

Series: Faith like a Child

**God Made Me**

Genesis 2:4-7, Romans 5:6-8, Second Corinthians 5:16-17

Sermon by Hanna Arata

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, July 6, 2025

A reading from Genesis chapter 2, verses 4 through 7: “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the Earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the Earth, and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no one to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being,” the word of the Lord.

All right, thanks, Asher. It is so fun to have students as part of the service. I love it, but I am biased, because I get to hang out with them all the time. Well, hey all. I am Hanna, if we have not met. I am the associate student pastor, as Paul said, and I am just really excited to be with you guys today, so I did bring some props, so you will have to just wait and see what they are for, but it is very fun. If we are going to do it in a generational service, we have to have fun things, right? So, but before we get started, I am going to go ahead and pray, if you will bow your heads with me.

Lord, thank you that you made us. Lord, it sounds like such a simple thing, but I think that a lot of the time we see that as not a positive, but maybe a negative thing or something that we do not really know what to do with. Lord, I pray that as we enter into your word this morning, as we enter into this space of learning what it means to be made in your image, what it means to be made by you, God, would you help us to see ourselves how you see us, to not let what other people say about us dictate who we are, but letting you dictate who we are, because you are our creator? You are not just our Father and our friend, and those things are amazing, but you also are our creator, and you knit us together in such a beautiful way, and would we embrace that today? Would you open our hearts to what you have to say to us? It is in Jesus’ name that I pray, amen.

Have you ever wanted to look like someone else, like when the TV show, “Friends,” came out, and everyone wanted the Rachel Green haircut, because everyone wanted to look like Jennifer Aniston? Anyone? Okay, when I first started watching “Friends,” that was definitely like me. Yeah. Well, when I was in middle and high school, I did not really want to look like anyone in particular. I just did not want to look like me. Has anyone else felt that way? I can see there are some hands in the room. Yeah. I think that is a very common thing when you are growing up, but when I was in middle school, I was a huge tomboy, not that I am super girly now, as you can see, but I am from Dallas, and so I wore my Dirk Nowitzki jersey from the Mavericks three times a week. I had basketball shorts that were for boys that went past my knees, and I wore boys vans every day, and I did not brush my hair. I had no clue how to dress myself, and I think the reason that I did that was because if I am being honest, I was really insecure, and I was not the cute, petite girl with the pretty hair who had a lot of girlfriends. I was a huge tomboy. I would play football with the boys before school and even scratched up my knees multiple times, and I was a foot taller than everyone else in my grade, so that obviously made things really uncomfortable, and

I did not know how to dress myself, and inside all I wanted was for someone to love me for me. Have you ever felt that way?

Now, have you ever wanted to be someone else, not just look like someone else, but be someone else? Like, if you could trade your life and their life, everything would be better. Like if you had their friends, their family, their relationship, their success, their job, their stuff, if you were that person, you would be happy, and you would love yourself, and you would not struggle with the things that you struggle with. It can be easy for us to think that when God made us, He actually did so without thought, that He took us from these blobs, and then He put us through a human making conveyor belt, and some of us came out with issues, and some of us did not. I think there's a lot, and so we think about how we were created, and it can seem random and unfair, or like have you ever asked God the question, "God, why did you make me this way, with these issues, without this? Maybe you were bullied, and you had no friends, and you just wanted to be that cool guy in your class who has plans every weekend. Maybe you have a strained relationship with your kids, and you see all these families that seem so happy and close, and you just wish that could be you. Maybe you struggle to believe that God is real, or that He's good, and you just wish you could be that person in your small group whose faith just never seems to waver.

From the day we are born, we are given the message that we're not enough, that there is something wrong with us. We are taught to compare ourselves to other people, to want what everyone else has, and to look at ourselves and see a deficit, but then we try what the world has offered us, and it doesn't really seem to satisfy, does it? When we look at ourselves, we see a deficit we can't overcome or fix, and what happens is I think for a lot of us that know God, we assume that, "If I see myself this way, and I know myself best, God must see me that way too," but I mean, I feel like I know all of my deepest, darkest secrets. I know all the things, and so if God also knows all of that, I feel like we're probably on the same page. Then I know that if I'm a screw up, why would God, a perfect, holy creator, see me as anything but a screw up? Friends, all of this affects the way that we tell our story, and that is the story that we tell about ourselves, how we were made, and who made us, and the way we tell that story, it really matters. Scripture tells us a different story than the one we so often tell ourselves, though.

