**MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM**

**PART II**

**WHAT GOD HAS SEPARATED, LET NOT MAN JOIN TOGETHER**

**Genesis 1:1 – 2:3**

**INTRODUCTION**

Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis 1. Today we continue our series on “Male and Female He Created Them”, where we explore what the Bible teaches about gender and sexuality. Last Sunday we looked at the authority of Scripture from 2 Timothy 3. I found it necessary to start with that topic, because what we get out of what the Bible teaches on this topic depends on how much we trust the Bible. If we believe that it’s just a man-made product reflective of an ancient time in history, then there’s no reason to believe that what it teaches is true now. But if we believe that it contains the very words of God – that all scripture is “breathed out by God” – then we have every reason to believe that it is true, not just for us, but for all people and for all time.

One of the biggest fads right now is the popularity of the “origins story”. Many of us grew up watching superhero shows. I remember coming home every day from school excited to catch the next episode of X-Men. It was a good show. But as good as it was, I was somewhat dissatisfied with the fact that I didn’t know where these members of the X-Men came from. It left me with so many unanswered questions. Why was Professor X in a wheelchair? Why was Wolverine angry all the time? How come Cyclops’ laser eyes don’t burn through his eyelids when he closes his eyes? In order for a story to make sense, we need to turn to the beginning.

Genesis is the ultimate “origins story”. It tells us about the origins of God (that is, that he has no origins), the origins of the earth, the origins of animals and plants, the origins of mankind, the origins of marriage, even the origins of evil. And, not surprisingly, it also tells us about the origins of gender and sexuality. If we don’t understand what Genesis teaches about gender and sexuality, then we won’t understand why the rest of the Bible teaches what it does about this topic.

I’ve titled this message “**What God has Separated, Let Not Man Join Together**”. This phrase should sound familiar to you, either because you know your Bible well or you pay attention during marriage ceremonies. It’s meant to sound like Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:6, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Jesus is teaching that marriage is essentially a divine institution. A man and a woman become husband and wife primarily because God has united them. Therefore, no man or woman has the right to determine when and how that union should separate.

The same is true with respect to gender and sexuality, except it’s the inverse: “What therefore God has separated, let not man join together”. We’re going to see that Genesis is very intentional about showing us that creation was about separation. As God creates, he divides, he defines, and he commands. He separates the light from the day, the land from the water, the plants and animals according to their types – and most significantly for our purposes, he separates male and female. If God has separated the male and female genders, then human beings have no right to mix them, to change them, to claim to have both of them, or to claim to have neither.

We’ll be looking today at Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, which was already read before the break. Since it’s a lengthier portion of Scripture, I won’t read it again. But keep your Bibles open, because we’ll be looking at our text frequently.

We’ll have three points today:

1. Creation is Good
2. Creation is Ordered
3. Creation is Trinitarian

(1) **CREATION IS GOOD**

For anyone who has studied art or music, you’ll know that the best artists or musicians have their own distinct styles that express who they are. The better the artist, the more distinct the art becomes. The best artists are able to use their art to express their emotions, their personality, their passions. For example, when I was learning how to play the violin when I was younger, my dad always played music by violinist Itzhak Perlman in our home. I was reading a review of one of his recent performances, and this is how his music was described:

“The rhythmic drive of Perlman’s playing in the Tarantella was breathtaking. It was hard to imagine any other violinist generating such momentum and elan…his famous honeyed tone and long-phrased *legato* have not been lost, and both were there when needed…”

If we, the created ones, can create beautiful art that expresses who we are, then how much better can the uncreated one express who he is in his creation? That’s exactly what our text teaches us. Like a master artist, God is drawing on creation as his canvass, and he is imprinting his own distinct style on it. As God creates, he is expressing who he is in what he is creating.

And how does God choose to express himself in his creation? By his goodness. We see that in verse 4, when God through Scripture declares that the light he created was good.

What does it mean for something to be “good”? Good” is perhaps one of the most flexible terms in the English language. We say that food is good. We say that a movie is good. We say that sermons are good. We say that a car is good. What we typically mean when we say that something is “good” is that we think that it works the way it’s supposed to. Food is meant to be enjoyed, and when we enjoy it, we say it is good.

