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Created with Flesh and Bones
Genesis 2:7, 18 – 25

In this isolating, impersonal, and confusing time in which we live, we need to hear a clear voice of truth. We need to hear of how human beings were created to be, and a hope that it will one day be better. And so we look to the story of our beginning, in the book of Genesis. This morning, we conclude our sermon series with the recognition that human beings were created with flesh and bones; we were created with *bodies*.

If you felt a sudden wave of nervousness when I said the word “bodies,” you are not alone. As I was writing this, I had a flashback to eighth grade science class, when my teacher prefaced a video clip with, “If you laugh at this video, you are immature.” This science video from the 1980’s opened with a group of men and women in bright leotards doing embarrassing dance moves. I couldn’t *help* but laugh. My teacher glared at me.

This is how many of us respond when we hear the word “body.” We feel nervous and uncomfortable, and want to hide. With a barrage of images and advertisements, we continue to receive the subliminal message (or not so subliminal message), that we ought to look differently, that our bodies are not good enough.

But if we can set aside our nervousness for a moment, we can admit that human bodies are truly magnificent. They change, grow, age, heal, and reflect whom we are and how we would like to be understood by others. They are how we experience the world around us, and how the world experiences *us*. Our bodies are

how we communicate with one another, with postures of hope, anxiety, joy, depression, curiosity, fear, anger, and love.

As we grow, we recognize that our bodies give us away. The confidence we try to exhibit is soon betrayed the moment we open our mouths, or come from behind the computer or cell phone screen. It has been said that our bodies, our body posture and our voices, are about 80 – 90% of communication,¹ so we hear the constant refrain to call and not send that e-mail, to hash something out in person instead of sending that tweet.

Our bodies are who we *are*; they are *not* inconsequential. And in this increasingly technological and impersonal world in which we live, we *need* a theology that is incarnate, in the flesh, and personal.

In Genesis 2, God creates man. God says that it is not good for man to be alone, so God brings animals to the man. But among all the animals, there is not found a helper for the man. So God causes the man to fall into a deep sleep, takes one of his sides, and closes it up with flesh. From the man's side, God creates woman, and brings her to the man (Gen 2:18 – 22). As Genesis 1:31 says, "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good."

The man does not see God creating the woman, because he is in a deep sleep. But when the woman is brought to the man, he immediately recognizes that she is distinct from the animals; she was created from his very body. In verse 23, the man says, "'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.'"

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/beyond-words/201109/is-nonverbal-communication-numbers-game>

Like the man, the woman is given a responsibility and a limitation. She is to serve the garden, and not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She is given a responsibility, so she is above the animals, yet she is given a limitation, so she is below God.

Woman and man are created beings, and are created to be obedient to their Creator. They are not created to be *equal* with God. They are created with an important responsibility, yes, but they are still *created* beings.

And woman and man are not content with how God created them to be; they want *more*. They want to be like God. Their desire takes root, and they act on it. They eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Soon after, they realize that they are naked, so they hide their bodies; they clothe themselves. They do not want to be vulnerable with one another. When they hear God walking in the garden, they hide even *further*. They do not want to be vulnerable with God.

Because of their disobedience, their *bodies* receive the consequence. The woman will have great pains in childbirth, and the man will work the ground in pain. Both of them will one day die.

Man and woman were created with *good* bodies, but because of their disobedience, their bodies and souls and *all* of creation were committed to death. Man and woman could not do *anything* to change the course of history; only the death of a *perfect Person* could.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14). Jesus came

down from heaven and took on flesh. He took on *our* flesh, *human* flesh, so that he might die and destroy the one who has the power over death (Heb 2:14 – 15).

Jesus died in the flesh and was resurrected from the dead. When he was resurrected, he did not come back as a ghost; he came back in his resurrected *body*. He ate in front of his disciples and invited them to touch his wounds, to prove that he wasn't a ghost (Lk 24:39 – 43).

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, that because Jesus was raised in the body, we too shall be raised in the body. Because Jesus was raised in a body that will never die, we too will be raised in a spiritual body that will never die (1 Cor 15:44).

As Christians, we need to recover our theology of the body. Our bodies were *created* good, but they have not always been *used* for good. They have not always been used to honor God. They have not always been used to serve one another. They have not always been used to care for creation. They have not always been used to rest in God. They have often *instead* been used to elevate ourselves and to pursue our own desires. As the Apostle Paul reminds the church in 1 Corinthians 6:19, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God. You are not your own, you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body.”

This is quite the statement from Paul. In our culture, we often instead hear, “Do what feels good to you. Do what makes you happy. It doesn't matter what you do, so long as it doesn't hurt others.”

This is *not* the message of Scripture. The purpose of our bodies is not to please ourselves or to become whatever we feel like on the inside. The purpose of our bodies is that we *live* and glorify God with our bodies.

What might this look like to glorify God with our bodies? This might look like someone close to me, who knew he was called to take better care of his body. When asked by friends what spiritual disciplines he was practicing, he said, "Eating better and exercising. I will be healthier spiritually when I am healthier physically." This might look like saying "no" to an obligation or a friendship so that you can take your husband or wife out on a date. This might look like intentionally encouraging someone's marriage or praying for a single person close to you. This might look like taking your children to the park or doing an activity they want to do. This might look like giving away one of your favorite things. This might look like saying a word of blessing to someone. Tell them that they are deeply loved by God and that they are a gift to you. This looks like being faithful to your spouse. This looks like waiting until you are married to have sex. This looks like honoring someone who has no capacity to honor you. As Jesus said in John 14, "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed" (Jn 14:13 - 14).

There are *many* ways in which we can honor God with our bodies. Our bodies were created good, and are the temple of the Holy Spirit. They were bought at a price. Honor God with your body. Amen.