

Child of Destiny

Text: Gen 1:26-28, Psalm 127:1-5

Friends I need to you imagine a couple of scenes with me as if we were watching a play or creating a movie.

In the first scene we have a couple – maybe in their mid-thirties – standing in the middle of their living room. The man is tenderly embracing his wife, one arm around her waist and the other placed gently on her head as she is crying silently into his shoulder. As she cries her body trembles quietly with a deep sadness, and his face reflects that grief with a sadness of his own.

As we look around their small home we notice there is a letter on the coffee table from the doctors office, the words “fertility tests” and “unlikely to bear children” seem to jump off the page at us in bold font.

Then we notice that one of the bedroom doors down the hallway is open, and we catch a glimpse of walls painted a soft yellow color with a teddy bear wallpaper boarder running along the top...it's a nursery

And in the kitchen, the refrigerator is covered in photo-cards from their family and friends announcing the arrival of a healthy baby girl or boy.

It's not hard to understand what is going on here is it? The longing to have a child, to make something beautiful together is impossible – destiny unfulfilled.

The next scene we encounter also takes place in a living room, between a couple, but much younger however. They are in their early twenties, living downtown in an old industrial building that has been converted into loft style apartments.

There are tubes of paint, brushes, palettes and easels scattered about the meagerly furnished apartment. Half finished paintings stand here and there, dark brooding works, reflecting chaos and uncertainty. The colors and brush strokes are angry and it creates an uneasy energy in these paintings. But it suits them because they are visual protests against the injustice and the evil which the young artist sees in the world around him.

He is standing off in a corner, his body stiff with rage. It is not however, directed towards society or the world at large at this particular moment. The young woman, who is his wife, gets up from the old couch which lounges in the center of the apartment, and moves tentatively across to the room towards him, but he shifts his stance away from her in response and she stops – uncertain as to what she should do next.

She is holding a home pregnancy test kit in her hand and it reads positive.

It's not too difficult to guess what has happened here either? How can you bring a child into this world when it's so messed up – they'll be destined for destruction.

Friends, the reality of conceiving and bearing children into this world stirs up deep emotions in people – in us, there are feeling of happiness, excitement, hope, joy, or maybe feelings of sadness, dread, fear, anxiety, –or perhaps some of both at the same time.

And it doesn't matter if you are a parent or not –

I remember vividly how impacted I was emotionally as a 12 year old boy when one of the characters on the original Degrassi High TV series found out she was pregnant.

I remember the hushed whispers in the hallways a few years later when one of the grade 12 girls in my high school got pregnant.

And I think this is because deep down on some unconscious instinctual level we are aware of the sacred nature of what it means to conceive and bring children into this world, and we just know that's not something to be done casually or taken lightly.

Of course the sacred nature of procreation comes from the fact that it was God himself who commissioned us as human beings to conceive and bear children – *“to multiply and fill the earth”* as He commanded Adam and Eve in the scripture that we read this morning.

But instinct alone isn't as much help to us as a well-thought out approach, based on the scripture, about what it means to have

kids and raise them. And as those commercials for Canadian Tire used to say – where you end up has a lot to do with where you start out.

So where will you end up, where did you end up? What would your scenario look like?

Full of heartbreak because you didn't have children, couldn't have children,

Is it angry and resentful, or racked with guilt because you didn't want children?

Are you disappointed or hurt because your child isn't who you expected them to be, or just afraid because you must parent your children on your own?

Or maybe your scenario is contented and satisfied because everything is going, or went as you planned it,

and if pressed you might admit to a touch of pride about how you've managed to be a good parent.

Friends the good news is that scripture gives us the right starting point so that in the end we don't end up heartbroken, angry, disappointed - or proud...

If we allow God's truth to speak to us in whatever scenario we might be in it will shape what we think and feel – what we believe - about having kids and parenting them, and this will guide us in our journey as parents.

So where do we start? Well, as always we go back to Genesis for our starting point and here we discover that the whole idea of procreation is God's. *Gen 1:28 "Be fruitful and increase in number"*

And we might think that's pretty obvious – but friends we need to be reminded of it when we live in a society where our biological functions are thought to be the product of evolution and not the Creator.

But, child bearing is God's idea...and we also discover his intentions for it. It is to be the means by which those who were created in God's image....to be God's representatives on earth,

those who are to explore, develop and subdue the creation.... to multiply so that there may be more stewards – more people made in God’s image. A people of God who will glorify Him!

And children are a part of this – and friend that means children bear God’s image too – because they are destined to become stewards and rulers over God’s creation. And this is why we value children!

Where does the value of a child come from? It’s not from their cuteness, or from some sort of innocence, or from the potential they may represent for a better future, or even the fact that they are our flesh and blood –

No, it comes from the fact that they bear the image of God, and God’s intention for them is to become stewards over His creation!

So, pro-creation is God’s idea. Now, does God step back at this point to say to Adam and Eve, “Ok, its all here, steward it, get busy and multiply – I’m going off for margaritas, have fun and try not to wreck anything.”

You see many people think that once God created procreation, biology simply took over from there – and from simple observation it may appear to be that way.

But Scripture reveals the true nature of things to us and Psalm 127 shows us that the arrival of children in our lives is a heritage and a gift from God – in other words when we take a closer look at how God does this – we call it biology – but it is still God at work, working with us... because that’s what it means to be a steward, we work with God.

