

"The Cultural Mandate"
(Gen. 1:28)

Introduction: Last week we were looking at the creation of man and woman in the image of God on the sixth day of God's creation week. We saw that man was made from the dust of the ground, and that God subsequently breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. We also saw that God used Himself as the blueprint and made man in His own image as a spiritual, rational, moral and immortal creature. As a part of his original constitution, God also endowed man with moral excellence, which consisted of true knowledge, righteousness and holiness, or as the theologians abbreviate it, original righteousness. This was lost in the fall, although man continued to be in the image of God because he retained the former attributes. When a man is converted to Christ, this original righteousness is renewed in him throughout his life as he becomes more and more conformed to Christ's image. This only takes place through the new birth which only comes through faith in Christ and repentance from sin.

But the creation narrative tells us more about man besides his being made in the image of God. It also tells us that man was given a mandate to have dominion over the created realm. Man's imaging the likeness of his Creator, as we saw last week, also involves his rule over the creation. As a part of this duty entrusted to him by God, he is called upon to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it. And what I want you to see from this text is,

After God created man, He gave him the commandment and blessed him with the ability to fill the earth and to subdue it for His glory.

- I. *This Commandment and Enablement of God to Fill the Earth and to Subdue It for His Glory, Was Given to All of Mankind.*
 - A. *To Mankind, the Task Was Given by God to Have Dominion Over all the Earth, "LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, ACCORDING TO OUR LIKENESS; AND LET THEM RULE OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA AND OVER THE BIRDS OF THE SKY AND OVER THE CATTLE AND OVER ALL THE EARTH" (V. 26), "AND GOD BLESSED THEM; AND GOD SAID TO THEM, 'BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY, AND FILL THE EARTH, AND SUBDUCE IT'" (V. 28).*
 1. *Though this command was given to Adam and Eve, its fulfillment required that a greater number of people undertake it.*
 - a. *This commandment was given to mankind, "LET THEM RULE OVER ALL THE EARTH."*
 - b. *It could not have possibly been for Adam and Eve alone, for the world is far too large a place and the expertise needed in the variety of areas of research far too vast.*
 2. *Therefore, in order to accomplish this, the Lord blessed them with the power of procreation.*
 - a. *He said to them, "BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY, AND FILL THE EARTH" (V. 28).*
 - b. *To enable them to do this He gave them the power to conceive and to bring forth children in their image.*

- c. *However, since the probation of Adam required that there be no other children born before its completion, they did not have any children until after the Fall.*
- d. *We will be looking at Adam's probation more specifically next week.*

B. *This Dominion Entailed the Subjection and Preservation of All Things for the Glory of God.*

- 1. ***Man was to subdue the earth to sustain himself.***
 - a. ***Man who was made from the earth had to be sustained by the earth.***
 - (i) God created man from the dust of the earth and from that dust he was to be nourished and all of his needs were to be met.
 - (ii) Can you think of anything that man needs to live which is not found in this world?
 - (iii) This is an amazingly complex world.
 - (iv) God has placed here about 103 naturally occurring elements, and man has synthesized in cyclotrons a few more.
 - (v) Each have their own peculiar properties which multiply into even more when they are combined with various other elements in chemical compounds.
 - (vi) From these building blocks, God has made everything which exists in this world and has created the possibility for many more things to be constructed.
 - (vii) He has made a variety of metals and other conducting substances to make electronics possible.
 - (viii) He has made a variety of woods, each with its own textures, strengths and beauties.
 - (ix) He has made a variety of pigments to color paints and to use as dyes.
 - (x) He has given everything that is needed to create devices which could transmit and receive video and audio signals, so that there could be TV and radio broadcast.
 - (xi) And of course, the most obvious and necessary things He has made are food and clothing.
 - b. ***And so man was to study the earth and make it yield its fruitfulness to him.***
 - (i) There are many fields of science which have striven to subject the creation to the usefulness of the creature.
 - (ii) Agriculture seeks to bring the greatest yield of food from the same acreage of land, as well as to produce hybrids that can flourish in a variety of climates.
 - (iii) Mathematicians and physicists have sought to understand the laws which God has made to govern the universe and have been able to do many amazing feats, such as placing a man on the moon.
 - (iv) Chemists have sought ways of using chemicals to better the lives of man, such as producing

better fertilizer, formulating stronger plastics, or various other things which range through just about every aspect of life.