In the same way, when God declares his creation “good”, he’s saying that it works the way he wants it to. All of it works together well, so that the earth can flourish and living creatures can be fruitful and multiply. It is “good” because it all works together in a way that enables his creation to live a good life. But it’s also “good” on a deeper level. When God says it is good, he’s saying that it reflects his goodness. Goodness is not just some standard floating around in the sky. Goodness finds its definition in God. God is goodness. Whenever something is good, it is good because it bears the traits of his goodness. So when God declares his creation “good”, he’s declaring that his creation reflects his goodness.

Genesis 1 shows us that God has left the imprint of his goodness all over creation. God declares his creation “good” seven times in Chapter 1:

* In verse 4, God declares that the light he created was good
* In verse 10, God declares that the separation of dry land from the seas was good
* In verse 12, God declares that the plants and trees were good
* In verse 18, God declares that the sun and the moon were good
* In verse 11, God declares that the sea creatures and winged animals were good
* In verse 25, God declares that the land animals were good
* And lastly, in verse 31, God saw everything that he had made, and declares that it was “very good”.

The ESV translates verse 31 as “behold, it was very good”. Gordon Wenham, one of the most respected commentators on Genesis, says that a more accurate translation of verse 31 would be simply, “it was really very good”. The emphasis of the Hebrew is on God’s enthusiasm for his completed work. He couldn’t have been more pleased. Like a master artist who had just finished the final stroke of his paint brush, God stepped back and admired his handiwork, approving how its different parts fit together in perfect harmony, satisfied that it resembled his own goodness.

Notice when it is that God declares that his creation was “really very good”: after he had crowned his master painting with mankind, his greatest creation of all. The significance of this event shouts out from our text. More attention is paid to the creation of mankind than the creation of anything else. God speaks more about the creation of mankind than he does elsewhere, and his description of mankind is expressed in poetry in verse 27. But the most important sign of the significance of mankind’s creation is what verses 26 and 27 tell us about human nature: we were made in the image of God. All creation reflects the goodness of God, but only mankind reflects all the manifold attributes of God: his love, his mercy, his justice, his joy, his creativity, his wisdom.

And in the wisdom of God, he has ordained that mankind should be expressed in two genders: male and female. We see that in verse 27: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

This is the cornerstone of this entire series: “male and female he created them”. The fact that God created us male and female and not anything else should be sufficient for us to submit to this truth. He is our creator, and as our creator he has sovereign rights over who we are, what we do, and how we live. But our text goes further than that. It exhorts us to hold fast to this truth that mankind is created to be male or female because being male or female is good.

It is good to have men who are masculine and women who are feminine. Masculinity and femininity both uniquely add to the goodness of God’s creation. They were made to fit together in companionship, in the complementing of gifts, and even in sexuality, so that we could experience the good life that God made for us. Mix them up, switch between them, or ditch them all together, and the goodness is lost. When we lose sight of the Bible’s teaching on gender, we lose not only the goodness of these relationships, but the goodness of God reflected in our distinct genders. Now it’s true that we often hold onto unbiblical views of what masculinity and femininity are. We’re going to spend a couple Sundays on those topics in the future. But for now, the point is that there is something unique, beautiful, and good about being male, and there is something unique, beautiful, and good about being female.

The other thing that verse 27 teaches us is that it is God who makes us male or female: “male and female he created them.” Gender is not self-determined. It is God-determined. And as we will see more clearly in Chapter 2 next week, our gender is inextricably tied to our sexuality. If you’re born with male sexual organs, then you are male. If you are born with female sexual organs, then you are female. God has given you your body, and in giving you your body he has given you your gender.

These truths sound self-evident to many of us, but they are truths we can no longer take for granted. Our oldest daughter Lily is in Senior Kindergarten at a local public school in Oak Ridges. I had heard disturbing information about the current public school curriculum, so I decided to check it out myself. This is how the Ontario curriculum defines “gender identity”:

A person’s sense of self, with respect to being male or female. Gender identity is different from sexual orientation, and may be different from birth-assigned sex.

My children’s generation is being taught that sexuality and gender are two different things. While sexuality is pre-determined, your gender is not. You can be born with male sexual organs and yet not be male. Gender is a fluid concept that must be self-determined and self-defined. And with the growing popularity of gender-reassignment surgery, sexuality is quickly becoming a fluid concept as well. Sam Allberry, a British pastor who struggles with same-sex attraction but has resolved by the grace of God to be celibate, summed this up nicely:

Our culture says: Your psychology is your sexual identity—let your body be conformed to it. The Bible says: Your body is your sexual identity—let your mind be conformed to it.

