

Know Your Place, Play Your Role

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[0 : 00] Let me just pray before I say anything else silly. Father God, thank you so much for this chance to gather together. Thank you for the gift of your words. We pray that you'll speak to us, that your spirit would work in our hearts, and that we would come to love you more and know you deeper as a result of tonight.

We ask these things in your holy name, Lord. Amen. The title of tonight's sermon is Know Your Place, Play Your Role. And I know that phrase is more often used quite negatively. You know, it's often said by the, maybe in the period drama, the hottie-tottie lord of the manor says it to the servant, you know, know your place, stay down, nobody wants to see or hear you. Or maybe the arrogant bad guy in a teen drama says it to the plucky underdog, know your place, that's what you have to do.

You have to know your place, stay out, and let me do what I want to do. But in reality, knowing our place is a really good thing. Knowing our place helps us to play our role more efficiently.

Think of any team sports. Knowing your position well is only going to help the team and benefit you as a group. Now, I played rugby for most of my youth. I played for my local club, Perthshire Eagles, and I played for my school, Perth High.

[1 : 13] Now, club rugby was where it was at for me. That was our really competitive team. We played, we were a good side, and we worked hard. We trained three or four times a week. That was the important one. School rugby was a total muckabout.

We maybe played games every couple of weeks, and normally my school consisted of about half of my club, who played together all the time, and we were playing schools who had never done rugby in their life.

So it was normally an absolute riot. We would just have a great time. We would do what we wanted. Now, for my club team, I was a number eight. Yes, shock. I wasn't a prop. I was a number eight. And I was good at that. I was pretty decent number eight when I was, like, 15. But when it came for the school team, we all just kind of played where we wanted because we could. We normally get people who had no idea what they were doing, so I could kind of run around with the ball and just score a few tries.

It was great fun. And one week I thought, you know what I'm going to do this week? I'll play fullback. Fullback's fun. They do things. That really highlights my story.

[2 : 14] And we came up against a team who knew what they were doing, and I was playing fullback that week, and it was a nightmare. I had no idea what I was doing. I had no idea what my positioning was meant to be. I had no idea what I was meant to do when they came towards me.

It was just a nightmare. I was a forward. I was meant to be in the scrum and in the rock and all these things. Instead, I was finding myself really far back trying to catch balls, which I was not very good at. So I played fullback, and we got destroyed.

We got ruined. I kept making mistakes because I didn't know where to be. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know my position in that team. I didn't know my place well, and so I couldn't play the role. I couldn't do what was needed of me.

What our passage does tonight in Genesis 1, it shows us exactly the place of mankind in creation. By looking at these five verses in detail, what we're going to do is understand what the role of mankind is in creation, what God has given us to do, and hopefully by knowing more about our place, we can play our role better.

Genesis 1, which we've been looking at for the past three weeks, I think, it's the account of how God created the heavens and the earth. We've seen amazing things done as God speaks.

[3 : 23] He has spoken everything into existence, the sun, the stars, the land and sea, animals, birds, and fish. It's a glorious chapter, and now we get to the creation of mankind, and we get to find out what the place of mankind is in this great creation.

So let's know our place. This is positive. This is great. Our place is way more than we could ever expect, and I think verse 26 gives the whole game away. I think what it does is summarizes exactly what our place is in creation, and then the rest of the passage furthers that, expands upon it.

So let me read. Please look with me at verse 26 of chapter 1 of Genesis. It says this, So there are two things we need to know about our place in creation.

First, we are made in God's image. Second, we are made to rule over the created beings. We're made in God's image, and we're made to rule over the created beings.

Straight away, it tells us how good our position is, and that is way higher than we could ever imagine. The role God has given us is not just some lowly part of creation. You know, we're on par with the cows and the sheep.

[4 : 48] No, we are made in His image to rule. To be made in the image of the great creator God, it's unbelievable. And on top of that, we're placed in a position to rule everything else.

One of the really big questions that always is going to come out of this passage is, what does it actually mean to be made in God's image? It's easy to say that. It's a different kettle of fish to understand it. And there's been great discussions over that question for centuries.

Now, some people have said to be made in the image of God means to look like God. Some have said it means to be created like God, you know, with a spirituality, with a spiritual reality in our creation.

Others have said that what it means to be made in God's image is to be creative or intelligent or self-aware of our own existence. Lots of these things are possibly true in some ways, but it's hard to kind of get those from what Genesis tells us about what it means to be made in God's image.

But thankfully, as you read through, this author has given us exactly what we need to know about being made in God's image. So we can see what he meant. There are two things I want to draw out of this, draw out of Genesis 1.

[5 : 59] To be made in God's image is relational and it is to rule. To be made in God's image is to be relational and it is to rule. Verse 26 has this unique phrase in it that we've not seen so far in chapter 1.

