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Genesis 1:26-27, 3:8-9

What We Believe:
Sin & Mankind

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Bernie shared a little story with me this week about a farmer who never wanted to go to church, in spite of being asked by his wife over and over again. One day, when his wife was just too tired to go, he decided to make her happy by going to the service. When he got back, his wife asked, “How was it?” The man replied, “Good.” So she asked, “What did the pastor preach on?” He answered, “Sin.” She asked, “Well, what did he have to say about it?” The farmer replied, “He was against it.”

At Cornerstone, we’re going through a sermon series entitled, *What We Believe*. Today, I’m preaching on the topics of sin and mankind. I am against sin, but not mankind.

Our **Articles of Faith** explain both our humanity and our sin, **linking** the two in the same statement. **Why** does it do that? Because wherever humans are, there is sin. Wherever humans are, there is pollution, poverty, corruption, injustice. Humankind is broken. But at the same time, we know this **shouldn’t be**. It’s like we know humans weren’t this way originally. Article III, number 7, says, “We believe that God created all people in His own image...” It references Genesis 1:26, so I want to read it and the next verse.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them. (NIV®)

God created human beings in the image of God. The Hebrew word for “image” is *şelem*, and it means “**idol**.” An idol is a physical representation of a diety. Idols in the Bible and in some religions today are made of wood, stone, or maybe silver or gold if they’re expensive. The idols (or images) God makes of himself are different. They’re living, breathing, acting, human-beings that **join him** in **ruling** over creation. *When God creates humans, he creates them like him, with the capacity to know God and participate in what he is doing.*

To be human is to be made for relationship with God and others.

The God of Christianity is a relational being. One of our newest Elders, Terry, pointed out to me the **unity** and **diversity** we see in God in **Genesis 1:26-27**, but to see it we have to look at the **ESV** translation.

v.26a Let us make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness...

v. 27 So God created man in **his** own image,
in the image of God he created **him**;
male and **female** he created **them**. (ESV)

Is God **plural** or **singular**? God is unity and diversity. He is one God in three persons, Trinity. Male and female, men and women, somehow reflect this unity and diversity together. This means three things:

- a. **Both men and women are made in the image of God.** One gender is not better than the other. It takes both genders equally, working together, to truly reflect God. Humanity needs both men and women.

Today we installed our Cornerstone **Elders**. As I read our philosophy of ministry, you may have noticed that Cornerstone believes only men can be Elders. Honestly, I was a bit nervous to publish our list of Elders online as outsiders might question this. Before the team from Immanuel planted this church, we surveyed the community to get to know them and one woman told us she “has issues with patriarchal churches.” There’s something I want to make perfectly clear. The Elders believe men and women are just as valuable and talented as each other, but the team who founded this church and our Board of Elders believes God calls men and women to different roles in the family and church (1 Tim 2-3). Now this doesn’t mean we can’t politely disagree on this issue, holding to different points of view even among the Elders, but as a church, we believe God values both men and women equally, but calls them to different tasks. *Thus we reflect God’s unity and diversity. Both men and women are made in the image of God.*

- b. **Men and women are made for relationship with God.** God made us like him so we can be in relationship with him in a special way that surpasses that of animals or nature. We can share in some of God’s attributes, his love, goodness, kindness, wisdom, and even holiness. We have both a body and a soul (or spirit). God is a spirit too, and through Christ has taken on a human body. *Do you see how men and women are made for relationship with God?*
- c. **Men and women are made for relationship with each other.** As we love and care for each other, we reflect the unity and diversity in the Trinity. We need each other, men, women, unborn, young, old.

With our autonomy announcement, we also sent out a copy of our Constitution & By-Laws. For those of you who read it to the very last page, you’ll notice we included a statement on what we believe about “Marriage and Human Sexuality.” It says:

All Pastors, Elders, and Deacons shall affirm and uphold a biblical definition of marriage and human sexuality, meaning, God created marriage to be between one naturally-born man and one naturally-born woman; therefore, this is the only good and acceptable relationship to express and experience sexual intimacy (Genesis 2:18, 21-25, Matthew 19:4-9, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:21-33, 1 Timothy 1:9-10).

We believe and teach that God created men and women to know and love each other in marriage. This is not a popular position. But this is what the Bible teaches when it says God made them “male and female” and in all the Bible passages listed above. But I want to make something really **clear**. Just because we can’t affirm the LGBT view of marriage, it doesn’t mean we think any less of LGBT people. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are just as valuable and precious to God as heterosexual men and women. I hope that one day we have people from the LGBT community come to Cornerstone, and they feel welcomed and loved, but also challenged and stretched as they encounter Jesus.