Both the culture and the Bible call on people who struggle with sexual identity to change. The only difference is that our culture gives priority to the mind, whereas the Bible gives priority to the body. Our culture says that we are *psychological* beings that happen to live in a physical body. It’s merely a shell for the real “me” to inhabit. The Bible has a much higher view of the body and tells us that our body says something fundamental about who we are. We will look at this more next Sunday.

(2) **CREATION IS ORDERED**

The second thing that our text teaches us about creation is that it is ordered. We see that right at the beginning of our text in verses 1-3. Gordon Wenham is again helpful in understanding these verses. He draws on early interpretations of this text, analysis of its grammar, and comparison with other ancient sources, and concludes that these verses should be interpreted chronologically. So first God creates the heavens and the earth in verse 1, then verse 2 describes the consequence of God’s creative act, then verse 3 tells us what God did next.

In other words, when God creates the heavens and the earth in verse 1, creation is not yet a finished product. It’s “without form and void”, as verse 2 tells us, which implies chaos and disorder. It’s like God created the raw materials for creation in verse 1. And it’s not until verse 3 that he begins to put it all in order by his divine speech.

This is part of what makes creation “good”; that it is ordered, and that it is structured. And throughout Genesis 1, we see God putting creation into order. That’s true of all creation, starting with its form and structure:

* In verse 4, God separates the light from the darkness.
* In verse 7, God creates the skies to separate the waters on earth from the clouds
* In verse 10, God separates the dry land from the seas.
* In verse 14 God creates the sun and the moon to separate the day from the night

It’s also true that God put living creatures into order. We see again and again the phrase “according to their kinds” when Genesis 1 speaks about plants, trees, and animals:

* In verse 11, God commands that plants and trees bear fruit “each according to its kind”, and we see God’s command being fulfilled in verse 12.
* In verse 12, God creates sea creatures according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.
* In verse 24, God speaks out the creation of land animals according to their kinds, and we see that fulfilled in verse 25.

The emphasis here is on God separating different parts of his creation from one another. He is putting creation in order by creating distinct boundaries between creation’s various parts. This is part of what makes creation “good”. Indeed, the only day in which God doesn’t say that what he did was “good” is Day 2 in verses 6-8, where God separates the waters below the expanse from the waters above the expanse. And the reason why there is no declaration that it is good is that God wasn’t done separating them yet. That comes on Day 3 in verses 9-10, when God gathers the waters under the expanse together and separates them from the dry land. Then, and only then, do we see God’s declaration that it was good in verse 10. As Gordon Wenham helpfully puts it,

“There runs through this chapter a concern with definitions and divisions…The different species of plant and animal life again bear testimony to God’s creative plan. The implication, though not stated, is clear: what God has distinguished and created distinct, man ought not to confuse.”

The same can be said about the male and female genders. What God has distinguished and created distinct in the male and female genders, man ought not to confuse. God has created them, and their distinction from one another is part of what makes them “really very good”.

God’s act of creation was accomplished through taking what is chaotic and disordered and making it structured and ordered. Those involved in the breakdown of gender are taking what is structured and ordered and reintroducing chaos and disorder. They think that they’re reconstructing the world, when they’re actually deconstructing it. They’re undoing the order that God has brought into the world for our good.

These days, “order” has a bad reputation. I think about how the new antagonists in the new Star Wars movies are called “The First Order”. Order is depicted as the opposite of all that is good, the imposition of tyranny that kills human freedom and joy. It’s no doubt true that order imposed by evil people with too much power will be oppressive and evil. But Genesis 1 is talking about an order that is put in place by a God who is both powerful and good. The order he has created is the best order we could have for the joy of all people and for the glory of his name.

Indeed, we know that human beings tend to thrive with the right kind of order. The ordering of our work days makes us more productive. The ordering of our priorities builds healthy families. The ordering of the ingredients we use creates better cakes. We need order in order to thrive.

Our culture think it’s doing us a favour by removing this order. It says that human happiness ultimately comes from self-determination: the freedom to choose what you do and who you are. It says that you must be as free to choose your gender as you are free to choose your socks. But when we remove the God-given order that God has created for our good, we’re inviting people back into the chaos and disorder that is *not* good. In doing so, we’re literally tearing the world apart.

