

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Watertown, WI**

“Created, Redeemed, Called”

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“Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gen. 2:7).

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the One who created you, redeemed you, and has called you. We consider each in turn.

First, God created the heavens and the earth. God enjoys creating. He takes time while doing it because he wants it to be good and right and beautiful. There’s a careful process to it. He’s thought it through. And then, consider the results! He saw all that He made and it was very good. When you consider that every snowflake is indeed unique, you know God still enjoys creating.

The faith of God’s ancient people wavered at many times in many ways, but rarely on the doctrine of creation. These people knew nothing of the Big Bang or evolution. They didn’t have to contend with any of that. They simply affirmed the joyful doctrine of creation: that we are creatures living in God’s good creation. The pages of Scripture are replete with this joyful affirmation. Psalm 139, “For it was you who formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Don’t you love the idea of God knitting you together, slowly, intentionally, thoughtfully?

In Genesis 2, the work of creation is thought of in a different way. The text says the Lord God “formed” the man of dust from the ground. That word “formed” is the same word that is used to describe what a potter does with clay. Again, a very hands-on process. Later on, Isaiah would come right out and say it. “Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand” (64:8).

God as knitter. God as potter. In Genesis 2 God is a builder. The Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone.” So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept the Lord took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh, and with that rib he made a woman and brought her to the man. That word “made”, literally means “built”. It’s the same verb used of Noah when he built the ark. It underscores a distinction in the story. God did not form Eve out of the dust of the ground. He made her from something taken from Adam, which makes her totally suitable for Adam as a partner, and he for her. The two are made for one another. They complement one another. One glance at the woman Eve is all it takes. Adam is thrilled, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

Male and female He made them. We are gendered male and female down to the cellular level. Each of us has about 37 trillion cells in our bodies. If you are a female, every one of them has two x chromosomes. If you are a male, every one of them has an x and y chromosome. Gender reassignment surgery cannot change this. Pharmaceuticals cannot change this. Biologists know that sex is binary. There are only two sexes. This is true throughout the plant and animal kingdoms.

Now, a person might say, “I’m done being a girl. I want to be a boy now.” But all nature resists. It’d be like me saying, “I’m done being a late middle-aged Lutheran pastor. I’m going to be a 25-year-old California surfer dude. Nature fiercely resists such things.

Today it’s also being hammered into us that man is just one species of animal among all the animals, and in fact, a curse, a blight on the surface of the earth, a weed species. The earth would be better off without us, we’re told. And indeed, we have done great damage to the earth, and our bad, sinful behavior is pushing our world toward disaster.

However, the great difference between man and animal is that man is made in the image of God. That is said of no other creature, and what that means is Adam reflected God’s character but was also God’s representative in the world, his steward over all that he made. Moreover, God breathed into man the breath of life. That is not said of the animals. In the Bible, God speaks to man alone. He never speaks to the animals. You are not just another species of animal, nor are you a blot on the surface of the earth. You are the pinnacle of God’s creative work. From Psalm 8, “You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands” . . . not to exploit it stupidly at the expense of future generations, but to care for it and pass it on in good order to future generations.

You are handmade by the Lord, custom made. That gives you immeasurable value. Your value does not come from how smart you are, or athletic, or productive. Your value has nothing to do with the measure of your waistline. All that is artificial, demeaning even. Your value comes from the One who created you.

First, he created you. Second, he redeemed you. You needed that redemption, for the Bible teaches we have all fallen far short of the Lord's expectations. We don't care for the world or love others as God intended us to. We don't even love Him as we should, the One who created and still sustains us. Like Adam and Eve, we have rebelled against God and resist His laws as if they are foreign intrusions on our freedoms. The wages of that sin is death . . . temporal, spiritual, eternal death. And God is just. Therefore, he cannot simply ignore it. It would be contrary to his just nature. Thanks be to God, He will not also wipe us out because of our sin. That too would be contrary to his nature, for he is merciful, and loves his whole creation. So, in his justice and mercy, he sends his Son, Jesus, to redeem us from sin and death. Galatians 4 says, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to *redeem* those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (v. 4).

To redeem something means literally "to buy it back." It is to set a captive free by way of paying a ransom. Prisoners of war were ransomed. Slaves could be set free if somebody "redeemed them". Normally these transactions were paid with gold or silver . . . but not in our case. It wouldn't come so cheap. 1 Peter 1, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed . . . but with the precious blood of Christ" (v. 18). 1 Timothy 2 says, "Christ Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all people." No one was left behind. Not one. You are the redeemed of the Lord, and that also gives you immeasurable value. 1 Corinthians 6 says, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (v. 20). And because you have a Redeemer, you can say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God."

God created you. God redeemed you. God has also called you. That calling of God gives you immeasurable value. First you are called to be his child. That is, we don't automatically belong to Him simply by virtue of being born. Remember, sin and rebellion has broken the relationship with our Creator. However, when you were baptized, God restored a right relationship with you. It's as if God adopted you and made you His own child. And God is not just pretending to love you as His own child. He's all in. He will never go back on His promises. Indeed, He cannot. You can turn your back on Him and forfeit all the gifts that He is storing up for you, but He will not turn His back on you. Even when we are most sinful, He will not disown us. Again, it would be contrary to His nature. 2 Timothy 2: "When we are faithless, God will remain faithful for he cannot disown himself" (v. 13).

We are called to be His children, His people. We are also called to be His disciples, His evangelists. You're not just a spectator sitting on the sidelines of salvation history. God wants you to play a part and knows you can because, remember, He knit you together. He wants you to have mercy on others as He has had on you. And to bring the message of grace to others, as someone obviously brought it to you. He also gives you the work of making disciples of all nations.

We don't need to go far. How many in Watertown are not disciples of Christ? Thirty, forty percent? How many in Watertown feel just sort of average, or perhaps something less than average. Do you think we have a message for them? You are created by God. He knit you together. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. He has high expectations of you and good plans for you.

How many in Watertown are carrying around with them a load of guilt? Maybe it was an abortion. Maybe it was an episode of rage against a child. Maybe it was a sin of their youth. Do we have a message for them? Christ redeemed you from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for you. He paid the price. He loves you still. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed your sin from you.

How many in Watertown feel they have little purpose? They feel their work is mostly meaningless, their friendships unsatisfying and they have the sneaking suspicion no one would much miss them. Do we have a message for them? God has called you to be his child, and not just his child, but also his disciple and servant, an ambassador of God's love and mercy in the world. He has called you to be part of the body of Christ, and that body has no unessential parts. Every member is important, necessary, and serves a purpose.

Three things give you immeasurable value and worth. God created you. God redeemed you. God has called you. You are: created, redeemed, called. How you feel about yourself, that doesn't really matter. What others think of you, how others treat you . . . they are not nearly as important to what God thinks of you and what He's done for you. What you look like. How old you are. The size of your investments, or of your debt, what your work is or was. Puny concerns. Nothing else matters. Father, Son and Holy Spirit: he's the only One, what he thinks of you, what he has done for you, the plans he has for you.

He created you. He redeemed you. And he has called you. Thanks be to God. Amen.