To be human is to made for relationship with God and others. If God created us all to get along, why are we hurting each other, and failing so miserably? It’s all because of sin.

Sin breaks our humanity.

When you think of sin, what do you think of? Maybe you think of the seven deadly sins, “pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath, and sloth.”¹ If you grew up Catholic, maybe you think of mortal and venial sins. In the

¹ Wikipedia contributors. "Seven deadly sins." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 16 Jul. 2017. Web. 27 Jul. 2017

Bible, the Hebrew word for “sin” is ḥāṭā’ and it means “to miss (the mark).”² During a civil war in the Old Testament, we actually see this word used for slings not missing their mark in battle.

Judges 20:16 Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred select troops who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. (NIV®)

“Not miss” literally means “not sin.” So what do we miss when we sin? We miss God’s **perfect standard**. As we learned earlier in this sermon series, God is perfectly **holy**. His character is loving but also good, and anytime we’re not loving or good like him, we miss the mark, we sin. Not only do we miss the mark with our actions, but on the inside too. Sin starts in our **hearts**, and leads to several **consequences**:

1. Sin breaks our relationship with God.

When God created Adam and Eve in the garden, they were perfect. They didn’t have sin. But then the serpent, who we learned last week is Satan, tempted them to eat from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9), which God told them not to eat from. When Adam and Eve disobeyed by eating this fruit, they hid themselves from God in shame.

Genesis 3:8-9 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” (NIV®)

Sin creates a break in relationship between God and humanity. We see this in our **Article of Faith**.

7. We believe that God created all people in His own image; that mankind was tempted by Satan, sinned, and thereby incurred eternal physical and spiritual death, which is separation from God.

I want to let you in on a little secret. The last line of this article used to read “which is separation from God’s **blessing**.” We didn’t want to imply that there is any space where our sins can completely separate us from God’s presence. Remember, God is **omnipresent** (he is in all places). So the separation this article is talking about is **relational**. *Because of sin, you and I are separated from a life-giving relationship with God* (Isa 59:2). Sin leads to death, which leads to a separation from the loving-kindness of God for all eternity. Sin is a **prison warden** who locks us away from the love of our friends and family forever.

Because of Adam and Eve’s sin, we are all born with a sin nature. We call this **original sin**. It means we are always **bent** towards missing the mark. In our own power, we’ll always sin. This original sin destroyed our **free will**. We’re no longer free to choose good. Although we don’t necessarily choose evil all the time, the **arch** of our lives will curve away from God instead of towards him. We see this in our second article.

8. We believe that as a consequence of the Fall, all human beings are born with a sin nature, rebellious toward God, choose willingly to sin, and are therefore under God’s condemnation.

We’re born in sin, and we choose willingly to sin because of it. No longer are we apart of God’s perfect family. Instead, we deserve God’s judgment, **hell**. We become God’s enemies, but there’s more **casualties** than just our relationship with God. Sin breaks our humanity, including how we treat our neighbors.

2. Sin breaks our relationship with others.

When God confronted Adam with his sin, instead of confessing his sin, he blames Eve.

² *MED (Mounce’s Expository Dictionary)*, s.v. “SIN,” 655. [accord://read/Mounce_Expository#10234](http://read/Mounce_Expository#10234)

Genesis 3:12-13 The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (NIV®)

Sin leads to an **immediate breakdown** in their relationship. Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent. *The break in relationship with God leads to a break in relationship with each other.*

Have you ever experienced this? You have a close friend, who you love, but sin begins to tempt you with a new thought, “Hey, they just got a new car, and you didn’t. Why should they have it and not you? They can’t afford it.” You begin to feel jealous and you find yourself criticizing them to others. And then you spread rumors, and they find out, and your relationship is shattered. *Sin breaks our relationship with others.*

The week I read the book, *A Breviary of Sin: Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be* by Cornelius Plantinga Jr. He tells the story of a Yale University test in the 1960s called the Milgram experiment.³ In this test, there were a pool of unwitting subjects, a “youngish man in a gray laboratory coat”, and also a chubby “middle-aged man [the subjects] supposed to be another subject like themselves but who was actually an actor...” They were told this experiment would “test the effect of punishment on learning...”

The man in the gray lab coat told the subjects it was their job to administer penalty shocks to the middle-aged man every time he got a wrong answer. The subject was then placed before a fake **shock generator** with labels ranging from “15 volts” to “450 volts,” which also were labeled “slight shock, moderate shock, strong shock, intense shock, danger — severe shock, XXX.” People have died from as little as 42 volts if the current is right, so this is pretty dangerous.

