

God's Great Design - The Beginning

INTRO: This morning we begin a new series that I am excited about because of where it is leading us as a church. Two weeks ago I revealed to you, and have for a few years now, that we would like to move toward an elder led system of government within the church. As such we are beginning a series of series that will all be leading toward explaining what eldership is, why it is the biblical pattern, and what it will mean for our church.

It may not seem like we are leading toward talking about eldership because the beginnings will be on seemingly unrelated topics. However, by the time we are done opening topics, you should be able to see why we cover all of these other areas.

TRAN: So where we start this morning is with God's design. And one of the big questions we will be looking to answer within this first series is what does it mean to be a man, and what does it mean to be a woman? What was God's design?

- I. What makes a man a man, and a woman a woman
 - A. We have asked this question in the men's Bible study this year - mostly about men
 1. But also about raising daughters - what makes them a strong woman
 2. It's not biology
 - a) If it's just having man parts, then Oliver David Bishop is a man
 - b) That means little Veronica Montgomery is a woman
 3. Of course not Pastor Keith, they become a man or a woman when they hit that certain age
 - a) Really?
 - b) How many of you have met little boys that can shave - little boys that are 50 years old? So it isn't age right?
 - B. I am far removed from nursery rhymes - I still remember several, but far removed
 - C. How many of you remember this one: What are little boys made of? Snips and snails and puppy dog tails. That's what little boys are man of. What are little girls made of? Sugar and spice and everything nice."
 1. Now first of all, do you know what a "snip" is?
 - a) It's a little eel
 - b) So little boys are little eels, snails, and puppy dog tails
 2. They are not positive who wrote this - it is attributed to a man (Robert Southey)
 3. Hearing it I have to think that a woman wrote this
 - a) And probably not any woman

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- b) Probably a woman that just got out of a bad relationship
- D. But even this simple nursery rhyme is trying to define what makes us men and what makes us women
 - 1. And the culture has moved away from the centuries of how being a man or being a woman has been defined
 - 2. They are literally moving into the absurd - and let me give you examples
- E. Examples of the absurdity of how the culture tries to answer this question
 - 1. Randy Thomas wrote an article that appeared in the New Yorker, and in it he contends that the younger generation of men, while seeming to embrace a more gender neutral society and behavior, are “more frustrated with not knowing what it means to be a man.”
 - a) The article goes on to say, “We’ve lost our history of what it means to be a man and our history of what it means to be a woman, and activists have worked to obliterate that history because they feel its sexist. So if a man doesn’t know how to teach a little boy how to be man, there’s a void there, and in that void, it’s no wonder we are coming up with all kinds of ways to identify”
 - b) The point Mr. Thomas was making was the variety of ways you can now check off to define yourself
 - (1) It has always been, male or female
 - (2) Now it’s male or female or other/they
 - (3) The newest one entering the list - gender fluid
 - 2. Before we go farther, just a reminder
 - a) Some of this will sound crazy to many of us
 - b) But even in this room, whether we realize it or not, there can be people here that struggle with gender identity
 - c) This is your stern reminder: The church must be a safe place for the gender confused and sexually broken
 - (1) If it isn’t, what we have effectively done is taken these issues and set them outside the bounds of God’s grace
 - (2) If you do that, you do not understand the grace of God that you claim
 - (3) I say this to you in some straight forward language because to reach a lost, broken and dying world, we don’t get to play God
 - (a) We either understand the AMAZING GRACE of God and apply it in all circumstances
 - (b) Or we prove that we may never have experienced that grace ourselves
 - 3. An example of this idea of gender fluidity - this is taken from the website of Mount Holyoke College in MA

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- a) Read other page
- 4. This is one example of what is playing out in our society
 - a) Not just colleges
 - b) Business
 - c) High Schools
- F. So how do we as Christians, believers in God's Word, approach this issue?
 1. The answer, of course, is with grace and compassion
 2. The reason we as Christians believe that this issue is wrong is because of the Word of God, but also science is confirming it
 3. A man named Dr. Paul McHugh is the university distinguished professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University
 - a) He has concluded, after decades of research, that gender identity confusion is a psychiatric issue - not something for people to decide on their own
 - (1) He is well known in his field for his research, and for shutting down the gender reassignment surgeries at Johns Hopkins
 - (2) Here is what he said, "I have witnessed a great deal of damage from sexual reassignment. The children transformed from their male constitution into female roles suffered prolonged distress and misery as they sensed their natural attitudes."
 - b) Gender reassignment started back in the 70's
 - (1) What he did was go back and surveyed those that had the surgery done
 - (a) Did it fulfill them? Did it satisfy?
 - (b) Did it fix what was broken in them?
 - (2) What he found was almost all the males who had this done now identified themselves as lesbians - because their natural inclinations came out
 - (3) He said that 80% of children who struggle with gender identity grow out of it
 - (a) So greater damage was done by over-zealous parents having this surgery done for their kids
 - (b) Than by just helping them work through the issue
 - c) Again he says, "We have wasted scientific and technical resources and damaged our professional credibility by collaborating with madness rather than trying to study, cure and ultimately prevent it."
 - (1) From my research, this man is religiously conservative, but not necessarily a Christian - and he calls this madness
 - (2) He is the head at Johns Hopkins - a place that does not hire idiots

