inclusion of the man here. Like a father with a son, he allows him to do his part and learn along the way, working in concert to bring about a good end.

Also, don't miss the deep significance of giving something a name. One of my favorite things to do is name things... really it is... businesses, ministries, kids, dogs... It's part of caring for a thing you have made or have been entrusted with. It's one of the ways we give meaning to things. We name our children after those we admire or those ideals we hope they will live for. A name gives dignity, it sets trajectory, it claims responsibility, it represents care, it denotes origin. Names can bless and curse. And we see each of these aspects through names given throughout the Bible. For example Moses means to pull out or draw out of water. Because he was drawn out of water, but God will also draw the people out of Egypt through Moses... through water even. Jesus means salvation... because he will save his people from their sins.

God invites the man to be like him and imitate him. Just as God called day day and night night and earth earth and heaven heaven. So the man now calls them by the name he gives them. It is a sign of delight and care.

If we were to summarize this verse, it may go something like this... God says, "I form, You name, We take care of it together.

We will see in the next verse that God has another objective in bringing all the animals to be named. He wants the man to realize or learn something.

20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

As the man is doing the naming he sees a pattern among the birds and beasts. They come in pairs.... He's and she's, males and females that fit or correspond to each other. He donkeys and she donkeys... he hawks and she hawks... they have a likeness but a difference also. They go together, or the fact that they match seems to be the idea here. But for him there was no match...his pair was incomplete... no helper fit for him could be found. Something... someone was missing. The man's aloneness is put on display and it is not good. How will humanity be fruitful and multiply, how will they have dominion over creation and image God as mentioned in chapter 1 without the helper that fits the man. The naming of the beasts and birds brings the issue into focus. So, what will be the solution? Let's look in verse 21...

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

God continues his work of creation... this time taking a different approach. The man he created from the dust of the ground. And breathed life into him. This time rather than forming from dust, he uses the body of the man to acquire his building block for the helper. It seems that the author intends to distinguish the man and the helper from the rest of creation. John Sailhamer says it this way.

In the first chapter the author has already intimated that humanities creation in the "image of God" somehow entailed their creation as male and female... In the narrative of the creation of the woman in chapter 2, the author has returned to develop this theme by showing that humankind's creation "in God's image" also entails a partnership between man and his wife. The "likeness" which the man and woman share with God in chapter 1 finds an analogy in the "likeness" between the man and his wife in chapter 2. Here also as in the first chapter, the human likeness to God is shown against the backdrop of their distinction from the other creatures. Sailhamer- Pentateuch as Narrative- 102

In short, I see three marks of humanity that distinguish them from the rest of creation here in Genesis. 1.Their likeness to one another as male and female. 2.The partnership they enjoy with one another and God. 3. And their likeness to God as those created in his image.

None of the other creatures are created in God's image.... None of the other creatures are invited to partner with God in his work of establishing and caring for creation. None of the other creatures enjoy the unity and likeness that mankind enjoys as male and female.

The varied creative approach that God takes here also includes putting the man into a deep sleep, which on the face may seem like simple super natural anesthesia. And though I am sure the man was glad for this deep sleep, (Who wants to be awake during surgery) I get a sense that there is something greater than medical process happening here.

Through out the Scriptures sleep can represent the dark place where God does transformative work. Or figurative death that brings about something new or better. We see it twice later in the Book of Genesis where God makes his covenant with Abram, promising to make his offspring like the many stars, he also promises a land for those descendents. And then after that, the same promise is reaffirmed to Jacob as he sleeps and has the vision of the ladder.

God confirms his promise through the work he does as they sleep. It is no different with the man here. God does what he says he will do, but most times his people will have to sleep to enter into that promise. So here we see a figurative death that leads to a promise fulfilled.

So as promised the Lord builds The Helper That Fits and then brings her to the man. In the same way the animals and beast were brought, but this time the response is quite different. Rather

than discovering lack, as he did when the animals were brought to him, he finds wholeness, likeness, and similarity.

23 Then the man said,
"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

Here we see the man rejoicing at the completeness... the wholeness that her arrival brings. Humanity is delivered from the lack of her presence and delivered into a place of flourishing and living as God fully intended....Ready to fill the earth and subdue it together.

Just as the author uttered a poem about how male and female would image back in chapter one, now the man does the same. He sings out in joy for the helper God has made. "Finally", he says, "there is one like me, who came from me" Like the animals all had fitting ones for them, now he has one that fits. But unlike the animals she has been made from his body rather than the dust.