The actor would then take the test hooked to **fake shockers**, and every time he got a wrong answer, the man in the gray coat told the test subjects to shock him. The actor wasn’t very good at taking tests, so the real test subjects were instructed to shock him lot’s of time, growing in intensity each time. He’d protest at first, and then complain, then start to cry out in pain, and scream, before collapsing.

If the test subjects started to protest, the man in the gray lab coat would give them increasingly stern commands, and most complied. When the test subjects could only hear the actor yelling through a wall, and not see him, 62% shocked him up to 450 volts, XXX. When they sat in the same room, 40% still obeyed. Milgram was testing to see if people would obey orders that were clearly wrong, and we do.

Our sin tempts us to not only turn on God, but others, and we obey. Yes we have to deal with the temptations of Satan too, whose lab coat is made of snake skin, but the first temptation is inside of us, it’s in our **hearts**. The sin in us leads us to shock and wound others, and turn on God (Matt 22:34-38). This is what it means to be born with a sin nature. Because of sin, we’re born less than human, less than the image of God. We’re born broken and bent. But, there’s hope. *Sin breaks our humanity.*

Christ restores our humanity.

Next week I’m going home for my mom’s birthday party, she’s turning 30, so Andy is preaching. I don’t want to give away his sermon, on salvation, but I have to give you a glimpse of hope. I can’t leave you under condemnation without any hope of deliverance, but you should come back because we need to be reminded of what Andy is going to preach every single day.

³ Plantinga, Cornelius, Jr. *Not the way its supposed to be: a breviary of sin.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996. Print. Pages 173-176.

Just like Adam broke our humanity by sinning, Jesus Christ restores it. Jesus is **Adam 2.0**. He's the second Adam who is here to restore what we lost. He does this by being the **perfect human**. Jesus never sinned, not once. He wasn't born in sin because he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He never broke his relationship with God the Father, and never sinned against people. The **gospel** is the good news that Jesus offers us his own perfect humanity. If you confess your sins, and put your faith in him, Jesus takes away your **inhumanity** and give you his **humanity**. He gives you a new heart, and **unbends** you. My two take-aways are:

1. Confess your sins

If you don't know Jesus, and he hasn't yet give you his perfect humanity, confess your inhumanity. Confess the ways you sin against God and against others. Confess that every day you miss the mark of God's perfect standard and this sin starts in your heart. Confess you need a new humanity that only Jesus offers.

If you are a Christian, are you confessing your sins and discovering Jesus' perfect humanity in you? Jesus calls us to a lifelong journey of becoming more human. Day by day we confess when we miss the mark, and as we do this, we turn our hearts to Jesus and become more like him. We become more unbent and more human. To be human, isn't to be messed up, but to be like Jesus. *Confess your sins.*

2. Enter into relationship with God and others.

As we enter into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and enter into relationships with those around us, we become more human. We become a clearer-image of God. We become more like Jesus.

How do you enter into relationship with God? It's not a one time prayer. It's a lifelong friendship full of love, trust, and obedience. We follow Jesus day by day through through his Word, the Bible. We build an eternal relationship with the Father through prayer. We experience the filling of the Holy Spirit as we seek his presence throughout our days. Do you want to know God? Then seek the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

How do you enter into relationship with others? I see this two ways: 1) Get to know your **church** family. Enter into this community. Love it, sacrifice for it, be a part of what God is doing here. 2) Reach out to your **neighbor** who doesn't know Jesus yet. We want to see humanity restored, not only in us, but in them as well.

Confess your sins and enter into relationship with God and others.

Christ can restore your humanity.

Jan Rensaller was one of the test subjects at Yale University. He was "a 32-year-old engineer and 'a member of the Dutch Reformed Church.'" When the man in the gray coat pushed him by saying, "You have no choice" he replied, "I *do* have a choice . . . I can't continue . . . I've gone too far already, probably." Fighting sin isn't easy. Apparently there was also an Old Testament professor who stopped "at 150 volts, claiming that God's authority superseded" that of the man in the gray coat.

Sin makes us feel and act less than human. But Christ came to fix that by forgiving us of our sins and inviting us into relationship with God and others. In sin, we will always miss the mark. But in Christ, we get new hearts, and become unbent and more human day by day. *Christ can restore your humanity.*

Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote and preached this message for the people of Cornerstone Congregational Church. [Click here to listen to more sermons](#) or [click here to read our story](#).