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- (3) The other thing I found in my research, an article from Johns Hopkins Medical News said this, "Psychiatrist Paul McHugh has attracted controversy over three decades, but when he sets his sights on a trendy diagnosis, his aim almost always proves true."
 - (a) That's some high praise
 - (b) Even though in recent months people are firing at this guy's research because it is no longer acceptable to tell people that this could be anything but their own choice
 4. I say all of this as an example of the fact that these are the people we are supposed to be helping and reaching to with the love, and grace of Jesus Christ
 - a) We must be a safe haven for them
 - b) We must display the grace of Christ the same way we received the grace of Christ
 - (1) Any response less than gracious proves we don't understand our own message
- II. To help us understand God's design, I want to take you to one verse, not hard to find, Genesis 1:1
- A. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
 - B. So let's break this verse down
 1. "In the beginning..."
 - a) Because you and I are finite beings (means we are limited - as opposed to infinite) we cannot think of anything outside of time
 - (1) Time controls us
 - (a) What time are you coming over? What time does class start?
 - (b) When are we meeting for lunch? What time is kickoff for the Super Bowl?
 - (c) When were you born? What year did you graduate?
 - (d) All time!
 - (2) It would be quite impossible to describe much without time
 - (a) Even this..."God existed before..." Oops, before is a time word
 - (3) Ecclesiastes 3 tells us how much time drives us - you might not even realize this is Biblical if you were born in the right era
 - (a) Read Ecc. 3:1-8
 - (b) Ya'll remember the Byrds right
 - (c) We are dictated and controlled by time
 - b) Yet, Genesis 1:1 says that there was something before time
 2. Let's add to it: "In the beginning God..."
 - a) Now we know who or what was outside of time

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- b) We know that there was something before “in the beginning” and that something was God
- c) According to scripture, God is the only thing or person we know of that had no beginning
 - (1) That means that everything else that exists had to proceed from the one person that had no beginning
 - (2) All reality is found in God
- 3. Continuing on, “In the beginning God created...”
 - a) God is the one that created everything
 - b) This gives us a glimpse at His wealth
 - (1) I have told you this before - if you could take nothing and make anything you wanted, and as much of it as you wanted
 - (2) That would make you wealthy beyond compare
 - (3) If someone even came close to your wealth, just make more
 - (4) God created everything out of nothing
 - (a) Not only does that make Him immeasurably wealthy
 - (b) It means He owns it ALL - including you and I
- 4. “In the beginning God created the heavens...”
 - a) A display of His power
 - b) The word of heavens is plural in the Hebrew - it indicates the whole universe is in view
 - (1) So there are men describing the whole universe that do not understand what we understand about the universe
 - (2) David said “He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.” Psalm 147:4
 - (a) David knows nothing of what the Hubble telescope has shown us today
 - (b) He has no idea how big things really are - but He says that God is the one naming all the stars
- 5. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”
 - a) Ever think about earth - how tiny and insignificant we are in the universe
 - (1) Earth is far from the most impressive planet out there
 - (2) There are far more planets that are more unique, bigger, and more impressive in any number of ways
 - (3) Yet it is here on earth that God chose to have the greatest drama in the universe play out by placing man and woman here to reign over His creation
 - b) Some people think that is arrogant to say that earth is the point of all the universe

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- (1) But, the Bible consistently shows us that God delights in the weak, the small, and the insignificant
- (2) Earth would fit that bill
- C. So in just the first verse of Scripture you have a personal, creative God who creates all things
 - 1. He created space
 - 2. He created time
 - 3. He created mass
 - 4. It's the trifecta for philosophy, theology, and science
 - a) The biggest questions of life - origin, purpose and design can now be studied and understood
 - b) And that is what I want to do to end the sermon is look at our origins, our purpose, and design