This morning, I want to walk through the ways God sees us, based on what He has told us in scripture. The first is that God made us *tove*, which is a Hebrew word we will get into in a little bit. God made us in his image. God made us without shame, and God made us new. So first, God made me, us, *tove*. Something that is really important to understand about the creation account that Asher just read a portion of is that it was one of many that the people in Babylon would have known. Israel was hearing all of these stories. They were really small group of people in a much larger context, and all these different cultures had a different idea of how the world was made and who it was that created it.

There was one story that they talked about in creation where there were these gods who had this huge fight over who was better, and so the first guy, who won, tore the other guy in half and made him into the earth and sky. That is pretty scary. Then there is another one where the gods made all of creation, but then they were way too lazy to take care of it, so they created humans to take care of all their dirty work. Those don't feel like great options, right? It says a lot about the gods that they believed in, but the people of Israel, the people of our God, Yahweh, they said, "We need to tell a different story, because we have experienced a very different kind of God."

When we look at the book of Genesis, where our creation story is, I think it is really easy to get caught up in the question of did God actually create the Earth in seven days, or was it over thousands of years? Were dinosaurs real, like how long has the earth been around? Although those questions are really interesting, they are actually not super helpful, because that is actually not why Genesis was written. Everything in scripture was written with a purpose, and the purpose of Genesis was to tell people about the character of our God, Yahweh, and in this story, this God had the power to bring order from chaos, to create something out of nothing. There was no anger, no selfishness, no one forcing Him to do or make anything, no big violent battle, just perfect, powerful creativity.

Have you ever thought about the fact that God did not have to create anything, like nowhere in Scripture does it say that God lacked anything, that He needed anything from anyone? He was perfectly content as He was, and yet He created, and He did it with intention and care. So why did He do it? Well, we believe that He did so out of an overflow of love for what He was going to create, and if you have read Genesis 1 and 2, did you notice that God spoke creation into being, but He formed humans? Genesis 2:7 says, “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

Now, to illustrate this, I am actually going to invite my friend Wendy to come up on stage from our kids ministry. You all give it up for Wendy. Awesome. We are actually going to sit right over here. All right. Can you sit with me? So, Wendy, I am going to have you make me a little person with a head and arms and legs, the whole thing. You can pick whatever colors you want, and you can go ahead and start whenever you are ready, and we are going to do an artist interview, because Wendy is an artist, so Wendy, have you ever made a person before? “No.” First time, first time. This is very exciting. You picked orange first. Is that going to be the head or the arms? It is going to be the head. It is going to be the head. Okay, amazing. Okay, are you going to use a lot of colors or just one? Multiple colors. That’s awesome. Are you making a boy or a girl? “Probably a girl.” Yeah, that makes sense. Okay, is she a kid or an adult? She says probably a kid, because they are easier to make, and they are a little smaller, so that feels good. Oh, we got some eyes going, pink eyes. I kind of wish I had pink eyes. That would be fun. So, if your friend is a kid, how old is she? Seven, she’s probably seven. It is good. It is a good age. How old are you, Wendy? “Nine and a half.” She is nine and a half, so she’s making a little sibling, I guess. It is good. So, I want you, Wendy, I want you to think of a name. What do you want to name your person? “Paisley.” Paisley. Oh, that is a very fun name. I met a Paisley once. She was cool. What are you making now? Are you making her hair? “Oh yeah,” she goes. She has got pink hair. I will show her to you after we are done. This is so fun. Okay, what does Paisley like to do for fun? She does disk golf for fun. Who plays disk golf, anyone? Yeah. Okay, we have some people. That’s fun. You and Paisley can hang out. This is good. All right, we’re done with the head. Time for the neck. Oh, right. Does Paisley have a favorite food? “Pasta.” Pasta. Is that like you? Do you like pasta? “Yeah.” Is that your favorite? What’s your favorite? “Steak.” That is good. Wendy loves steak. She is a carnivore, someone just sitting in the back. This is good. Okay, now she has a purple body. Are you doing the arms and legs? Amazing. Okay, Wendy, I want to ask, how did you pick her hair color? “Well. I thought that pink would be a unique color for the hair.” Okay, she said, “I thought that pink would be a unique color for the hair.” Yeah. I love that. I have a friend that has pink hair. That is very cool. Awesome.

