

CNF Talk 1-Preliminary Thoughts (Friday Night)

creation, work, stewardship, identity

Gen 2:15 (HCSB)

God made us in His image *on purpose* for us to live *with purpose*.

INTRODUCTION:

–I want to introduce tomorrow’s talk, “*Caring for the Garden*,” with a look at **Genesis 2:15** (HCSB): “*The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.*”

–**HOM.idea.** As embodiments of God’s image, our divine *position* has a divine *purpose*. We bear His “likeness” to reflect and represent Him on earth by our own creative work. His call for us to care for creation was not cancelled by human sin. It has always continued through His grace. –God in Jesus humanly exemplified what it means for us to be *prophets, priests and kings*. The Holy Spirit calls and enables us to follow Jesus as servant-leaders with *prophetic, priestly and royal* roles of caring for creation, as we, together *with creation*, await His Return.

–To help us think about this....

I. I Have a Few Searching Questions:

- “*Why did God create us as body-spirit beings in the first place?*”
- “*How does Christ’s Incarnation define our own calling in a world disrupted by sin?*”
- “*What are the material and spiritual dimensions of a Christian concept of ecology?*”
- “*How is being servants of God shaped by our privilege of being co-creating ‘friends’ of the Creator?*”
- “*What does the task of ‘caring for the Garden’ have to do with our many different kinds of work in the secular world?*”

TRANS: These questions imply that most service to God isn’t done in church. Today’s *Garden* is the world of our workweek, where we use our *physical, mental, and spiritual* abilities that reflect God’s image. My talk tomorrow barely scratches the surface of this theme, but I hope to lay a theological foundation for us to build on. I’m praying we leave here with *renewed zeal and inspiration* to serve as prophets, priests and kings in all the areas of life where God has “placed” us [lit., “caused us to rest”]. But here’s *one more searching question* for us to sleep on tonight:

II. “Is God Concerned About *Who We Are* or *What We Do*?”

- That’s a trick question, because it asks for an *either-or* response, but the answer is both-and. These 2 questions are *interwoven....*
 - God is the Creator because *He created* all things; Jesus is the Savior because *He saves* sinners; the Holy Spirit is the Counselor because *He counsels* believers; AND we are believers because *we believe*. (Who we are cannot be separated from what we do.)
 - Today’s popular psychology says that *who we are* isn’t defined by what we do. That’s *true* in one respect and *false* in another:
 - “*I’m a student!*” Yes, but do you *really study* the textbook?
 - “*I’m a parent!*” Yes, but do you *guide & provide* for your kids?
 - “*I’m a citizen!*” Yes, but do you *practice good citizenship*?
- Jesus said in **John 10:10b** (ESV), “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (We become who we are as children of God by having this “life” from Christ, but we express ourselves as God’s children by what we do with that “life”: how prophetically we speak, how we serve in personal ministry, how we lead in the power of our King’s authority. Is our “life” lived *poorly* or “abundantly”?)

CONCLUSION:

–**God made us in His image *on purpose* for us to live *with purpose*.** *Who we are* as image-bearers of the Creator must be kept aligned with *what we do* as cultivators and guardians of creation. Staying under the sound teaching of God’s Word—in *church services and gatherings* like this one—provides for that divine alignment to be a *regular and ongoing* part of our lives.
–I’m glad you’re here. I’m glad to be here. Let’s pray for a great weekend....
(**Pray for** the weekend’s *activities*, for the *talks*, for our *safety* here, for *those still traveling* to get here, and for a *good night’s sleep*.)