

## “Point of Origin”

*Life is a Highway, Read the Map – sermon #1*

Genesis 1:24-2:3

It’s time for a little bit of “Name that Tune.” I won’t sing it, but tell me if you can identify the song and artist from these verses.

Life's like a road that you travel on  
When there's one day here and the next day gone  
Sometimes you bend and sometimes you stand  
Sometimes you turn your back to the wind

There's a world outside every darkened door  
Where blues won't haunt you anymore  
Where brave are free and lovers soar  
Come ride with me to the distant shore

If you said, “Life Is a Highway” by Tom Cochrane, you’re right. I was a freshman in high school when I rocked out to that song in 1991. What is fascinating to me now, 27 years later, is the spiritual nature of those lyrics, even though I’m certain this was never meant to be a religious song.

Life is a highway, a journey. There are many clichés about stopping to smell the roses and so forth, but I want to borrow Cochrane’s idea and tie it in with my own. Life is a Highway; Read the Map.

You see, before we had GPS and smartphones, we actually needed paper maps to navigate. (Who even has those in their cars anymore?) What does a map do? It won’t tell you step by step where to go, but if you read it, you can find essential information, figure out where you are, and figure out the best route to your destination.

The point I am making in these next few weeks is that the Bible is also a kind of map. The Bible does not give specific, step-by-step directions to every situation in your life, but it will tell you your point of origin and guide you as you journey through life. All of our journeys are unique – no two people take the same path in life. We do not all have the same destination. Reading the Bible however, gives us information and possibilities. The Bible informs our choices so that we can make good decisions on our journey, even turning around when we find ourselves on the wrong road.

Now I realize that this Bible-map analogy has its limits. For starters, the Holy Bible is prose – words – not pictures. We shouldn't treat the Bible like a wall painting. Instead, we should read it as a great literary work with stories, poetry, and instruction, all written to reveal God to us.

A map doesn't tell you where you are going. You have to find that information yourself. What the map does tell you are the connections, possible routes, and obstacles between places. The first and most important thing to do with a map is, find the location where you are starting.

Today we read from the beginning of our map, the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, Genesis 1.

Genesis tells us how it all began. On the first day, God created light and separated it from darkness. On the second day, God created the sky and sea, separating waters above from waters below. On the third day, God created ground – separating dry land from the oceans, allowing plants to grow. Then God filled the spaces he created. On the fourth day, he placed the sun and moon in the heavens; on the fifth, fish in the sea and birds in the sky; on the sixth, animals and humans on the dry land.

Here we find the clues for our origins. The end of the first chapter tells us that humans were made on the sixth and last day of creation.

We all believe that we are created. Even those who do not believe in God acknowledge that none of us created ourselves. There is always a source to life: God, evolution, DNA, the Big Bang, and so on. I’m not here to argue any of that. The point is, we know that we are not eternally existent. We are finite. We have a start. We are created.

If we are created, it is reasonable to assume we have a purpose. Most things that are created have a purpose – a cell phone is created to communicate. A house is created to be lived in. A car is created to be driven. Humans inherently know this truth, because we are creative. The same is true in nature. Birds are created to fly; fish are created to swim; deer are created to run. Someone might use the word “evolved,” some might say “designed,” but we are really talking about the same thing: purpose.

So what are humans created to do? What is our purpose? To answer that, we need to know our point of origin. So what does the Bible say? Genesis 1:26 says we are created in the image or likeness of God. So what does that mean?

We know what it does not mean. We are not gods, with a small “g”. Anyone who thinks that rightfully needs psychiatric help. But there is something of God in each one of us. For one thing, we are the only creatures with the ability to reason and think in moral terms. We can make decisions, not based on instinct, but on values, logic and intuition. In that sense, we are completely different from other creatures on this earth.

Another result of God’s likeness in us is that we are created for relationships. God is relational, and so are we, by design. Christian scholars see

hints of the Trinity in this passage. Note, verse 26 says, "Let us create." Probably God the Father is speaking with the Son and the Holy Spirit. Three-in-One. The mystery of the holy Trinity means that God is fundamentally relational. Our desire for relationships is part of God's plan for us, because we carry the image of God inside.