Okay, so as Wendy finishes up Paisley, I want you guys to see what Wendy is doing. She is crafting this little person with so much intention. I think a lot of times when we think of God forming us, we think of that conveyor belt, but here Wendy is rolling the pieces. She is connecting them to each other. She is deciding what colors to use. She has got a lot of options, and she now has a person with pink hair and a purple body and orange limbs and blue shoes. I know it is a very pretty person, honestly, and she has a skirt now, so that is perfect. Is she done? Amazing. Okay, can you hold her up? Is she? Yeah, okay. I know she is very delicate. All right, you all give it up for Wendy. Amazing. Okay. You can hand her to me, and then I will put her on the stage. Yeah, that is great. Thank you. That's okay. We will keep her on the stage. Okay, thanks, Wendy. You can go have a seat.

I love it, and although this might feel like maybe a silly illustration, sorry, Paisley's eye fell off, so I was putting it back on. I know it might seem silly, but imagine if that is what you thought of when God created you. Imagine if you thought of God saying, "Oh, I am going to pick purple, and I am going to roll it together, and I am going to place it so carefully onto the orange part, and I am going to take the pink, and I am going to curve it around to look like hair," and all these things. What if that was the way you thought of how God made you? God could have spoken you into existence like He did with light, like He did with the sun and the moon, the plants and the animals, but He did not. He chose to form us. When God created the world, He called everything He made "tove," which is my favorite word in Hebrew, and we translate it in English as good, like God saw all that He had made, and He said it was good, but in reality, the connotation of this word is life-giving, and although God called all of his creation good, it is only after God creates humanity that He called it his creation very good, "tove mayode," in the Hebrew, and "tove mayode," has the connotation of being goodness that is complete, so I want you to think about it this way.

Say you are moving into a new house, and you get to set up your new bedroom. Very exciting. You have your bed, and then you organize your clothes. Maybe you picked out a new set of sheets for your bed and some pillows, and then you put all your clothes in your closet. You move the furniture around so that it feels just right, and then, if you are anything like me, the very last thing you do is to put up the artwork. I do not know about you, but this part always takes me the longest, because I feel like more than anything else in my room, my art says a lot about who I am and how I want to express myself. Like if people were to come into my bedroom and see my artwork, they would say "That is Hannah." I will spend days rearranging things until it feels right, and then there is always that last photograph or art piece that you do not really know what to do with, but it matters where it goes, and then you finally find the perfect place for it, and you set it up, and you are like, "okay." You take a step back, and you say, "Okay, it's done." This is a feeling of completeness, and it is like, "Now that this final piece is up, now I can call this place my home, because it is set up just how I like it."

Now I want you to imagine God forming you as the finishing touches to his creation. Scripture says that after God was done creating, He rested. His creation was complete. It was tove mayode, so He sat back, and He enjoyed all that He had made. So, you were created as Tove. It was life-giving for God to create you. Did you know that? It was not a chore. He did not have to do it. It was not an obligation. No, He delighted in creating you, and not only did He make us Tove, but He also made us in his image. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God He created them.

Male and female, He created them,” and when Genesis says that God created us in his image, it means that He made us to represent our creator, but what does that actually mean?

I think a lot of us do not really have a good concept of what it means for you to be actually made in the image of God. First, it means that God is relational, and so as people that are made in his image, we are relational. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that are in perfect relationship with each other, and so we as his image-bearers, we are created for relationships with each other and with God. Second, it means that God has authority over all creation, and we as his image bearers, are given the task to have dominion over and take care of the earth. Third, we share certain qualities with God. We have rational thoughts. We have a sense of right and wrong. We have creativity. We have free will, and we actually have the capacity to engage with the divine, even though we are not divine. We were made to reflect God’s image into the world, and we have been given the incredible task of demonstrating who God is as we live as image-bearers.