- (v) Biologists have sought to understand more about plant and animal life in hopes of bettering the well-being of man.
- (vi) Architects have studied the laws of physics and developed building technology in hopes of building larger, stronger, and more esthetically pleasing structures.
- (vii) Metallurgists have studied the individual properties of metals to use them for specific applications in jewelry, to make them stronger and more attractive; in construction, to make the iron girders sturdier in the framework of buildings; and in electronics, to make wire which will better conduct electricity to the diodes and transistors.
- (viii) In these and in many other ways, man has studied the creation and has made it yield up its God-given usefulness to meet the needs of man.

2. *Man was also called to be the steward of God's creation to ensure that it continued to sustain future generations of people.*
 - a. *There were many generations yet to be born and it was important that man took good care of the earth so that it would continue to yield its fruit.*
 - b. *For this reason, man was not to "rape" the earth and leave it barren, but rather was to conserve its resources.*
 - c. *How many generations of man were to be born and to fill the earth was as yet unknown.*
 - d. *But everyone coming into the world would need the resources which the earth had to yield, and those resources are not without limit. They must be conserved.*

3. *And all of this labor, as well as everything man does, was to be performed for the glory of God.*
 - a. *In this as well as any other endeavor, it was to be performed with a desire to please God, according to His standards, and for His glory.*
 - b. *God made all things that He might display His glory, and when man images the nature of the Creator, it reflects the glory of God.*

II. *After the Fall, Man Is Still to Subdue the Earth, Only Now the Task Is Much More Difficult.*

- A. *The Fall Affected Both Areas of the Cultural Mandate--to Fill the Earth and to Subdue It--But Did Not Abrogate the Responsibility: In pronouncing the curse upon mankind, "TO THE WOMAN HE SAID, 'I WILL GREATLY MULTIPLY YOUR PAIN IN CHILDBIRTH, IN PAIN YOU SHALL BRING FORTH CHILDREN; YET YOUR DESIRE SHALL BE FOR YOUR HUSBAND, AND HE SHALL RULE OVER YOU.' THEN TO ADAM HE SAID, 'BECAUSE YOU HAVE LISTENED TO*

THE VOICE OF YOUR WIFE, AND HAVE EATEN FROM THE TREE ABOUT WHICH I COMMANDED YOU SAYING, "YOU SHALL NOT EAT FROM IT;" CURSED IS THE GROUND BECAUSE OF YOU; IN TOIL YOU SHALL EAT OF IT ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE. BOTH THORNS AND THISTLES IT SHALL GROW FOR YOU; AND YOU SHALL EAT THE PLANTS OF THE FIELD; BY THE SWEAT OF YOUR FACE YOU SHALL EAT BREAD, TILL YOU RETURN TO THE GROUND, BECAUSE FROM IT YOU WERE TAKEN; FOR YOU ARE WST, AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN'" (GEN. 3:16-19).