Now sometimes we’re tempted to say that in ancient times people used “religion” or “God” to explain things they couldn’t understand because they didn’t have the scientific knowledge we do today.

But look at who wrote this Psalm – it was Solomon, the wisest King ever! A King who was known for his scientific and philosophical investigation of the world (1 Kings 4:33) and yet in the end he still concludes *Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. (Psalm 127:3)*

Now for us the significance of God still being involved in the process of procreation, and bestowing children upon us as gifts, is that it means children belong to Him, they are His, not ours...not really.

An important fact to be reminded of from time to time because while we live in a part of the world where it is easy to make sure our children are well taken care of materially – we live in a society where children are neglected spiritually – or worse yet abandoned or mislead spiritually!

It's easy to buy into the apparent wisdom and tolerance of the approach which says "I'm not going to force my Christian beliefs down my kids throat, I'll let them choose for themselves when they are older.

Friends – while this may seem like a wise and tolerant approach for parents, and while its true you can't *force* your kids to have faith (this too is a gift from God), from a biblical perspective this approach is an abdication of our responsibility to take care of the children God has gifted us with and a refusal to help them discover the truth of who God intended for them

to become – stewards of His creation, working in relationship with Him.

Jesus words in Mathew 18:6-7 come to mind where He says "*If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.*"⁷

Friends, we need to ensure our children, all children really – because they all belong to God – are being told the truth of who they are and what their destiny is!

Are your children being raised to know they have been made in the image of God – that they have a destiny... to be stewards of creation! And what about the children that live around you?

Would you turn a blind eye and do nothing if you saw your neighbor's children, or your grandchildren, or your niece or nephew was neglected, or abused? We'd like to think not... so what can we do to help the children in our neighborhood who

are suffering spiritually? – may God give us the wisdom to act appropriately to help them.

Friends - *Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.*

Now, anyone who has spent a bit of time with children – especially in their teen years might wonder if Psalm 127 is right about them being a reward... because there are times when our kids feel more like a punishment – correct?

And friends we need to jump back to our starting point once again to be reminded that the idyllic harmonious relationship between God and humans was interrupted by rebellion and since that point and time procreation has passed on that rebellion to each of us – and eventually we become aware its been passed on to our kids as well.

King David was certainly aware of this reality in his own life when he wrote Psalm 51 where he says *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”* (vs.5)

But friends, the good news is that as soon as Adam and Eve had rebelled against God – He made a promise to them that one day a child... a child would be born who would crush the head of the devil, the one who had deceived Adam and Eve and instigated their rebellion. A child of destiny

So, procreation was God’s idea for creating a race of stewards – now procreation would also be a part of God’s plan to restore this race... to rescue them from sin.

In time this lead to the birth of Jesus Christ – Emanuel – God with us – God become one of us – only with sin. He was conceived by the Holy Sprit, born of the virgin Mary...

He is the hope for each and everyone of us, and especially for our children because He fulfilled his destiny.

He lived his entire life without rebelling against God, and he took our rebellious nature and put it to death on the cross and was raised back to life as the prototype of the kind of people we will become – people without sin, rebellion and therefore

no more sickness, disease, sorrow.... Only love, peace, joy and happiness – in a world made new once again.

Where you start out has a lot to do with where you end up and only the scriptures reveal to us that we started out because our first parents were given a calling and a destiny to be rulers over creation and to create a people to glorify God.

So how would this starting point help the two couples who are wrestling with the prospects of having or not having kids?

Well, if all children are a gift from God – our first couple may need to wait for God's timing, they may need to ask God, they might need to come to grips that God has other plans for them with regards to children.

Since all children are a gift from God, are there not ways other than biological ones by which God might allow them to share their love and care with a child?

Think of Mother Theresa on one hand, or simply being a sponsor parent for a child through an organization like

Compassion International on the other – with a number of other options in between.

And for our angry young brooding artist who sees no hope and no future – if he could see Jesus Christ, if he could believe that Christ has secured the renewal of our world and of our lives...

He would have hope for the world his child would be born into, he would have hope for the kind of person his child could eventually be...

And what about each of us?

If we are disappointed with what our children have done or the choices they've made, remember God was disappointed with Adam and Eve too - but he made them a promise... and that promise is for our children as well.

God is not finished with them yet - forgiveness, grace and mercy will always be available to them, no matter how far they may wander away – Jesus is only one step back from them.

And if you are afraid because you face the challenge of raising children on your own remember that God is with you. He was the one who gave you these children.

Psalm 127 reminds us of the blessing the God intends for children to be to their parents when they are older. They are like arrows, they can protect from enemies, and they can hunt for food, they will have families of their own. You will not always be alone, you won't always have to fend for yourself.

And if things are going good for you – don't knock on wood! Give thanks and praise to God instead. Keep on turning to His truth as your starting point each and every day in your journey as a parent to the gifts of kids that He has given to you.

Friends, God is a good God! We see that he even blesses those who don't believe in Him, or who ignore Him – So friends how much more will He enjoy blessing those who are willing to acknowledge and praise Him for it.

And ultimately that blessing means we will spend eternity – in the new heavens and earth – with all of God's children who

have put their faith and trust in the child of destiny – the Son of God – Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

So friends remember – as parents, for the sake of your child's destiny – where you start out has a lot to do with where you end up.

Amen.