So, my friend Caitlin, who many of us may know, she goes here, she has these cool cloud stickers on her car, and there is a picture that is going to come up. It is on the right, these really cute little cloud stickers that go on her sunroof, and when the light hits them just right, they refract light, and they actually, if you look on the left, they create little rainbows all over her car, and it is like our favorite thing when we are driving around to look and see all the rainbows on the sunny day. I feel like this is such a sweet image of what it means to be created in the image of God, to bear his image, and we as people can’t perfectly reflect the light, because we like these clouds, we have cracks and lines, but our purpose is to refract light into the world, and if you can see these stickers, none of them are the same. They are all unique, and our refraction shows God’s glory, his heart, and his hope in the unique and beautiful way that God made you.

So, what does this look like? It means when you are exhausted, and your kids are bouncing off the walls, and they break something, and you take a deep breath, and you respond with kindness and gentleness when you want to do something else, in that moment, you have the Holy Spirit working through you, and you are reflecting God’s heart. When you look at a person experiencing homelessness in the eyes, and you ask for their name and listen to their story, you are sharing and reflecting God’s heart. When you create a safe environment for a friend to share their grief or pain, you reflect the heart of God, and when you use the gifts that God gave you, like art or writing or counseling or leadership or gardening or building things, you reflect the heart of God. So then, if that is true, then how were we created to see ourselves? Our third point is that God made me without shame. Genesis 2:25 says, “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.” In the garden Adam and Eve were naked, and this is included because it is a symbol. There was nothing separating them from each other or God. It was perfect harmony and community. God made us to be fully ourselves before each other and before God in the garden. There was no need for shame, no need for comparison, no brokenness, no insecurity, no need to hide. In the garden, humans were secure, and they felt seen, and they were satisfied, which sounds so different from our lived experience a lot of the time that I was describing earlier, doesn’t it? Adam and Eve trusted God and believed that He knew what was best for them because He created them.

So, what happened? Well, Genesis 3 happens. Humans decided that it was not enough to just reflect God and represent Him, but they actually wanted to be God, and as we know from being humans for any length of time, when humans want to be God, that is when things go wrong. Sin entered the scene, and the

very first thing that happened was that humans were no longer in perfect connection with each other or God. First, they hid from God. That fractured their connection, and then Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the snake, and then God had to give them clothes, because they saw that they were naked, and it was now a bad thing instead of what it was meant to be, and God still loved them, but their connection was fractured, and they were actually sent out of the garden. So, even though we were made Tove, good, sin separated us from God, and if Tove means good or life-giving, then the opposite of Tove is sin, because if you have been a person, and you have experienced sin, it is life-taking.

So how can we live as people that are both Tove, life-giving, and sinful, life-taking? Those feel like opposites, but it is important that we have a proper understanding of sin and how it affects us, and I want to take a second to recognize that there probably are people in this room who have grown up in churches or homes where the message was because of our sin and the ways that we have messed up, every person is absolutely horrible, with no redeeming qualities, and if you do not have Jesus, you are actually worthless. We have been conditioned to believe that our sin makes us worthless, and that God just puts up with us. I believe that this story that we tell ourselves is why we can struggle to believe that we were made good and that God actually loves us, but when this is the end of the story, we lose hope that God would ever actually want us as we are, and so oftentimes we either try harder to earn his love, or we just give up, and although sin is real, and we do need Jesus, and He is who makes us worthy, this version of the story we have been telling ourselves actually is not the full story, and I want to give you the version that God gives us in scripture.

