Gen. 2: 5-9; Psalm 8; What is Mankind? I. How We Were Created II. Why We Were Created

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you know, June is called Pride Month. As a nation, we are all expected to jump with joy and offer our praise to those who choose to live in rebellious sin. From NASCAR to baseball, it seems like everyone is expected to bow the knee before this teaching. I am who I say I am! I can be anything or anyone I want to be! I can choose to be a man or a woman or a cat. I have complete independence- I am what I feel. My identity is mine alone to control- and you have to support any claim I make about myself. I determine my identity! In fact, it is hate speech to disagree with my self-identification! It is clear that proper understanding of our identity is crucial today. Who are we as a people? What does it mean to be a member of the human race? Where did we come from? To answer this question- people have many different opinions. Some think that we came from primordial ooze. That we are nothing more than evolved monkeys. Others trace life to the work of being from other planets- but that raises the question- where did those other beings come from? So today we begin a short series on our identity? Who are we- or what is mankind? We will consider mankind’s identity this week- and we will consider the identity of man and the identity of woman in the weeks to come. So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ created mankind with a unique design and purpose.

**I. How We Were Created**

In our first point, we consider how we- humanity as a whole- was created. Many people enjoy watching superhero movies- and one of the common themes of themes would be an origin story. The story tellers would take us back to the beginning- how did this superhero get their start. Well, when it comes to humanity we find our origin story in the first pages of Scripture. In the beginning, God created man. Specifically, as Gen. 2:7 says, God formed man from the dust of the ground. The word for formed here is used to describe the work of a potter with clay- God molded the first human being by using the dirt of the earth. In fact, the word for man is Adam and the word for dirt or earth is Adamah. So there is a close connection between man and the dust of this earth. We are part of this created order- God made us by using the created matter present. We are from the dust of the earth. We have a specific and special beginning. Being part of this world, we are linked to this world. Our bodies are at home here- we were made to walk upon this earth. Even though Elon Musk is trying to build a colony on Mars, the fact is man was made to live on this earth! This blue and green marble is our home. Remember that this creation of mankind took place before the fall- and after man is brought forth it will be declared that all was very good. This simply means that our body- the stuff of our flesh and bones- is not bad but good! It is a good gift- the physical things of this life and the physical body that God has given to us is a good gift! After forming the body of man, God continued His creative work in v. 7 by breathing life into his nostrils. God spirited his breath into the lungs of man thus making him a living being. Life is clearly a gift of God- and as He puts His Spirit of life within us and we become living creatures. We are made of a body and a soul- the breath of life pushed within our chests. As a unit, we are body/soul creatures. Made to be one being who lives and breathes. When performing CPR, you need both chest compression and breath! So it is, God breathed into us! From this creative work we learn that mankind is dependent. Man did not make themselves- we did not give birth to ourselves. The old logical question is asked- what came first, the chicken or the egg. If the chicken came first, where did the chicken come from? If the egg came first, where did the egg come from? Well, here we find the answer- where did man come from? He was a special and unique product of God’s hand! Having been created, it is stated that God created man in the image of God- stated in Gen. 1:27. Mankind is unique not only in the way in which he was created, but also in the position in which he stands. Humans are said to be in the image of God- in His likeness. Man was created in a unique relationship with God- as we will see in our second point. Made to know God, fellowship with Him and worship Him. Mankind was created with true knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Created good- even very good! Free from sin- free from death- walking in communion with God and with each other. They are unique in their dominion over the other creatures as Gen. 1 continues. Mankind rules over the other things that God has made. As we also read in Psalm 8- crowned with glory and honor. Given dominion over the works of God’s hand. All things of this world placed under his feet. So we see here that man is not only dependent, we are also special and unique! No other creature is crowned with the glory and honor of dominion! Man alone is given the task of naming and taming the wild beasts. Humans are not equal to other creatures- nor are we under the created order. We are not just one creature among many- we are over and above. In other words, we can use and consume without fear. We have the God-given right to explore and bring order to creation. We also have a responsibility to care for the world that God has given to us! We rule over the works of God’s hand- as God rules over us and over all! So using the natural resources like trees, oil and coal can be done in a God-pleasing way! When you drive through the country and see the perfectly planted rows of corn- each standing in their place- you can see the product of man’s hand! This is as God designed- working the soil from which we came and to which we return. Bringing order- bringing life and purpose to the land! Looking at the vast number of human beings- we see the product of God’s hand! The creative work of our God is good! We are, as Heb. 1 puts it, created by the Father through Son. Upheld by the Word of His power. In our creation and continue by His providence- man was made by the hands of God and in the image of God.