So the first thing our map tells us is that we were made in the image of God, and that is a good thing. Male and female, both are made in the image of God. And verse 28 says, "God blessed them."

If you're ever having a bad day, dwell on this thought: God made you, and God blessed you. You have a stamp of approval, a mark of authenticity on your life. You know the saying, "I know I'm special, because God don't make no junk!" That's true. That's all of us. That's what our map says.

Looking further to verse 28, we see that the second thing our map says is that God wants us to learn our multiplication tables. He says, "Be fruitful and multiply."

What does it mean to be fruitful and multiply? On a simple level, it means that God blesses families. "Go and make babies," God says. Wow, God talks about sex in the very first chapter of the Bible! Parents, maybe that's a clue for us.

But not everyone has children. Could "fruitful" mean something more than just having offspring? I think so. The Bible says, God created, and it was good. What if being fruitful and multiplying means we also can create good? What if our fruit is spiritual fruit, like Galatians 5:22, the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? I'd love to see that fruit multiplied in this world, wouldn't you? It doesn't matter how old you are:

any of us can multiply that fruit. I submit that we are meant to multiply God's goodness!

We are made in God's image, we are blessed to be fruitful and multiply. The third thing our map says is that God told humans to “fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over [every creature].” According to Genesis 1:28, we are given the right to rule over creation, which means we are responsible for it. We have complete authority. Unfortunately, these words have been taken as an excuse to use our natural resources destructively. But I believe that is backwards. If we are responsible for ruling over creation, then we'd better take care of it, or there will be nothing left for us to rule over! We did not create it; we cannot replace what we destroy. So somehow, our map is telling us that our purpose in this life is related to the health of all the world: plants, fish, birds, animals, the skies, the seas, and the land. It's all connected.

So why does this matter? If we concede the fact that God created all that is, including us, so what? Allow me to give you the example of the \$20 bill.

This is a federal reserve note of the United States of America. At the top, it says it has a value of \$20. Why? A \$20 bill has worth because of its creator, in this case, the government. Otherwise, this is just a fancy piece of cotton paper with green ink. If I take this \$20 bill and wad it up, spit on it, throw it on the ground, walk over it, kick it or drop it in the mud, it still has value because of its creator. Its purpose does not change, even though it had a rough day.

Do you see where this is going? The Bible tells us that each person is a creation of God. Each human is made in the image of God. Each person has intrinsic value and worth, no matter what they look like or what they are going through, because they are loved by their Creator. Each person should be treated

according to what they are: all are children of God. All of us are created to love and worship God and fill the earth with goodness.

Verse 31 completes the creation story. God saw everything and called it "very good." No other day in creation got that extra qualifier, "very." There is something about our relationship to God and our place in creation that caused God to smile and say, "Yup, I got it right."

You can read any part of the Bible any time you like. You can start in the middle, the end, wherever. But if you want to know your purpose in life, you have to start at this beginning. There is a Creator, and He created you.

Next week we will get to the second part of the story, the goodness that was lost in the Garden of Eden, but that's for next time. What is important now is this: to whom do you give credit for your creation? Are you in charge of your own life? If you think so, that's a lonely place. You are not Three-in-One. You are not all powerful. You do not have control of all creation. You cannot create the sun, moon, and stars, or part the oceans. If you try, you will be very frustrated.

But if you want to journey through life according to your purpose, you must acknowledge the Creator. Our Creator.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 admonishes us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth. God gives us a choice whether or not to acknowledge him. God has never forced himself on anyone. But to anyone who feels lost in this life, this is great news. The God of the Universe knows you because he made you. Even if you have turned away from God, that does not stop God from loving you. You are made in his image. You are God's property, his work of art. And through Christ, we have fullness, completion, and reconciliation. That knowledge will make a huge difference on how the rest of your journey in life will go.

Memory Verse: Colossians 1:16a

"For in Christ all things were created: things in heaven and on earth..."

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Reflection Questions:

1. What do you believe about the creation of the world? Have you ever thought about it?
2. Do you believe the Bible is a map to the journey of life? How does it guide us?
3. When you read that you were made in God's image, what thoughts come to mind?
4. How are humans different from every other animal on this planet?
5. How can you multiply good fruit in your life?