

## **Genesis 1:1-2:4a** Made in the image of God

We pray...

Have a look at the screen and tell me, what do you see?

- (A picture of me)

Is it me? No, I'm standing right here, you're looking at a screen.

Of course, what you're seeing is an 'image' of me.

In some ways it's very good, you can immediately recognise me, you can see my physical features, but that's really all that it's good for.

This image cannot speak, it doesn't show my true character, it can't share the story of who I am, and it can never accomplish something according to my will.

Now you've likely heard the phrase before:

'We are made in the image of God'

It's what we heard in our reading today from Genesis:

**God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.**

Genesis 1:27

And we know what an image is, so naturally, we are drawn to think: we, as people, are like little photographs of God. If we brought all the people of the world together, we could get a decent idea of what God looks like, because that's the collective image of God!

But to be made 'in the image of God', it's not really about looks at all.

God doesn't need us as a mirror so that he can look at himself in pride.

He doesn't need a photo to send to family and friends so they can see what he looks like.

No, it's that within his creation, human beings would be the image of his character, to reflect the likeness of who he is within his creation.

And there's an important distinction of what it means to be made in the image of God.

Listen again to how God describes his plan to make us in his image:

**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."**

Genesis 1:26

See, you may well have noticed in this verse that God speaks of himself a little differently.

He doesn't say: 'I'm going to make mankind in my image', no, he says:

"Let *us* make mankind in *our* image, in *our* likeness"

It's the reason we hear this passage today on Trinity Sunday.

From the very beginning, the Father was not on his own creating the universe.

No, there is no work of the Triune God that can be accomplished apart from the fullness of who he is.

We are not made in the image of the Father, we are made in the image of the fullness of God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We were created so that all creatures of God's creation would see and experience the character of Father, Son, and Spirit.

So what then does that actually look like?

Well, we could spend all day unpacking all the characteristics of God, but we can see an essential core through just three.

See, Paul has given us this great summary, these words of blessing that God would grant us what we need to live out our created purpose as his image:

**May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

2 Corinthians 13:14

If you want to know what it is to bear the image of the Triune God, as we were created to do, it is to do the following:

To reflect the fullness of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is, willingly giving of yourself for others, even if they have done nothing to earn it.

To reflect the love of the Father.

That is, expressing pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, loving anyone, from family to strangers, to even your deepest enemies.

And to reflect the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

That is, to have full and perfect communion throughout all humanity. Every human united in their common purpose, without discord, without hatred or division, but bound together in perfect harmony.

Of course, this is so far from what we experience in this world.

In fact, it's almost impossible to imagine what the world would be like if every single person was living as a perfect reflection of the character of our Triune God, living out his grace, love, and fellowship.

When sin entered into the world, we turned the mirror away from our God.

Instead of reflecting him to the world around us, we instead we want others to see us, to see our character.

Sure, we can live out grace toward others... so long as they deserve it.

We twist grace with our own selfish vision of justice, offering grace only to those who might give us a good return for our investment.

Sure, we can live out love toward others... so long as they show they are worthy of our love.

We can love our families and even our friends, but strangers? They will need to prove themselves before they get our attention, let alone our love. And our enemies? Well, there's just no way that we'll ever love them, unless maybe they come grovelling before us begging for forgiveness.

And then there's fellowship. Now we love having fellowship... When it's shared with like minded people... But we'll quickly sever that fellowship if we hear some views or opinions that don't quite align with our own. And of course, there's people that are so far removed from us that we would never even consider sharing a piece of our lives with them...

In our sin, that image of God that we were created to bear has been so far distorted, that he's no longer recognisable.

Any yet, it's in the midst of our sin, that we see the very thing that we were created to reflect.

In Christ, we see the fullness of God's grace, as he willingly offers himself in our place. Taking our sin upon himself and clothing us in his own righteousness.

In Christ, we see the fullness of God's love, as God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

In Christ, we see the fullness of God's fellowship, who seeks for us to be one with him, as he and the Father are one.

In God's plan of salvation in Christ, the fulness of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is revealed in its purest image.

And it's in Christ, that our distortions of God's image can start to be restored.

As Jesus pours out his grace upon us, we can start to live out that grace to others, that they would come to know his grace through us.

As the Father shows his love for us through all that he has done in Christ, as those who are loved, we can show his love to others, that they would come to know his love through us.

As the Holy Spirit has been sent to us, we can be drawn into deeper fellowship with one another, that we would be open toward others, that they might find themselves drawn into the unity that only the Spirit can give.

And perhaps, though it is seen only dimly, we can reflect a glimpse of the God of creation, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is continually at work in our lives.

So may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

♪ AT 43 How shall I call you

Pastor Jeremy Smith