No other part of creation gets this. And that's verse 26. Let us make mankind in our image. The creation of man comes directly from the relational aspect of God.

This shows us that in creation, God is involving all three persons of himself. The Father, Son, and Spirit, who always existed in perfect harmony, works together to create mankind.

And so in that relation that they created, we are in that image to relate to God and to one another. We see this again in verse 27.

In the way mankind was created, it says, in the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them. Mankind was not created as one uniform, one size fits all thing.

[7 : 04] We are made male and female. It's a really special thing to note. It's so special that the writer tells us this. It can be easily glanced over as well. It's a bit of a given we're made male and female.

But it's really important to remember that we are all made from the off distinct as male and female. So we're made to be in relation with one another, male and female together. And it means that we are distinct from one another.

We are not the same. And that is a really great thing to celebrate. Currently, lots of people in our society think that to be equal is to minimize any difference. True equality looks like every single person getting the exact same treatment, job, anything they want.

That's what equality is often defined as. But it isn't true. We are made different. We are made distinct. It isn't true in God. To be equal in the Godhead, which is what we call the Trinity, does not look like them all being the exact same.

God exists in three parts. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. All three of them are equally God's, yet distinct from one another. These three persons are all God's.

[8 : 14] The Son is no less God than the Father. The Father no less God than the Spirit, and the Spirit no less God than the Son. Now, this is confusing, I'm sure, but what I want you to grasp is that these three persons are different, yet completely equal.

And so too with mankind. Because we're made in God's image, we can see that to be male is to be no less human than female. To be female is to be no less human than male.

We are made equal, yet distinct in the image of God. So let's celebrate these differences in the way we act, live, and go about our lives. I think hearing that phrase, mankind is made in God's image, is huge.

And I think, speaking from up here, the real depth of that statement has gone over most of our heads. It went over my head. It has gone over my head. It's just spending time in this passage that has really dawned on me how amazing this is.

So to kind of remove the generalization of that statement, let me change tack. You are made in the image of God. Yes, you sitting there listening to me.

[9 : 24] You are made in the image of God. Exactly the way you are. You are not too ugly. You are not too boring. You are not too plain. You are not too tall, short, fat, thin, whatever you are.

You're nothing. You are made in the image of God. So easy for us to think that we are worth nothing. Maybe you've moved into Hulls in the past few weeks, and it's been a really hard shift. No one in your flat wants to talk to you. You've not made any friends yet on your course. You felt really alone. Maybe you think that's because of you. Maybe you think it's because you're not worth knowing.

Let me tell you, that is not true. You are made in God's image. You are worth knowing, and God wants to know you. Maybe you're stuck in a boring job. Maybe you've got no job.

Every single day goes by the same as the day before. Maybe you're spending your entire time filling in spreadsheets. It's boring. Each day drifts and slips away, and it feels like your life has no meaning because you do nothing that seems to mean anything.

[10 : 31] You feel like if you didn't do your job, someone else would. You're very easily replaceable. When we're living these truths, it can seep into our bones.

These thoughts weigh us down. Meaningless can start to engulf our whole life because we think that is true of ourselves. But brothers and sisters, Genesis 1 tells us that is not true.

You are not meaningless. You are made in the very image of God. The God that we have looked at, creating everything with His words, created you in His own image.

Please don't leave tonight thinking that that doesn't mean anything. Your life has meaning because it was created for something. To live for God is the reason you are here. He has made you to be in relationship with Him.

Your life has meaning. Your life has value. You are worth something to this God who's created you. You are worth more than you could ever imagine.

[11 : 35] So please, leave tonight knowing your place in creation, knowing the value you have to the God who created you. So that was our first point. To be made in God's image is to be relational.

The second thing that it means to be made in God's image is to rule. We've been made in God's image for a reason. There's a big old so that in verse 26. We are made in God's image so that we will rule over all the animals and the birds and the fish and other things.

Again, we see in verse 28 that we are blessed by God to rule over the fish and the sea and the birds and everything on creation. Mankind's place in this world is to rule over creation and as it says in verse 29, to subdue creation.

Maybe you're here tonight and you think those words sound awful. Ruling and subduing, that sounds exploitative and it sounds like we can do what we want with this creation we've been given. You know, we can just satisfy ourselves with it, not do anything else.

But let me just say right now, that is not what God means when he calls us to rule and subdue. We're called to rule rightly. We're called to rule justly and we are called to rule under the authority of God.

[12 : 48] Mankind in creation has not removed God, rather we work under him. We are his stewards, the person he's placed to do his work for him. He created every single bit of nature.

God's rule does not look exploitative or dangerous to the thing he's created. Neither should ours. Our rule needs to be characterized by the care that God gave to every single part of the creation he made.

So what does it look like for us to rule over creation? Let me read verse 29, where I think we find an example that we can kind of look at in a bit of detail. So verse 29, look at this with me, please. Then God says, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that

has fruit with seed in it.