1. The ground would no longer yield its produce without great effort.
 - a. Specifically mentioned here is the area of agriculture: bringing forth food from the earth now entailed great labor to break it up, thorns and thistles growing along with the crops, and sweat to illustrate how difficult would be the task simply to live.
 - b. But this was to affect all of man's life as he sought to carry out his original purpose to subdue the earth.
 2. And the bringing forth of children to fill the earth would also entail greatly increased pain.
- B. Because of This, the Task Is Now Much More Difficult.
1. We see the difficulties which exist today in subduing the earth to man's benefit.
 - a. Man still studies the field of agriculture, but now there is harsh weather, weeds, destructive insects, and hard and infertile soil to contend with.
 - b. Chemists are now having to find ways to replenish the nutrients of the soil and synthesize new chemicals to kill the destructive insects.
 - c. Biologists are carefully studying various bacteria and viruses in hopes of finding a way to destroy them without harming those infected by them. (These things probably existed before, but now they are functioning differently).
 - d. Architects are trying to build their buildings taking into account the frequently occurring earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, or typhoons.
 - e. Metallurgists have to come up with non-corrosive metals to last longer under the oxidation and chemical corrosion which takes place today.
 - f. And, of course, doctors are having to deal with a variety of diseases which have resulted from the curse, the various types of injuries man inflicts on man, such as bullet wounds or bruises, as well as the overall effects upon the body of the aging process.
 - g. In this and many other ways, the Fall has greatly complicated man's endeavors to subdue the earth.
 2. And women, in bringing forth children, must now contend with the pain of childbirth.

- a. *There doesn't seem to be a lack of persons to carry out the work on account of this. Overpopulation seem to be the bigger problem.*
 - b. *However, there are still many dangers in childbearing. Many mothers would not be alive today if medicine had not developed the ability to surgically remove the infant in case natural birth failed.*
3. *And, of course, we must not fail to take into account the effect of corruption upon man himself.*
 - a. *The Fall affected all of man's natural abilities to some degree.*
 - (i) **He tires more easily.**
 - (ii) **He grows old and weak.**
 - (iii) **He cannot think with as much clarity and penetration.**
 - b. *And he is also affected spiritually.*
 - (i) **He no longer seeks the glory of God in his labors.**
 - (ii) **But now he exploits the earth, and seeks to cause it to yield up its treasures in order that he might consume it upon his own lusts.**
 - c. *And yet, as Christians, born again through a living faith in Christ, we are yet to carry on this process for the honor and praise of our Lord and Maker.*
 - d. *Therefore, even though the Fall has made the task much more difficult, it is still the obligation of man to subdue the earth and to rule over it.*

III. Uses.

- A. *First, your calling from the Lord is a part of God's cultural mandate, and you should use all of your natural and spiritual abilities to glorify the Lord in it.*
 1. *All of creation is to be subjected for the Lord's glory, so every lawful calling is good and a part of the cultural mandate.*
 2. *Therefore, you must not think that the only vocation with the Lord's blessing in life is the Gospel ministry.*
 3. *Other vocations are not evil or to be demeaned; all are necessary and a part of the bigger picture.*
 4. *Agriculture, mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology, metallurgy, architecture, geology, medicine, all seek to learn more about the creation and subject it to the usefulness of man.*
 5. *Are you using your God-given gifts in your particular calling to glorify God, or are you exploiting them for your own purposes?*
 6. *Again the Scriptures say, "Whether then you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).*
- B. *Secondly, realize that your children, who were given to you by God's grace, are part of this cultural mandate.*

