



Crowned with Glory and Majesty
Text: Genesis 1:26-29; 2:4-25; Psalm 8:1-9;
Selected Scriptures
Sanctity of Human Life Sunday
Pastor Lyle L. Wahl
January 21, 2018

Theme: **Praise God for crowning you with glory and majesty.**

Introduction

Imagine this situation. You are on a trip to a large city. You are driving around seeing some of the sights in your rental car. As you start to go down a steep hill you realize you have no brakes— they don't work at all! Panicked and on full alert, you avoid hitting a car at an intersection, spot a narrow alley and head into it hoping to avoid an accident. Immediately you see there's a tight spot ahead with a dumpster on one side of the alley and an SUV on the other. You think you can squeeze between them. You take a deep breath, and then it happens—a shabbily dressed man staggers out from the far side of the dumpster and falls right in your path. You have to make an instant decision. There are only three choices: smash into the dumpster on the one side, the SUV on the other, or run over the man. Some of us might choose to crash into the dumpster while others would pick the SUV. But none of us would choose to run over the man.

Question: *Why not?*¹

We who follow Jesus Christ believe there is an inherent value in every person that exceeds that of any other material thing. Psalm 8 tells us that we are *crowned with glory and majesty*.

We are thinking about that unique nature and value on this Sunday that is set aside to focus on the sanctity of human life. The life of every person at every stage of life. Life from embryo to grave. Every race, culture and position. Every state of physical, emotional and mental health.

The big picture, the central truth I want you to see and celebrate on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday is to *praise God for crowning us with glory and majesty.*

The basics of our unique nature.

We begin by reviewing the basics of our unique nature. The Bible tells us we are created “in the image of God.” Genesis chapters 1 and 2 make it clear that Adam and Eve, our first parents, were created by the direct, personal work of God. Chapter 1, verses 27-28,

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Chapter 2, verse 7, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Then later in verses 21-22,

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.”

Then we turn to Psalm 8 verse 5, which we read earlier. “You have made him a little lower than God [some versions, as in our church Bibles, read *angels*], and *You crown him with glory and majesty!*” (NASB).

But what does it mean to be created “in the image of God?” Let’s start with some of what it does *not* mean. It does not mean that we are gods. Nor that our physical being is in shape or form like God. “God is Spirit,” as we read in John chapter 4 verse 24.

Part of the difficulty in defining what it means is that the Bible does not define it with a verse that says, “Being made in the image of God is...” The words *image* and *likeness* used in Genesis are similar words with shades of differences. Both indicate something that is similar to an original it represents, but not identical to it. The word *image* can also carry the

meaning of representing something else. And so it has been suggested—rightly, I believe—that the people in Moses’ day, who God used to give us this account, would have understood this statement as, “Let us [the plural indicating the majesty or greatness of God] make man to be *like us* and to *represent us*.”²

People are unlike anything else God created. Part of being created in God’s image is that we have a unique nature which separates us from the rest of God’s creation. “In the image of God” is a broad statement which is defined by the entire Bible’s description of God.³ While the image of God in us was marred by sin, it was not destroyed. In Christ it is being renewed, and it will be fully renewed when we see Him face to face.

It might be helpful to look at a few summary points in this broad description of our unique nature. To start with, we are everlasting beings. Once life begins, it has no end. Yes, our physical life on earth is limited, but we are everlasting beings. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me *will live, even after dying*. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me *will never ever die*” (NLT).⁴ Jesus’ description of the judgment of the nations in Matthew chapter 25 states two divisions that include everyone—those who “will go away into *everlasting punishment*,” and those who will go “into *eternal life*” (46). Whether with God or separated from God for eternity, every person is an everlasting being.

Then, part of our unique nature is being spiritual beings. We were designed to worship God who is Spirit.⁵ And so through Christ we are able to relate to God, to thank Him, to pray to Him, to bring our questions and needs to Him, to praise Him.

We also are rational beings. That is, we have the ability to observe and analyze, and then to order things and take action. Along with this comes responsibility, as we see in God’s charge to rule over the earth in Genesis chapter 1 verse 28.

And we are moral beings. We have a God-created sense of right and wrong, of the *shalls* and the *shall nots*, of the *mays* and the *may nots*. This is clearly reflected in God’s command to Adam in Genesis chapter 2 verses 16-17,

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

There was right and wrong. There was a responsible, moral choice to be made and there were consequences for the choice.

There is much more that can be said here. The Scriptures tell us Adam and Eve were created directly by God with a unique nature.

Two parts of our unique value.

