21st Sunday after Pentecost

**Genesis Sermon Series 2 “Who Are We?”**

Genesis 2:7-9, 18-25 / October 17, 2021

Genesis 1 answers the fundamental questions of “who is God, what kind of place is the world, and what kind of beings are humans?” God is the one who blesses all things in this world. This world is a very good place in God's eyes. Human beings are noble beings created in the image of God. Although Genesis 2 looks like another creation story, it is actually dealing with one of the three themes covered in Chapter 1, and trying to delve deeper into the topic of “what kind of beings are humans?”

Who are human beings? Who are we? The definitions of human beings vary from field to field. Biologists claim that humans are eventually one of many animals. Evolutionists say that we are a group of beings that has evolved amazingly with excellent conditions for survival of the fittest. And philosophers describe them as beings who can think and as the lord of all things. If so, what does the Bible say? What does Genesis 2 define human beings as? Let’s take a look at what we essentially are through the Genesis Chapter 2.

**1. A Being Who Is Finite but Eternal**

Let’s look at verse 7 first. **“The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”** It is said that God created man from the dust of the ground. The word ‘Adam’ means ‘man.’ It means that man is a dust-like being built from ‘Adama’(dust). Adam is not a proper noun, but a pronoun representing all human existence.

On the other hand, after God created man from the dust, God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being. Here, the breath of life is ‘the breath of God.’ We need to notice that the human body was not a living organism until the breath of God breathed in. It means that a human needs the breath of God to become a real human. Without the breath of God in us, we are just a shell, a fleeting mass of dust.

At the end, Genesis 2 explains that God made man out of ‘lower earthly matter’ called dust and ‘upper heavenly matter’ called the breath of life. What does this mean? Human beings are both finite and eternal beings. We are ephemeral and insignificant like dust, but we are also eternal and sublime beings like God. It can be summed up in the definition of being made up of a human body and soul.

In fact, I often see that in people. There are people who are too small and fragile, but have indomitable courage and wisdom. On the other hand, there are people who have great power and abilities, but get sick in an instant and die. Human beings are finite but eternal beings, and eternal but finite beings. The Bible reminds us that we are both made of dust and of the Spirit of God. Let's keep this in mind.

**2. A Being Who Gives a Name**

Second, Genesis 2 defines a man as a ‘being who gives name.’ Look at verse 19. **“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.”** God saw what the man names creatures God made, and when the man gave them names, they became their names.

What does this mean? Does this mean that God created man as an ‘author of name’? What does this story say about humans? If we think about the meaning of ‘naming’, we can find a clue. Giving a name to something without a name creates value to an existence that was not important to us. Wild dogs and feral cats do not have names, but domestic dogs and cats each have a name. Dogs and cats given such names by humans have a different value to us than wild dogs or wild cats.

But to give a name is more than just to give a name to an unnamed object. There are things that we consider meaningless and worthless. They are failures, hardships, and diseases. But what if we name failure a ‘learning experience,’ disease an ‘alarm for a healthy life,’ and hardship a ‘process to become into gold.’ Then, what we considered worthless turns into something valuable, and a new creation takes place. Giving a name means participating in God’s creative work.

The same goes for people. There are people we don't pay much attention to: the poor, the powerless, and the uncomfortable. We treat them like nameless people. But giving them a new name makes them valuable beings. We could call the poor ‘the victim of my greed,’ the powerless ‘people who need my care,’ and the uncomfortable ‘people who can refine my character'. Giving a name like this is to turn things that were considered worthless into valuable ones.

I will introduce a poem that I tried to introduce in the last Bible study class, but did not properly introduce it. It is a Korean poem called <The Flower> by Kim Chun-su.

*Before I called her name,she was nothing more than a gesture.When I called her name,she came to meand became a flower.Like I called her name,will someone please call my namethat suits my light and fragrance?*

*I, too, long to come to her*

*and become her flower.*

*We all long to be something.*

*You, to me, and I, to you,*

*long to become a gaze that won’t be forgotten.*

**3. A Being Who Loves and Helps Each Other**

Third, Genesis 2 defines a man as a ‘being who loves and helps each other.’ Let’s look at verse 18 and 21-22. **“The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” … So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”**

This text is often regarded as a text for young men and women who are about to get married. That's why it's often read at weddings. It is natural. In this text, however, man does not simply refer to ‘male’, but means ‘person in general.’ Remember that the word Adam is a word meaning ‘human being.’ Therefore, this text needs to be viewed not only as a message that describes the relationship between a man and a woman, but also as a message that describes the essence of all human relationships.

The core message of the text is that it is not good for the man to be alone. Again, it is not a matter of living single or married, but fundamentally that human beings live in relationships. So, how do we build a relationship? The text describes it as ‘being helper.’ We shouldn't just meet people for a certain need, but we should love each other and become helpers who fill each other's shortcomings because we were originally one, not separate beings.

The description that God made a woman from a man’s rib does not express woman’s inferiority or subordination to man, but rather it expresses that man and woman belong to each other and are connected to each other because the Hebrew word for rib means ‘part of a being.’ That is, you are a part of me, and I am a part of you. It means that we are one and belong to each other. Let us confess to each other that you are ‘bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.’

**Wrap Up**

What kind of beings are humans? Who are we? Today, we looked at the answer to this question through Genesis 2. Let’s remember. Although we are made of dust, we are the beings that hold the breath of God, and we are finite but eternal. Also, we are the beings who continue the work of God's new creation, giving names to meaningless and worthless things. And we are not separate beings, but originally one being. You are bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. I am bone of your bones and flesh of your flesh.