(3) **CREATION IS TRINITARIAN**

There’s one more reason to uphold the goodness and beauty of masculinity and femininity, and that is that creation is Trinitarian. What I mean when I say that creation is Trinitarian is that creation resembles God’s Trinitarian nature. The Bible teaches that there is one God, not three gods, not many gods, but one God. And yet this one God eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God, each person is distinct from the others, and yet they do not compose three gods, but one. It is commonly said that there is a unity in the diversity of the Trinity. The three are one. And at the same time, there is a diversity in the unity. The one is three.

We see three hints of the Trinity throughout our text. Robert Letham, in his book *The Holy Trinity*, notes that God forms the world in a threefold manner. First, he creates through speech: “Let there be light! Let there be plants and trees! Let there be sun and moon! Let there be creatures in the water and on the land!” Second, God continues the act of creating by working. He separates the light from the darkness and sets the sun and moon in place. And third, God uses the activity of the creatures themselves to continue his act of creation. He tells the earth to sprout forth vegetation, commands his creatures to be fruitful and multiply, and then he finishes it off by commanding mankind to have dominion over all that God had made. God’s act of creation has a threefold dimension just as God eternally exists in three persons.

The second hint of the Trinity is in verses 1-3. There is the God who creates the heavens and the earth in verse 1, the Spirit of God who hovers over the face of the waters in verse 2, and the divine speech of God that calls light into being in verse 3. It’s no coincidence that the Apostle John calls Jesus the “Word of God” in John 1:1-3:

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 were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Similarly, Paul says in Colossians 1:16:

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

And the last hint of the Trinity is found in verse 26, where God says “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” God speaks in the plural about himself. We know he’s not speaking about angels, because angels are never described as participating in the act of creation anywhere in the Bible. So if not angels, then who? It can only be the Godhead, God the Father speaking to God the Son speaking to God the Spirit all three in one. Verse 26 is a rare sampling of the inter-Trinitarian communication between the persons of the Trinity, as they together deliberate and choose to create mankind in the image of God.

We see this unity in diversity and diversity in unity in the creation of mankind. Mankind makes up one part of creation, and yet it exists as a duality. Verse 27 tells us that “Man” is made in the “image of God”, and yet at the same time they are made “male and female”. Both men and women shine forth the image of God with equal brilliance, and yet the glory that they bring to God is one. There is a unity in their diversity, and a diversity in their unity.

This, my friends, is one of the most beautiful ways that we are made in the image of God. He is one God, like human beings are one creation, and yet he is three persons, just as we are male and female. He has created us to be like him in the unity of the godhead and the diversity of the persons of the godhead.

This isn’t just high theology. It has profound implications about how we think about gender. If God were a diversity only, then it would make sense for him to create an endless spectrum of genders. If God were a diversity only, then gender identity theory would make sense. “Diversity”, after all, is one of the watchwords of the transgender movement. But God is not a diversity only. He is a unity. His divine nature does not exist in endless diversity, but is summed up in the reality that he is one God. There are boundaries to his diversity, and therefore there must be boundaries to our diversity. We may not all be the same gender, but neither are we creatures that exist on an endless spectrum of genders. We are male or we are female. Diversity in unity, and unity in diversity.

**CONCLUSION**

Our text today ends with God resting from his work in the first three verses of chapter 2. God didn’t rest because he was tired. He rested because his work was finished.

The Bible teaches that God offers us a rest as well – a rest from our work of trying to find our identity, whether it be in gender identity or career identity or family identity; a rest from our work of trying to do enough to gain approval, whether from our peers, our families, or ourselves; and a rest from our work of trying to do enough to make our lives count for something. And he offers this rest to you not because you’ve worked enough, but because Jesus has worked for you.

Jesus died for your sins on the cross so that he could end your quest to find identity in all the wrong places and give you a new identity in him as one who is forgiven and unconditionally loved. If you struggle with the question of gender identity or you know some who do, let the good news of the gospel bring this comfort to you: stop trying to recreate yourself. We need to be recreated, but we’re not the ones to do it. God is the one to do it. If he created you, then he can recreate you. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says,

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

The gospel offers hope that gender identity theory cannot, because it has the power to recreate you into who you were truly meant to be. Gender identity theory leaves you in the lonely chaos of self-definition. The gospel invites you into the goodness of God’s definition. And for all who trust in Christ, that definition is this: that you are a precious child of God, deeply loved and cherished, and welcomed into his house with joy.