Because people are unique in bearing the image and likeness of God, we also have a unique, God-given *value*. Consider just two parts of this unique value. First, our value seen in God's strict prohibition of murder. The first murder in the human family was Adam and Eve's son Cain killing his brother Abel, recorded in Genesis chapter 4. God told Cain "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground" (verse 10). That is, there was a call for judgment. God judged Cain for this sin, although He protected him from being killed by others because of it.

Generations later, after the flood, God gave Noah and his family directions, including,

"And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" (ESV).⁶

The reason for God's great value on human life and His prohibition of murder is because He made us in His image.

And so, when we come to the ten commandments we read "You shall not murder."⁷ The one who willfully takes another's life, God says, forfeits his own. Exodus chapter 21 verse 12, "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death." There was no place of refuge in Old Testament Israel for murder as there was for unintentionally taking a life. In emphatic, even dramatic terms God said, "if someone deliberately kills another person, then the slayer must be dragged *even from my altar* and be put to death" (NLT).⁸

Jesus affirmed the command not to murder. You may recall the account.

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why

do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “Honor your father and your mother,” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.””⁹

Jesus affirmed the commandments, including the one not to murder.

There is no moral issue in one animal killing another, nor in people killing animals. But the value of every person’s life is not just greater than all the animals, it is qualitatively different, is higher to God. Consider that value in light of these statements. God told the prophet Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”¹⁰ And the Psalm writer tells us, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones” (NASB).¹¹

Now consider that value in light of the acceptance of abortion in Canada. One research firm’s 2016 poll revealed that 57% of Canadians said abortion should be permitted in all circumstances. An additional 21% said it should be legal in some circumstances, and a further 8% believe it should be permitted when the life of the mother is in danger. Only 3% thought it should never be permitted no matter what circumstance exists.¹²

Then we need to consider euthanasia, that is putting a person to death with medical means or allowing them to die by withholding medical measures. A February 2015 Supreme Court of Canada ruling struck down the section of the criminal code prohibiting physicians from assisting in the consensual death of another person.¹³

In June of 2016 the federal government’s “assisted-dying bill” came into force.¹⁴ Here in Alberta, in addition to physicians, the provincial cabinet at the end of 2016 gave the provinces 450 nurse practitioners the authorization to provide medical assistance in dying.¹⁵

In the first year of the law being in effect 150 Albertans received medical assistance to end their lives. Doctors in this field expected an initial surge after the law came into effect and then that the rate would taper off. But, they report, the opposite occurred. It was slow to start and then grew to about four per week in Alberta in that first year.¹⁶ According to a recent news report, the total number in Alberta who ended their lives this way was up to 268 as of December 31, 2017.¹⁷

How do we view this, respond to this in terms of what God says in Scripture? Our value in God's eyes, as revealed in the Bible, strictly prohibits murder of the unborn and terminally ill, of all people in all conditions.

Secondly, our unique value as people is seen in God's gracious provision of life. While today we may think first about God's gift of life in being conceived, born and living in this world, we also should think about God's gracious gift of everlasting life from and with Him.

Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 2 that we entered this world spiritually dead, separated from life with God. He writes,

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (verses 1-3, ESV).

“*But,*” he continues,

“God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ —by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (verses 4-9, ESV).

These are wonderful, great, grace-filled words of truth! These are words that display our unique value to God. Our redemption and spiritual life came at the cost of God the Son humbling Himself to become one of us, taking our sin on Himself and dying for us to pay the debt of our sin. How much more than the greatest love we can have is God's love for us and the value He places on us? Yes, as Paul wrote, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”¹⁸ Matchless, measureless love and value.

The starting points of living true to our nature and value.

What does all of this mean for us? How should we live in light of this truth? Let's consider some starting points of living true to our nature and value.

One thing it means is that we should be calling people to repentance and faith in Christ. At the start, we need to clarify that we are called to love and reach out to people in word *and* in deed. There is no purpose in going down the rabbit trail of choosing either/or rather than both/and. When two disciples were walking to Emmaus after Jesus' death and resurrection and Jesus joined them without them recognizing Him, they told Him "things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet *mighty in deed and word* in the sight of God and all the people" (NASB).¹⁹ The apostle John wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and truth."²⁰ The context makes it clear he was saying, "Love not only with what you say, but also with what you do."

Having said this, the church's, every believer's main mission to the world is calling people to repentance and faith in Christ. Every person bears the image and likeness of God, marred as it is by sin. Jesus has commanded, "you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (NASB).²¹ We have the same mission as the apostle Paul — being Christ's ambassadors to "persuade" people about Jesus.²² If we really understand and believe something of the nature and value of people to God, we should be, we *will be* calling people to repentance and faith in Christ.