They will be yours for food. Man is given seed-bearing fruit. Meanwhile, in verse 30, animals are given the green plants for foods. Being given seeds for food, it's said twice, it's quite, it's repeated for us.

Well, that sounds a lot like farming, doesn't it? Taking seeds, reproducing, and growing it for foods. And farming is a really simple way that we can see what it looks like to rule and control our environment.

[14:02] We're to use what we've been given to make more. Animals can't farm. They forage or they hunt. But as rulers, we are given this ability to do more with what we've been given.

And it's not just farming that we see this. We see that mankind controls what we have around us and we can shape it. We build cities. We mine metal.

We create irrigation systems. We develop computers. We fly people into space. We can alter the entire global ecosystem. We, as mankind, have a huge amount of control over the creation.

I think that's because that is the position God gave us to rule over creation. This is a gift. God has made us, mankind, royal stewards.

We are able to rule directly under His authority and we need to remember that every single day that that is our place. We are image bearers to rule over creation.

[15:07] That's a great responsibility and we need to take responsibility that we've been given seriously. On a day-to-day level, it can be quite big picture. Let me narrow this in once more to think, what does that mean for us that we've been given responsibility?

Well, that is different for every single one of us, but we've all been given a unique responsibility. Where is your responsibility right now? Maybe it's to look after your family.

Maybe it's kids or maybe it's your aging parents who are unwell. Maybe you're looking after people through illness. You're responsible for caring for them and that is hard and it is painful.

But when we step up and perform those responsibilities with love, we are doing what we are made for. We are owning the responsibility that God has given us.

Maybe you don't feel like you have a massive responsibility right now or maybe you feel that you can't take on much responsibility. Well, it doesn't make you less human to not think that. It doesn't mean that you're not doing what God has given you.

[16:10] But it can mean that you can look around and see what responsibility is there that you can take on. What gift, an area has God put you in that you can work for Him?

You can take control of what He's given you and do what we are made for. Our unique position in God's creation gives us all a unique amount of personal responsibility.

We can't shirk that. We can't throw that away and say, I want to live like my dog who sleeps all day. I've thought that would be great but that is not what we've been made for. We'll see in Genesis 3 in a few weeks' time the first thing that happens after we turn from God is that we shirk responsibility for what we do.

Whoa, no, it's not my fault. It was that guy. No, he made me do it. That's what Genesis 3 is. That's not how we're to live today. We have to own up the responsibility we've been given. Our lives need to show that we take our role seriously whatever role that is.

So as we look at Genesis 1 we get to see the ideal picture of mankind's. This wonderful, great role we've been given and God said it was very good.

[17:22] The only part of creation when it works together that is called very good. We were made for a reason that we need to live out perfectly. If you're discerning I, you'll be sitting there thinking what a load of nonsense.

look around we see none of that thing that Genesis 1 is talking about. The world we live in doesn't look like Genesis 1. Mankind didn't stay in Eden and we've not stayed in the sixth day and we've not stayed very good.

Sin has entered the world and we start to live less like rulers and image bearers and more like dictators and trying to be God ourself. the two things that we've learned about our place have been muddled.

We forget that we are image bearers and we forget that other people are made in the image of God just like us. When we forget that we don't live relationally we live to use and abuse other people.

When we lose the idea of image of God in our heads we treat people horribly. Think of small scale driving home and you're cut off by a driver and you just lose it.

[18:34] Red covers your vision and you're raging at that person. Cursing swearing at them hoping something awful happens to them. What you've done in your head is forget that they are made in the image of God.

You forgot that and suddenly they're a thing to hate they're a thing to get angry at or maybe you're a Twitter user or any social media we can say awful things in 140 characters. Insulting people besmirching them lying about them because we think we know what we're talking about.

Raging against someone who's done something that someone else told you in 140 characters online. What you're doing there is not anything good you are forgetting that that person you are talking about is a human being made in God's image.

You're demeaning someone made by God for God. These are minor examples but let's not think they stop there. There are huge huge issues that happen when we remove the image bearing nature of other people.

Pornography turns a person into an object to be used and devoured. That woman or man you are watching on your screen is a real person. That person was made in the image of God.

[19:49] You may have never thought about that before but that person you are lusting over and using for your own benefits as a daughter or a son a sister or a brother a mother or a father a person who has a real life real worth real value.

Yet by watching paying for using pornography we are condoning actions that destroy the personhood of real people. We are forgetting the image bearing nature of every single person. we are destroying that status in our minds. It's not just porn that does that other major industries do the exact same. Think of fast fashion and their sweatshops in Asian countries.

People being abused in their work hours. Think of the unethical farm trades who are underpaying farmers throughout the world because we can. Because we are able to pay them less because we know that if they don't take it someone else will.