1. The Lord has blessed you with the ability to bear children as a consequence of His original blessing on Adam and Eve.
 2. Do you see your children as a blessing and are you seeking to raise them in love and covenant nurture?
 3. And are you doing your utmost to raise them as contributing members of the kingdom of God, ready to labor in His world to subject it to His glory?
 4. This too is your responsibility in the sight of God.
 5. And for those of you who have already raised your children, it is your responsibility to help the other mothers to raise their children faithfully, "OLDER WOMEN LIKEWISE ARE TO BE REVERENT IN THEIR BEHAVIOR, NOT MALICIOUS GOSSIPS, NOR ENSLAVED TO MUCH WINE, TEACHING WHAT IS GOOD, THAT THEY MAY ENCOURAGE THE YOUNG WOMEN TO LOVE THEIR HUSBANDS, TO LOVE THEIR CHILDREN, TO BE SENSIBLE, PURE, WORKERS AT HOME, KIND, BEING SUBJECT TO THEIR OWN HUSBANDS, THAT THE WORD OF GOD MAY NOT BE DISHONORED" (Titus 2:3-5).
 6. And children, when you think of what you will do in the future as a lawful career, consider how you might best honor the Lord, and don't make your decisions based upon how you might best profit yourselves.
- C. Thirdly, just as it takes all of mankind to carry out this great commandment of God and is too much for just one or two individuals, realize that many of the tasks committed to the church are corporate in nature and not individual, as well.
1. If you were to try and accomplish everything that the Lord has commanded in Scripture, you would never be able to do it.
 - a. You could never go out and make disciples of all the nations by yourself.
 - b. You could never proclaim the gospel to every creature under heaven alone.
 - c. You could never pray for all your brethren in the world, nor for those individuals yet to be brought into the kingdom by name.
 - d. This would never leave you with the time you need to do the other things which God commands you to do, such as provide for your family, conduct family worship in your households, develop and nurture your family relationships, as well as your own personal growth in God's word through reading, meditation and prayer.
 2. That's because many of the things which the Lord has called His people to do are given to the entire church and not to individuals.
 - a. The commands come most frequently in the second person plural.
 - b. He has entrusted these duties to His entire covenant community.
 3. But you must not think, on the other hand, that because all of it is not your responsibility, that therefore none

of it is.

- a. You are called to a life of personal and perpetual holiness and obedience.
- b. You are called to study the word and to pray.
- c. You are called to witness of the gospel whenever and wherever the Lord gives you opportunity.
- d. You are also called to minister your particular gifts in the local church and to support it.
 - (i) Are you contributing to the church through the use of your gifts?
 - (ii) Or are you one who would rather sit on the sidelines and let everyone else do the work?
 - (iii) There are many needs in this church, even a church of this size, that aren't being met.
 - (iv) And because of the lack of the involvement of some, others often have to fill positions of responsibility for a great length of time.
 - (v) And this makes them reluctant to take on any further responsibility for fear that they will never be relieved.
 - (vi) Are you who are not involved in any way willing to use your giftedness to relieve the burden of your brethren and serve the Lord.
 - (vii) It is your God-given responsibility, and as you are faithful to Him, He will richly reward you.
 - (viii) And if you will not serve Him in this way, He will discipline you as a Father does His child, if you are His.

D. Fourthly, as we have looked at the marvelously varied creation of God, are you thankful for God's provision of all His creation to meet your needs?

1. Think of how the world might have been: one color, one kind of food, one gender of human who could reproduce through splitting rather than procreation.
2. And look at how the Lord has made the world: multicolored, multi-racial, with a great variety of sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, a great variance of personalities, so that no two persons are alike, the blessings of personal relationships, friendships, love, and marriage.
3. Are you thankful that your God is such a wonderful and gracious God to give you all of this to rule for His glory?

E. And lastly, although much of modern ecology may be in error, do you see that the world only has limited resources and are you seeking to conserve those resources for future generations?

1. Are you a wasteful consumer, or are you careful to use God's creation wisely?
2. Do you recycle the metals, papers, and plastics that you purchase from the store?
3. Are you living as wisely as possible, using only what you need to get by and no more, or are you consuming

lavishly the goods and products that the Lord has made available in His world?

4. *Do not forget, your actions are determining what the future will be like for the coming generations.*
 5. *Don't take the attitude that because you're not going to be here it doesn't matter.*
 6. *You must learn to think about these things with a God-glorifying attitude which is not self-serving or self-seeking.*
 7. *There is nothing in life which is indifferent; every choice we make is either glorifying to the Lord or it is not.*
 8. *People of God, make sure that your choices always have the glory of God and the exaltation of your Lord and Sovereign, Jesus Christ, at its heart. Amen.*
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2. *Calvin believes that God made all men from one pair in order to facilitate brotherhood among them. But this cannot be the only case, for it was necessary for the probation of man that one legitimately represent the entire human race. If there had been pockets of people created in the world, wherein would lie the probation?*
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- e. *Because of God's common grace, He endows even the reprobate with the ability to make amazing discoveries in His creation: Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, etc.*