**Imago Dei – Adam!**

***God’s Christ Comes Enfleshed***

Advent 1 – 2020

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

You have all heard the Old Testament lesson from Genesis before, you know that Adam was created in the Imago Dei, the Image of God, but what does that mean. For your years in catechesis some time past, you learned that the Image of God had to do with the fact that Adam was different than the rest of the created being. All the animals; from fish and water mammals, to birds and flying mammals, to the creatures that inhabit the earth, God spoke them into being.

On day five He said, “Let the waters team swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly about the earth in the open expanse of the heavens”…and God saw that it was good! He further commanded them to be fruitful and multiple. On day six He said, “Let the earth bring forth living creature after their kind; cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth after their kind,” and it was so.

Man was different! Man was made in God’s image. So God inspired Moses to write in the 2nd chapter greater detail about how He made man. *Then the Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Man’s life comes into him by God’s breath, this is hugely different than the animals. Interestingly, the word used in both Hebrew and Greek for “breathed” is also the word used for “Spirit,” as in Holy Spirit.

Man is given life not by being spoken into existence, but by the very breath of God. God is eternal, He is without beginning and without end. His breath imparting life, while it has a beginning, grants life that is also intended to last into eternity.

Furthermore, man was not only to be fruitful and multiply like the other creatures, He was to have dominion over creation, and subdue it. God gave man His own authority over creation, so that as God was over man and all creation, so man was to have stewardship in God’s stead over creation.

Man has reason and free will, unique gifts above all the other creatures. We see this in man as vestiges of the creativeness of God. Man creates in art, music, language, and in many other ways – the pews you are sitting in now. Man communicates in a complex manner far beyond all other creatures. Yes, some creatures can be taught even to use rudimentary tools. Only man has the reason – the mental ability – to invent, create, and build complex tools and use them.

Man also shows his created purpose to have dominion over other animals by his use of them to accomplish tasks for his purposes.

Maybe what you most remember from your time in Catechesis as the definition of man being created in the “image of God” was that man knew God and God’s will. That man was perfect and without sin. Man’s holiness was given to him by God.

However, we can easily see from reading Genesis five, that something happened to **that** (aspect of the) *image of God* very soon. We are again reminded that God made “man” (Adam) in His image, ***but*** by the third verse it declares that Adam *Fathered a son in his likeness, in his image.* In other words, there was something of the image of God that was lost. Forbidden fruit had been eaten, as disobedience to God had occurred. Sinfulness had now corrupted that image as it was passed to the next generation.

But, is holiness, perfection, and sinlessness the end all of what it means that man was created in the Image of God? We still have reason. Further in Genesis, as Noah and his family get off the ark, we hear God reminding them that man has the image of God when He declares to them, “Whoever shed the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in **His own image**.”

Man still retained something of the image of God. In James epistle we hear of that image even as we learn that the tongue is tough to tame, it is a restless evil, *with it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness (or image) of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing, my brothers, these things ought not to be so.* (James 3:10-11)

If the image of God is more than perfect holiness, then what else is part of that image? The image of God is the flesh you inhabit. Yes, you heard me correctly, part of the image of God is your very flesh – your physical body. Are you thinking, “How can that be? God did not have flesh. So, how can having flesh be part of the image of God?”

Listen again to the first verse of our epistle lesson for today. *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* (Col. 1:15) That verse declares it clearly and distinctly. Who is this ***He*** who is the image of God? Who is this firstborn? The hint is, ***over all creation***. That firstborn is Jesus.

Listen to the couple verses that precede and including verse fifteen. *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* (Col. 1:13-15)

Dear friends, Adam was created in the *Image of God* as a prophetic foreshadowing, what might be called a “type.” What I mean is that the Image of God is found in the incarnation of God in the person of His Christ, Jesus.

I will walk us through this quickly or this sermon could run for hours. I encourage you to come to me with any question this raises. You may ask privately, or I would encourage you to ask at Bible Study.

John’s Gospel, inspired by God, begins with the same words of Genesis 1:1.