The image we have been given by God to reflect Him has been corrupted by sin, and it is like being diagnosed with cancer. This person's body has a disease. It does not mean they are any less human, that their body is bad, that they are any less lovable, that their life is not valuable, or that there is no possibility of them being healed. It just means that there is something inside of them that has taken root and is actually a threat to their well-being. It changes the way that they feel, the choices they make, how they live, and sin is just like that. It infects every part of our lives, our choices, our relationships, our ability to accurately reflect that image that we were created in, and it is dangerous. When we do not treat the infection, what happens is that we start to get used to it. Even if we are deeply uncomfortable, we start to make excuses for why we have not gone to the doctor, justifying in our own minds that it is really not that bad. "I do not need help," and then we isolate ourselves from others and stop reaching out to our loved ones out of denial or shame, because to look at our infection head-on and see how it is affecting us feels scary, and sometimes to hope that we could even be healed feels scarier. What started as a circumstance has become a defining piece of who we are. When we buy into the lie that we are sin, we let it define us more than the image of God that we were created in, and then we decide that if we would not call ourselves worthy or Tove, then God definitely would not either. Friends, something beautiful about our God is that He never gives up on his creation. His plan has always been not only to make us, but to remake us, because He knew we would fall into sin, and if our sin made us worthless, then why would God come and save us?

Our fourth point for today and our final one is that God made us new. God's plan was always to bring us back to Him, to restore us to our original design. Romans 5:6-8 says this: "At just the right time, when we were so powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person, someone might possibly dare to die, but God demonstrates his own love for us

in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Amen? God decided that we were so worthy of saving that He sent his Son to come and save us while we were still sinners, not after we cleaned ourselves up, not after we went to church enough times. While we were still in sin, He came to save us, and He went all the way to the cross and then rose from the grave so that we could be with Him. God relentlessly pursues us, because his love is not like human love. His love is perfect, and it is dependent on his character, not our performance. This is the beauty of the gospel that makes our faith so beautifully unique. God’s love for us has never faltered. From the moment He formed us, He loved us, knowing that we would stray, knowing that we would mess up and try to do things our own way, and although we profess this truth with our words, so many of us walk around like we can’t actually accept that love, because of who we were before we met Jesus, the ways that we still struggle, and we can’t shake that worthless feeling, but when Wendy created our little friend here, she did not throw it away. She was proud of it. God does not throw you away either, even when you can’t understand why, even though you have run away and decided so many times that you know better than God. Maybe you have even rejected Him. God has decided that even with all of that, you were worth saving, and if God has decided it, there is nothing you can do to change that, and He wants to redeem you, to remake you into a saint.

Second Corinthians 5:16-17 says this: “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone. The new is here.” Friends, if anyone is in Christ, anyone, they are made new. The new creation is here, church. The cancer is gone. I am made new. Do you believe that this morning, that you are new? I want to be clear. This does not mean that you never sin again. It does not mean that you are perfect now, but it just means that you are no longer a slave to it. You are no longer a slave to sin, because you have the Holy Spirit, and you are free to be Tove again, all because of Jesus, and if He has saved you, you now get to not be defined by your sin, but by your creator and your savior, the way it was meant to be.

Earlier I mentioned that we so often ask God, “Why did you make me this way?” But what would it look like for us to change the question to “God, how can I use the way I was made, my story, my life, to better reflect your image?” What would it look like for you to actually embrace the way that God made you instead of constantly trying to change it? What if you stepped into your life knowing that just like those cloud stickers, you were made to uniquely reflect God’s heart through the way that you live your life? As you ask God this question this week, watch for the ways that He wants to reflect his heart through you as his image-bearer, because that is when life starts to get really good, really Tove, because it is what we were made for.

We are now going into a time of communion. We have stations all around the room, and we will have gluten-free in the back and the center. When you participate, in communion, we remember the perfect love that Christ displayed for his creation through his life, death, and resurrection. Christ came to make all things new, and by taking communion, we are saying that not only have we been made by God, but that He has made us new and alive in Him.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, at the Passover, Jesus sat with his disciples, and He predicted his own death for the final time. Matthew 26 says this: “While they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat. This is my body.’

Then He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.’” You are now welcome to stand and come as you are to the table of our Lord, amen?

Paul: I want to read for you Psalm 139:13: “For you created me in my inmost being, and you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Thanks to Hanna for that reminder today of how God has created us in his image without shame and made us good.

36:50 minutes

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Edited by Tom Kenaston

Message #863