III. Our origin, purpose and design

A. Our origin - what are we?

- 1. At its most basic, we have to say, we are created
 - a) We were created by a Creator
 - b) If we were created by Someone larger and more powerful, it means we are not the measure of anything in this universe
 - c) We are not the point - even though we are special within creation, we are not the point of it
- 2. This generally doesn't sit well with us because we want to be the point
 - a) We want to have the right to say, "its my life and I can do as I please"
 - b) We like to think that we are the maker of our destiny, so it comes as a shock to the system when we come face to face with the fact that we are not the point
 - (1) We see societies hypocrisy in all the films where we defeat the superior alien species
 - (2) The Marvel X-men films that are popular is both a giant advertisement for evolution, as well as society's hypocrisy at it's best
 - (a) X-men is all about humanity developing mutations that make them different and generally stronger
 - (b) And what does humanity do, label them as freaks and fight against it
 - (c) Why? Because, evolutionary theory is denied, and
HUMANITY IN ITS PRESENT FORM IS THE POINT
- 3. However, when we realize that we were created by a Creator, and that He, NOT us is the point, it changes our view

B. Our purpose - why are we here?

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1. This will be what several of the messages will be about in future weeks - but for now, let's just say, that because we have a Creator, He created us with a purpose
2. Because of this first sentence in the Bible, there are a number of things we know cannot be true
 - a) We can rule out Dualism - that is there is evil, and there is good, and they are fighting one another, and we don't know which is stronger or which will win
 - (1) You see this in all the demon possession movies out of Hollywood
 - (2) But based on the first sentence in Scripture, there is no force that can compete with God
 - b) Materialism - meaning all that exists is the material world we see can't be true, because God was outside of time, space and creation
 - c) Polytheism is out, because there is only one God mentioned
 - d) Hedonism is out because pleasure is measured against who God is, and the pleasure He offers
 - (1) Pleasure and wealth cannot be seen as good if it is selfish, or displeasing to the God who created it all
 - e) Existentialism
 - (1) How many have heard that word?
 - (a) Liars! How many of you have seen Elf? Then you have heard that word.
 - (b) How many know what it means?
 - (c) Existentialism is the idea that man determines his own reality
 - i) We are back to us being the point
 - ii) And in the movie Elf, by the way, the one guy, in talking with Miles Finch on the phone calls his book existential - meaning the characters in the children's book were determining their own reality
 - (2) But the whole idea of existentialism is ruled out because reality is determined by the Creator, not the opinion of the created
 - (a) So when people say they don't believe God exists and that is their reality
 - (b) Does their opinion change whether God exists?
 - f) Pantheism is out
 - (1) I keep making movie references, but think the movie Avatar
 - (a) They are all one with the creation
 - (b) Creation is their god
 - (2) That can't be true because God created everything
 - (3) But I want you to understand how pervasive this thought is

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- (a) Mikhail Gorbachev was a pantheist - he said, "I believe in the cosmos. All of us are linked to the cosmos. So nature is my god. To me, nature is sacred. Trees are my temples and forests are my cathedrals. Being one with nature."
 - (b) Here is what the problem is (besides being axiomatically false)
 - i) Their explanation of creation always sounds so amazing - who wouldn't want that as their god
 - ii) How many of them say that lion ripping apart the antelope - that's my sanctuary
 - (1) Nature is violent folks
 - (2) But you never see a pantheist talking about how amazing nature is in those moments
 - (4) Here is the other thing that we should note under pantheism
 - (a) You ever stood at the shore of the ocean - feel the power of the waves - know that they ocean could chew you up and spit you out without a second thought?
 - (b) Ever stood and looked at the grandeur of the mountains - see the beauty, feel the strength
 - (c) Ever stood and contemplated the universe, and how big it is, and small you are?
 - (d) All of those things put us in our place
 - i) But if you really want to be put in your place, understand that there is a bigger force behind all of that
 - ii) When we understand that there is something behind the magnificence we are looking at - that is when we really understand reverence and awe for the Creator
 - (5) The reason humanity is drawn to pantheism is because we see the design in it - sadly most forget to look for the designer
- C. That brings us to the last thing - design
- 1. As we will be talking about our design in future weeks, let me say this, there is a way that we have been designed to work
 - a) And much like a machine, if you do not use it according to its design, bad things happen
 - b) Any number of America's Funniest Home Videos comes to mind
 - (1) When we use the machine that God gave us according to the way He designed it, all is well
 - (2) When we do not, all kinds of problems can occur
 - 2. The Bible puts this principle this way, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end leads to death."

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- a) For every AFV person that said those magic words, "No, this will work," there is someone that wishes they would have been told, "There is a way that seems right to a man..."
3. However, the Bible also tells us, "You make known the path of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." - Psalm 16:11
4. So what we are looking at is God saying, "I am the Creator, the designer. I know what the path of life is, and if you will listen, and follow My design, you will be filled with joy and eternal pleasures."
 - a) So if we want to know what manhood is, God says, here is the path of life
 - b) If we want to know what womanhood is, God says, here is the path of life

CONCLUSION: These are some of the things we will be looking at in future weeks. What is God's great design for manhood. What is God's great design for womanhood. What is this path of life that God wants to lead us on as our Creator, and Designer of life.