The man awakes from his God given slumber to discover his God given helper, fitted perfectly to him. God has kept his promise to man and he has brought about what he called very good from chapter 1. His work is complete. The creation of woman serves as the crescendo of the creation account. All is now in order. Things are as they should be.

Again, Sailhamer says it this way.

“At the close of chapter 2 the author puts the final touches on his account of what it means for humankind to be “in God’s image and likeness” Sailhamer

If humanity is the Crown of God’s Creation, then Woman is the jewel in that crown. She is something splendid.

The final verses of chapter 2 serve as a point of application and point of exclamation.

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

To end the creation account with the statement that “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” does 3 things. First it reveals the degree to which things were in order. That which causes feelings of shame for people ,almost universally, (public nakedness) cause no shame for the man and his wife in the garden. That which the Bible consistently portrays as shameful, (nakedness) is here portrayed as good and right and orderly. This phrase is an exclamation point on how very good things were in the garden. So good that not even nakedness was shameful. Humans had nothing to hide and were free to be themselves with one another.

Second it summarizes. If one had to summarize the quality of life for the man and his wife in the garden, how would one do so?

“They were naked and were not ashamed.” Third, it invites... It is hard to read those words and not long for that type of relational unity and vulnerability. It is designed to say, this is what you were made for before God.

I said earlier that there was a point of exclamation and a point of application. So how should one apply this explanation of creation. The author gives some straight forward guidance... Because of all that has been explained concerning the man and the woman, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

So what does that mean the readers should do? In general, men and women leave their natural families and become one in a similar fashion as the man and the woman. They should live in unity and partnership, bringing flourishing into the world, imaging God through their distinct maleness and femaleness.

But there is another layer to all this I think we should consider. If we consider Paul's take on verse 25 in his letter the Ephesian church, the plot thickens a little.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love

his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

In the midst of instructing the church concerning marriage, Paul can't resist quoting from Gen 2. In doing so he pulls back the curtain to reveal a mystery. And here it is..... Gen 2:24 in some mysterious way is speaking about Christ and the church. And one could conclude that all of Genesis 2 is foreshadowing a Christ/Church reality.

Time fails us this morning to discuss all that Paul intended to say in Ephesians 5:25-33, but I would encourage you to read it later today or this week looking for how you might imitate the Christ Church relationship in your home. Again if you have specific questions about love and submission in the marriage relationship, I would direct you to my comments on Colossians 3 (which is a companion passage with Eph 5) from last year. You can find past sermons at northwake.com.

I would like to highlight 3 parallels that Paul mentions between Eph 5 with Gen 2

1. As the woman and man share a unity of body and likeness like none of the other created beings, so Christ and his church share a likeness, one body, where we are all members.

The church is the body of Christ in this world. We image him, reflecting God to all who will see. We should be sobered by this fact and live accordingly. In unity and oneness, loving and serving one another as we would our own bodies.

2. As the man's sleep and shared body gave life to the woman, so the death of Christ and broken body give life to the Church.

Christ loved us so deeply, that he would have his side split open while fully conscious. Nailed naked and ashamed to a cross knowing that on the other side of that shameful cross was the joy of obeying his father and securing his beloved bride. Christ awoke on the third day to the reality that God had kept his promise. And dear friends one day, you and I will fall into the sleep of death clinging to the promise that God will bring us home to his city and his presence.

3. As the woman plays a crucial role in the creation narrative so the Bride of Christ plays a crucial role in the culmination of history.

Revelation 21

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.' 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'

9 Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."
10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

We see that as the Bible begins, so it concludes. God prepares a place for his beloved people, his sons and daughters. Where they can flourish in relationship with him and his Son by the Spirit. What was foreshadowed in Eden with the man and the woman will be fulfilled in a new city of God's people, where the bride will be presented in splendor to her husband Christ.

And just as Gen 2 ends with an invitation into being naked and unashamed, so the Bible ends with an invitation

17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Anyone who is thirsty for life is invited to come and drink from the free water of life that God offers. It was purchased for you through the death of Christ and it overflows to you from his full life. He died, but he was raised, and so can you be today and forever.

So why are we here church?

To reflect God by living with a deep likeness to Christ and unity with one another... inviting those who don't yet know Jesus to come receive life from him in this life and in the city to come.