*In the beginning…*But then continues... *In the beginning* ***was the Word****, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being.* (Jn. 1:1-3) *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*. (vs. 14)

We know God is three persons in one God. We are not sure exactly how that works, but God reveals Himself to us in this way. From this passage from John’s Gospel, we learn that the 2nd Person of the Trinity takes on human flesh in the womb of Mary, is born, and given the name Jesus – and that before His incarnation, He is the Word of God.

What this means, is that whenever we hear God speaking in the Old Testament, that is the 2nd Person of the Trinity who becomes Jesus, what is more, if you have a Bible with the words of Jesus in red, then the first red colored words in such a Bible should be Genesis 1:3 when God, the Word of God speaks, “Let there be light!”

From that point, God was creating all to be prepared to support and sustain the crown of His creation, the one created in His image - man. Man was created in the image of the 2nd Person of the Trinity ***as He would be when taking on human flesh***. He is after all, the firstborn ***OVER* all creation**. Yes, Adam was created as a foreshadowing, a prophecy pointing forward to the person of Jesus – God incarnate – God in human flesh. He was a type, so to speak of the greater that was to come.

We also know that Adam lost the totality of that image. When He ate of fruit of which he was not to eat, he and all his descendants would now reside in corrupt flesh. The image was tainted, fallen, broken – it was sinful.

So, contrary to what some may think, God did not create Adam, and when Adam sinned, God had to come up with Plan B to fix things. Plan A was always Jesus, God’s Christ.

God, speaking through Paul’s pen to the Romans declares:

Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned—for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not counted against anyone when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the violation committed by Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Rom. 5:12-14)

Sin came to all men through Adam, and Adam was a type, a foreshadowing as I called Him, or an image of the One who was to come – Jesus.

Adam passed on an imperfect image, or you might say a broken image, as an image as you might possibly see of yourself in a dirty mirror. Or maybe you have looked at a picture of yourself and said, “Do I really look like that?”

God looks at us, knowing the perfect image, and sees us in our sinfulness in a like manner. There is disappointment and displeasure. You tried to wash the mirror to make it look better. People touch up pictures to get rid of blemishes and imperfections.

Unfortunately, blemishes and imperfections remain. We are sin-stained, soiled with unrighteousness. How do we get back the image? ***Can*** that which is lost ***ever*** be restored?

It is not something you can accomplish on your own, neither can I. We cannot even come close. Look at all who try today. Medications to restore youthfulness and vigor in both men and women flood both television and radio. Such ads also occur as pop-ups when online. Others attempt restoration by medical procedures, or they buy exercise equipment to do the task. Those desiring an immediate fix find cosmetic salves, ointments, or simple cover-ups one can purchase.

Our problem is more than skin deep. We were created in this flesh to enjoy eternity with our Father who breathed life into us. Without holiness and perfection, there is no place in that eternal glory. There can be no glory in that which is stained with death. The wages of sin is death. Sinfulness needs to be cleansed and the wages paid in full.

Adam is the image of God, pointing forward to the perfect Image of God who was to come. It is in this One who has come, God incarnate, that the perfect image is restored, remade, redeemed.

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:17-21)

You were born in the image of God, a fallen image, an image dirty, filthy, stained with sin. A dying image. As we have succumbed to the desires of our ‘fallen’ nature and listened to the siren voices of the world and Satan, we have ourselves fallen even deeper, soiling the image with sin and death.

In Jesus, the image is redeemed in His suffering and death – the wages of sin paid in full. It is restored in the resurrection of Christ.

Each week we confess in the Creed that we believe in the resurrection of the dead. This body you walk in, this flesh you inhabit, this fallen image.

It is this flesh which Christ purified by His incarnation in the womb of Mary.

It is this flesh which Christ redeemed with His suffering and death.

It is this flesh, His very Image – the *Imago Dei* – the Image of God – which was raised from the dead on the third day.

It is this flesh that will be yours on the last day, restored, made perfect, raised to eternal life.

It is declared this way in Scripture:

Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:51-57) Amen.