

Genesis 1:24–31
Wed. of Judica (Lent V)
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

On this last Wednesday evening of Lent, before Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday, we contemplate the sixth day of creation. On the last day of his creative work before taking a Sabbath rest, God created the land animals—the livestock, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth—all the creatures that dwell on the dry land, as adornment for the dry land that appeared on the third day. Our God is a God of order. And of course on the sixth day, God also created man. Like all the other land animals, man was given the breath of life to make him a living creature. But man was not created as simply another animal; he was created in the image of God, an image lost in the Fall but restored in Jesus Christ.

Man and the land animals were created to live in a relationship of mutual benefit, which you can still see traces of today. For most of human existence, having animals around was just

part of life. Animals have always been, in a sense, part of the family. You see this today in the joy that domestic dogs and cats and other creeping things bring to a household. Animals can also serve those with disabilities, allowing them a measure of freedom, or they can bring comfort to those traumatized or in distress. If you grew up on a farm or even visited one, you know how man and land animals can live in a relationship of mutual benefit, where the animals often become part of the household. In Germany, many of the old farmhouses have the barns attached directly to the house. So the animals were literally part of the household.

Of course, we know that the relationship of mutual benefit between man and livestock is not exactly an equal balance. Animals were created for man, not man for the animals. Since the Fall of mankind into sin, land animals have also been used for sacrifices. When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together to hide their shame (Gen 3:7). But then “the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.” God took an innocent, living animal and sacrificed it to cover the shame of mankind. Here we have a picture of all the sacrifices commanded by God in the Old Testament, and ultimately a picture of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world by laying down His life on the cross. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, who died to clothe us in His righteousness. His righteousness covers the shame of our sin, like the animal skins covered Adam and Eve.

So animals were being used already from the Fall into sin as sacrifices pointing ahead to the sacrifice of Jesus. We also see this in Genesis 4 with Abel, who was a keeper of sheep. The sheep could have been used for their wool, but we see here they were also used as sacrifices for the LORD. Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, but Abel brought the firstborn of His flock and their fat portions. The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering of animal

sacrifices. And so Abel also became a picture of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd who is killed in His innocence, but whose blood cries out to the LORD.

Land animals were being used for sacrifices, but not for food yet. That wouldn't happen until after the Flood. When the waters of the Flood subsided and the ark rested on the dry land of Mt. Ararat, "every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by families from the ark" (Gen 8:19). The first thing Noah did was to build an altar to the LORD, where he sacrificed some of every clean animal and bird, offering burnt offerings on the altar. When the LORD smelled the animal sacrifice, He said in His heart: "I will never again curse the ground because of man . . . neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done." Again, here is a picture of Jesus, whose sacrifice is a pleasing aroma to the Father, a pledge that we are reconciled to God and are pleasing to Him in Jesus Christ.

But from that point on, God also says: "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything" (Gen 9:2-3). The animals became skittish around man, knowing that they were no longer just friends, but also food. Of course, it also goes the other way. Man is not only friendly with animals, he also fears those who could kill and devour him. Life after the Fall into sin is a life of increasing violence and wickedness. The longer the world continues, the more death and destruction piles up. But at first, God saw that it was good.

And now we come to the actual creation of man. God brought forth the land animals directly from the ground, but man was created in a different way. Man was created directly by

God in the image of God. The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, to make him a living creature like the other animals. God created man “in His own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female He created them.” At the creation of man, we have a glimpse of our Triune God. Just as the Triune God appears at the very beginning of creation, so does He appear here at the pinnacle of creation, the creation of man. God said: “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness. And let them have dominion.” The one God is a plurality of persons, three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and man is created in His image. So man is a plurality, a community. We see this even today, where a man and woman will come together and bear children. One man, one woman, and the children they procreate. Every birth is a picture, an image of the Triune God. Or man as body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess 5:23), the threefold division that separates us from the animals.

The image of God is seen in man’s very being, and also in the dominion given to man. As the Lord rules over man, so is man given lordship over all creation. God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over [the animals]. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. The lordship the LORD gave to Adam is apparent in his task to name the animals. All the beasts and the birds were brought to Adam to see what he would name them. As the Father named Adam, so too did the man name the animals as an exercise of his lordship over them.

And the LORD said: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” None of the animals would do, so the LORD God put Adam to sleep and took one of his ribs and formed the rib into a woman and brought her to Adam. Adam could say: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23). Here we have the institution of marriage, already before the

Fall into sin. The marriage of a man and a woman is not like the breeding of beasts. It is a one flesh union—a union of bodies, minds, and spirits, a union for the sake of companionship and the procreation of children. Marriage from the beginning is a picture of Christ, the Bridegroom and His bride, the Church. As Adam slept, so did Jesus sleep the sleep of death. As the Bride was taken out of her husband, so is the Church formed from the water and blood flowing from the side of Christ. The profound mystery of the one-flesh union refers to Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32). That's why the picture of Christ and the Church also informs how husbands and wives are to relate to one another. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church, so wives are to submit in everything to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives, even to the point of death.

In the Fall, we see where the authority given to man over woman, and over all creation, goes completely wrong. Adam was given much in his dominion, but to whom much is given, of him much will be required (Luke 12:48). Adam abrogated his authority and allowed Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, tempted by the serpent, that craftiest of all the creeping things. Adam neglected his duty as Lord, and so sin came into the world through one man, Adam, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned (Rom 5:12). But Adam was a type, a picture, of the one who was to come (Rom 5:14): For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many" (Rom 5:15). Adam's sin led to condemnation and death for all people, but Jesus's death leads to justification and life for all people (Rom 5:18). "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22).

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15[:45–49], Adam is a picture of Christ: “The first Adam became a living being, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. . . The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

Jesus is the perfect image of God (Col 1:16; Heb 1:3) and He came to restore that image to mankind. Those whom God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29) and as we behold the glory of God, we are being transformed into the same image (2 Cor 3:18). Jesus restores the image of God, the reflection of God’s perfect righteousness, to us. In this fallen world it is still a murky, unclear image, but in eternity it will be clearly revealed. Then, in the new heavens and the new earth, all creation will be set free from its bondage to corruption (Rom 8:21). As Isaiah prophesies about the restoration of all creation on that Day: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” God’s wonderful creation points us ahead to the new creation, where God will wipe away all our tears and the animosity between God’s creatures will disappear. We will worship at the throne of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ. There we will join again with all creation in praising our God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forevermore. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Magnificat.