When we condone these things we are destroying image bearing nature of humans throughout the world. We're using them for our own benefits because we live in a more blessed country.

[20:57] We're a western country where we're able to do such things. Yet these people have as much value meaning and worth as you and I do. Yet they're not treated that way. This is not a world where we reflect the image bearing nature of God.

It's not just in the way we treat people. It's not just in our relationships with other people that we see this fall. It happens in the way we rule creation as well. Rather than ruling under God's authority for God's treating it with care and respect like we're called to we are milking it for all it's worth.

Selfishly using the world until it's destroyed completely. We are not ruling creation we are taking it and using it for ourselves and ourselves alone. We've been given a wonderful place in creation and we're abusing it.

We've rejected God. This is what happens when we try and be God ourselves things go wrong. The description of mankind in Genesis is glorious and wonderful.

The gift we're given beyond comprehension but the world around us does not look like Genesis 1. That's not the last thing the Bible has to say on this.

[22:07] If you'll turn with me to Hebrews chapter 2 tonight please it's page I hope 1202 in the church Bibles. Turn with me there. Hebrews 2 is quoting Psalm chapter 8 and I'm trying to read it out as you're turning there so please do listen.

There is a place which is Psalm 8 where someone has testified. what is mankind that you are mindful of them a son of man that you care for him you made them a little lower than the angels you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet.

In putting everything under them God left nothing that is not subject to them yet at present we do not see everything that is subject to them. The world was created mankind was given this huge honour and glory and yet we did not play our role.

We did not live up to the place we were given and our misuse of this role has blighted our lives and the world around us. However Hebrews continues in verse 9 but we do see Jesus who was made lower than the angels for a little while now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

We don't look around and see the world being ruled rightly we don't see mankind treated with the honour God gave us when we do look what we see is that Jesus has been taken up and glorified for us.

[23 : 39] We were given this great place that we did not deserve to be made in God's image and to rule yet we messed up we broke relationship we turned from him but God wanted to fix that relationship God wants us in an Eden in a world like Eden Jesus his rightful place the son of God was at the right hand of God the father sitting in heaven ruling perfectly it's the honour and glory he deserved that's the place he deserved and should be in yet what Jesus did was step down from that place he didn't hold on to that honour he gave it up so he could come and live as a human on earth he descended down to be like us and in doing that and living his life he played the role that we were meant to he followed God's will perfectly he loved and honoured others rightly he showed what it meant to rule perfectly under God's authority he took our place and fulfilled that role perfectly he became the ruler we needed when we failed to rule but more than that he didn't just step into the role of God's steward like us no he went the step further he took on the role of sinner that we became he died the death on a cross that we deserved he bore the punishment that we should have had he suffered death the son of God so that by the grace of God we wouldn't have to so verse 17 of Hebrews means when it said he would make atonement for the sins of the people he died on our behalf he played our role so we didn't have to when we turn from God when we reject him it becomes really easy to internalize that and think that God is going to remove our image bearing status we think that because we've sinned against him we're going to not be image bearers that sin that we've enacted will corrupt us and be like animals living only for ourselves brothers and sisters that does not happen our God is so gracious that he didn't turn

Adam and Eve away he didn't condemn them from everywhere he didn't turn them into animals for turning from him instead after he ate the apple he gave them clothed to prepare them for what came next and he gave them a promise that this will one day be fixed so when we sin when we fall to temptation when we fail to live up to that place as God's people he will not remove your status as image bearer instead he sent his son to redeem us that promise given in Genesis 3 that we'll see in a few weeks is fulfilled in Christ and will be fully fulfilled when he returns Jesus came to redeem us to transform us back in to that picture of Genesis 1 now thanks to the work of Christ we are united with him that role that we were never able to do that image bearing status we could never live up to because of sin the rule we were meant to do that we could never do because of our selfishness we are now able to play because we are in Christ we are able to rule and be image bearers like we were made to be brothers and sisters you are made in the image of God despite your flaws despite your sin

God has sent his son so you can be restored to him fully redeemed because of the death of Jesus we can reflect God's image because of the death of Jesus we can own up to the responsibilities we've been given we can rule creation like we are called to under the authority of Christ so let us rejoice brothers and sisters this is a gracious gift of God's that we can accept today let's rejoice because he's given us the title of image bearer and let's rejoice because of his great mercy he's restored us to the position when we turn from him our God is good let me pray father it is beyond our comprehension that you have given us the position you did it's hard to understand the worth and value and meaning you've given our lives especially when we reject you especially when we turn from you we thank you lord that you has sent your son to take our place to fill our role so that we might be restored and redeemed father we ask this week as we go out father you would help us to live for you perfectly in Christ father help us remember the image bearing status that we have our own worth and that of those around us the people we see every day help us to live for you and love those around us for you in your holy name lord amen amen and number one thank you so much for this I and thank you to my