

February 14, 2021

God and Man

In *Genesis* we read about how God created man and woman and we can, I think, really learn a lot about ourselves and about our God from those accounts. Last week we talked a bit about the very first statement in Scripture; **"In the beginning God created..."** From that very first verse we are challenged to either accept or reject that God is and that he wields the power to create.

Continuing in *Genesis* 1, we read about the creation of man; **"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."** And in *Genesis* 2 we learn that God formed man from the **"...dust of the ground..."** and placed him in the garden he had planted.

In that garden God planted two special trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As God places his creation in that garden he commanded him, **"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."** (*Genesis* 2:15-17) After their sin Adam and Eve were driven from the garden because as God said, **"The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."** (*Genesis* 3:21-22)

So, what can we learn about ourselves and about God from these three passages in *Genesis*? First, you and I are created in God's image. Now I don't think that this means God looks like me or you, but it does mean that unlike anything else in all of creation you and I are like God. But, how are we like God? I believe that it is in the two trees that God plants in the garden that we find the answer. First, God placed the tree of life in the garden and man and woman were free to eat of it any time they wanted. The fruit of that tree allowed them to live forever; to be eternal beings. So, you and I are like God in that we were created to live forever. We were created to be eternal.

The second tree that God planted in the garden also tells us a lot about ourselves. That tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, means that we, like God, can understand the difference between good and evil and we can choose one or the other. No other created being has the power to choose behaviors based on their capacity to understand the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. Mankind does.

So why is God not anxious for us to have the power to understand and to choose? Here we learn something about our God. Not only has he always existed and not only does he have the power to create, but he is also a God who must and will always hold us accountable for those choices we make.

You see, when God commanded man not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he established a law, **"...for when you eat of it you will surely die."** That law which the Apostle Paul centuries later will call the **"...law of sin and death..."** (*Romans* 8:2) applies to both God and man. God cannot set that law aside and still be God, so no matter how much he loves us he must, because he is God, always hold us accountable for the choices we make. So, we lose our eternal nature as a consequence of our choice to sin.

When God drives man and woman from the garden he says, **"The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil."** So, you and I are like God in that we have the capacity to know the difference between good and evil and to choose between the two. God drives man from the garden lest he **"...reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and live forever."** Ultimately, God must drive man from the garden because the consequence of man's sin under the

"...*law of sin and death*..." must be his access to the tree of life. The cost of man's sin, of your sin and mine, was and is our capacity to live forever.

So, God created us in his image in the sense that we, like God, can understand the difference between good and evil and we can choose between the two. And God created us in his image in the sense that we were made to be eternal beings, to live forever. But God, because he is God, must hold us accountable for the choices we make and the consequence of our sin-filled choices will always be our access to eternal life.