Another thing this truth means to how we live is that we should be living righteously, or rightly. How do we do that? Let's start with God's instructions in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, "Be holy, for I am holy."²³ We bear God's image and likeness which is being renewed in us since we came to faith in Christ.²⁴ We are to be holy, the Bible tells us, "in all [our] behavior" (NASB).²⁵ Not just in some things some of the time, nor in most things most of the time, but in all things all of the time.

Scripture gives us more specifics. First, some broad stroke statements. Micah chapter 6 verse 8 tells us, "[God] has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (NASB). Amos adds, "let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (NASB).²⁶

Then, in a bit more detail. We read in Isaiah chapter 1 verse 17, “Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow” (NASB). Proverbs chapter 31 tells us to speak up. “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (verses 8-9, ESV). That’s something of what living rightly is about. Psalm 82 adds, “Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked.” (verses 3-4).

You see, it is both word and deed. Being created in the image of God and now recreated in Jesus Christ, we are to live righteously in our attitudes, speech and conduct. We are also to live righteously with respect to everyone in that they also bear the image and likeness of God, they also have this unique nature and value to God. We are not to silently sit by when people are being abused and oppressed. We are not to silently sit by when lives of unborn children and the sick and elderly are taken.

One more starting point of living true to our nature and value is to thank and praise God. This is the main thing I want you to see, to focus on this morning. Psalm 8 is one of King David’s psalms of joyful praise. He opens and closes with the same shout, “O LORD, our Lord, How excellent [or, *majestic*, NASB, ESV] is Your name in all the earth.” Praise God because He displays His splendor in the stars and planets above and in little babies here below! Praise God because He uses the small and weak to bring down His enemies!

Above these things, praise God because He has made *us* “a little lower than God” —He has made *us* in His own image and likeness! He has crowned *us*, He has crowned *you* with glory and majesty!

When we think about God’s vast creation, we too ask “Who are we, who am I that You, God, should be aware of, think about me and care for *me*?” Living true to our nature and value means *thanking and praising Him for His great goodness and grace in crowning us with glory and majesty.*

Conclusion.

So today, on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, let us thank and praise God for making us in His image and recreating us in Christ; let us confess our sins of ignorance, indifference

and action; let us determine to stand firmly for what the Bible teaches with grace and love in every circumstance and with everyone in all that we say and do; let us be alert and aware of people in need, and then be a voice for them, give our smile, encouragement, time and resources to make a difference; and let us take up our mission, our portfolio as Christ's ambassadors of reconciliation.

Let's go to God now, reflecting, confessing, praising Him and making the decisions which His Spirit brings to our hearts and minds.

¹ Adapted from extended illustration by Mark Adams. *The Sanctity of Human Life*.
<<http://www.redlandbaptist.org/sermon/the-sanctity-of-human-life/>>.
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² Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2000, page 443.

³ Grudem, page 443.

⁴ John 11:25-26.

⁵ John 4:24.

⁶ Genesis 9:5-6, ESV.

⁷ Exodus 20:13.

⁸ Exodus 21:14, NLT.

⁹ Matthew 19:16-19; see also Matthew 5:21; 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20.

¹⁰ Jeremiah 1:5.

¹¹ Psalm 116:15.

¹² Andrew Russell. "6 in 10 Canadians support abortion under any circumstances: Ipsos poll." *Global News*.
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¹⁴ "Liberals' assisted-dying bill is now law after clearing final hurdles." *CBC News*.
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- ¹⁶ Keith Gerein. *One year after medically assisted dying was legalized, the attitude in Alberta is less fraught than some feared*.
<<http://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/one-year-after-medically-assisted-dying-was-legalized-the-attitude-in-alberta-is-less-fraught-than-some-feared>>. 16 June 2017. Accessed 10 January 2018.
- ¹⁷ Carolyn Kury de Castillo. *Albertans transferred after faith-based facilities refused medically assisted deaths*.
<<https://globalnews.ca/news/3963697/37-albertans-transferred-after-faith-based-facilities-refused-medically-assisted-deaths/>>. 13 January 2018. Accessed 10 January 2018.
- ¹⁸ Romans 5:8.
- ¹⁹ Luke 24:19, NASB.
- ²⁰ 1 John 3:18.
- ²¹ Acts 1:8, NASB.
- ²² 2 Corinthians 5:10-21.
- ²³ e.g., Leviticus 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:15-16, etc.
- ²⁴ Colossians 3:10.
- ²⁵ 1 Peter 1:15, NASB.
- ²⁶ Amos 5:24, NASB.

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