**II. Why We Were Created**

But why were we created? For what purpose did the LORD bring forth mankind? In other words- why were we made? When considering the reason that God made man, we start by going back to the beginning. Instead of making up our own mission statement, we read what the Bible tells us! Everyone is living for something. We have a purpose or goal every day- some reason why we get out of bed every morning. As we find in Gen. 1:28- God said to men that they are to be fruitful and increase. To subdue the earth and rule over it. So they are to fill the earth and subdue the earth! That is man’s created calling! What does this mean? How is this seen? Well, one clear way in which mankind carries out this task is by increasing- having children. As found in the context of marriage- as we will see again in a few weeks- God is pleased to see husband and wife bring forth children. Now this is not the only reason that Christians can get married- and sometimes they are unable to have children- but the fact remains that increasing in number is a normal and God-honoring part of marriage! But as you may know, here in the West married couples are waiting longer and having less children. Yes, it is true that not everyone will get married- just as every couple will not be able to have children. But there is a normal patter that God delights to see- His children getting married and having children of their own! This is pleasing to God- who said be fruitful and increase in number! A major threat to humanity is not overpopulation- but rather underpopulation. As more and more couples choose not to have children for selfish reasons, God’s calling remains unfulfilled. Next we find the calling to subdue the earth. To rule over it. As I said before, creation is given to mankind with the expectation that man will rule over it. Bring order to it by using, guarding, grooming, growing, cutting, building, grazing, burning, planting, trimming and harvesting. In this way, the chaos of the wild is brought into order and fruitfulness. This is your calling- to keep creation in check. When something breaks- we fix it or replace it! We want things to run properly- orderly- as designed. That is what God made us for!

So this is why we were created. This is our purpose when we were made. But we can take a step back and consider an even larger, overarching purpose for our life. Why should we plant fields and build bridges and fix cars? Or as our Presbyterian brothers would put it- what is the chief end of man? The answer is this- to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. So within the context of our daily work of filling and subduing we find the call to bring glory to God. As we find in Col. 3:17; whatever you do, do everything in the name the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Our live is to be lived for the purpose of giving God thanks- of bringing Him glory! This is the purpose shared by all men. To fear God as Ecc. 2:13 says- and keep His commandments. We were made for the purpose of bringing God glory by worshipping Him- and by obeying Him! This is the clearest way in which we bring Him praise- by worshipping and doing what He asks! There are so many people in this world that do not have purpose! They have no goals- no initiative- no direction! They are easily manipulated- and prone to despair! But our purpose is clearly known- the reason for living is evident! God made you for His purpose- for bringing Him praise! So to be clear, mankind has purpose- and we also have dignity! Life is not worthless- and we do not live for ourselves. We live for the Lord. Since we belong to the LORD, our life has value. Having purpose, what we do has significance. But when we look around us, it is clear that life has become cheap! The life of others is of little concern. Now to be clear, the life of fellow man is not absolute. There are situations when the life of others can be ended such as with capital punishment or when defending your own life. But here we are not talking about self defense or the sword of the state ending the life of a murderer. Rather, we see the reckless and thoughtless attack on life evident in the violence in the city- and in the ease of abortion. As you may know, June is the month in which Roe v. Wade was overturned. Knowing that our life and the life of others is a gift from God moves us to protect those who cannot defend themselves. Abortion and euthanasia are a great evil that undermines the worth of human life. The fact is, Jesus proves that the life of fellow man has value. For it was our flesh- our very humanity that Jesus took on when He came to this earth. Jesus did not come to help angels- He did not die for beast of the field or birds of the air! No, Jesus came to help the children of Abraham as Heb. 2 says. He came to help the lost sinners of humankind like you and me! For not only were we made to reflect the image of God- we are remade to bear the image of the man of heaven as I Cor. 5 puts it! We are made to reflect the image of Jesus Christ! This also explains why we were created! Made to reflect God as we were made- and now made to bear the image of the Son as we are remade into new creations! This is why we are here!

As we close, we remember that we belong to God! In Him we live and move and have our being! Our identity elevates us- gives us purpose and direction! We are not accidents but rather we are fearfully and wonderfully made! This truth humbles us- we are dependent on God for all that we have and are! But this truth also motivates us- we know who we are and what we are called to do! Jesus Christ created mankind with a unique design and purpose. As the Catechism says- you are not your own. You are the product of the Creator’s hand- and the recipient of redemption. So may we all see who we are- made in God’s image and now made to bear the image of the man of heaven!