

June 3, 2018

*Moments of Self-Doubt*

Genesis 1:26-28

**Opening words:** On this Communion Sunday, we find ourselves in the very first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1. The word "Genesis" in the original language means "in the beginning." Tradition tells us the great lawgiver, Moses, wrote Genesis, along with the other four books of the Pentateuch: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Book of Genesis can be divided into two great sections. The second half begins at chapter twelve and includes patriarchal history. The first eleven chapters give us prehistorical history. In other words, they explain to us how common things in the world were created. Chapter one tells us how the world itself was created. According to the text, God created the world out of nothing in six days. Our scripture reading for today tells us the crowning jewel of God's creation was mankind. Our scripture reading for today is Genesis 1:26-28. Let me call this message, *Moments of Self-Doubt*.

**Genesis 1:26-28** <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

<sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

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William Shakespeare once said, "*Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft we might win, by fearing to attempt.*" I know that quote is true because I have experienced it in my life. If you have ever dealt with self-doubt, say, "**Amen!**" You are not alone.

History tells us Abraham Lincoln was shot at Washington D.C.'s Ford Theater on April 14, 1865. Much has been written about the shooting and the political climate of America on that day. Very little has been written about the contents found inside the pockets of our sixteenth president. In the past I told you what they were. Do you remember them? In President Lincoln's pockets were found:

1. A handkerchief, embroidered "A. Lincoln"
2. A country boy's pen knife
3. A spectacles case repaired with string
4. A purse containing a \$5 Confederate note
5. Some old and worn newspaper clippings

One of the clippings was an article written by John Bright. He called Lincoln, "one of the greatest minds of all times." Today, that is common knowledge, but in 1865 it wasn't the case. As a matter of fact, in 1865, millions of people shared quite a contrary opinion. The President's critics were fierce. The country was in turmoil and was ripped to shreds by hatred and a cruel, costly war. Lincoln kept Bright's words because he couldn't believe anyone would say he had a great mind. All these years later, we can confess the truth. Lincoln suffered from depression. He was crippled with self-doubt and was haunted by a poor self-image. Do you know of anyone who is crippled with self-doubt and haunted by a poor self-image? Is there anyone here today who is crippled with self-doubt and haunted with a poor self-image?

I have called this message *Moments of Self-Doubt* for an obvious reason. I know of more people who are filled with self-doubt, than I have met who are filled with self-confidence. Can I state the obvious? Your self-doubts are influential. They influence the way you look at your past and evaluate your present. Your self-doubt will alter your future in a negative way. Every good parent praises their children to build good self-esteem, but life has a way of eroding that solid foundation. Self-doubt has a way of creeping into your life. That is why this morning's scripture lesson is so important to remember.

We are in the first chapter of Genesis. God is creating the world out of absolutely nothing. Do you remember the order in which things were created? First came the night and the darkness. Then came the earth's atmosphere. Then, dry land and oceans. Then came the sun, the moon, and the stars. Then came the fish and the birds. Then the land animals. The last thing God created, before resting, was mankind. Listen to what I am about to say. Mankind was not created last because God grew tired. Mankind was created last because mankind was the crown jewel of God's creation. There was nothing more advanced in God's creation than mankind. In verse 26, we are told we were made in God's very image. Self-doubt comes when we forget we were made in God's image.

Today, my goal is to help you restore your self-confidence. Have you ever stopped to consider it is Satan who puts self-doubt into your life, because he doesn't want you to maximize your full potential? He wants you to live in a shell, afraid to come out. God, on the other hand, wants you to live up to your full potential. He wants you to have the greatest impact on your little corner of the world because you are His ambassador. Never forget it. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ! I don't have an article that calls you one of the greatest minds of our time, but I do have three questions to remind you of your value. So, if you are ready to defeat your self-doubts and become the person God intended from the very beginning, say, "**Amen!**" Once again, our model for holy living is Jesus!

### **Do you know who you are?**

First, Jesus was self-confident because Jesus knew who he was. The Gospel narrative is a little thin when it comes to Jesus' childhood. We are told that Jesus was born in

Bethlehem and lived in Egypt for a short time as an infant. He called Nazareth home. We are told he went to the temple when he was twelve years old and amazed the Elders with his understanding. We know nothing about his teenage years, but we do know he lived near his mother, Mary, until he was thirty. We know very little about Jesus' life, but I am comfortable saying Jesus knew who he was from the very beginning. Jesus knew he was the Son of God. Jesus knew being the Son of God brought unique opportunities, but it also brought unique challenges. Jesus was not arrogant; Jesus was secure. Jesus knew who he was. How many secure people do you know? Do the people in your life consider you a secure person? Do the people in your life consider you an arrogant person? Do the people in your life consider you a fool? Only a fool says they know everything. With that in mind, I have a question.

Why do they put flat roofs on buildings in Ohio? This building is the perfect example. I don't know how many roofs this building has had in fifty years? The answer is, too many. In 2012, we took out a roof loan for \$70,200. We have paid that off in just about six years. That is good, but this is bad: We are looking at taking out another roof loan for \$167,000. I do not believe in secrets at church, so let me tell you how this will work. The Trustees are looking at companies to do the work. The finance committee is looking into the loan. Next, we will have a Charge Conference to approve their work, because the entire church will have to pay off the loan. That leaves me with one question: Why do they put flat roofs on buildings in Ohio? There are just some things I don't know.

The most liberating words in my life are the words, "I don't know!" When I was younger I thought I had to know everything. There was a time when I wanted people to think I knew everything. The truth is, I am ignorant about many things. I know nothing about plumbing, auto repair, foreign policy, sewing, crafts, and the finer details of physics. I can't speak a word of Portuguese. It is extremely difficult to know everything. Then, I learned to use those three little words, "I don't know." Saying, "I don't know" doesn't mean you don't know anything. It means only means you don't know about certain things. I don't know anything about cardiology, but I do know something about God, preaching, the Bible, church growth and group dynamics. I like being sixty-one years old, because I have had sixty-one years to learn about myself, my strengths and my weaknesses. Does anyone here know everything? Can anyone here today say they are one of the greatest minds in our time? When was the last time you uttered these three little words, "I don't know?" Jesus knew who he was. All secure people know who they are. Do you know who you are? And, all of God's people said, "**Amen!**" Do you know whose you are?

### **Do you know whose you are?**

Second, Jesus was self-confident because Jesus knew whose he was. Two weeks ago, we looked at Jesus's baptism. Do you remember the scene? Jesus goes into the wilderness to the shores of the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. With some encouragement, John baptized Jesus. The scene ends by God, himself, speaking. The Almighty said, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*" All

doubt is washed away. Jesus was the Son of God, and you are a child of God. That fact always humbles me.

One of the great preachers of yesteryear was Phillips Brooks. He was extremely confident and optimistic. A close friend asked why he was so confident. He replied, "*It is really quite simple. I am a Christian.*" Once you discover God's love for you, everything changes. Just think about it for a second. God claims you as His child. In the end, God will be victorious and He wants to share the spoils of that victory with you! It really doesn't matter what the world says about you. The only thing that really matters is that God loves you! Jesus was self-confident because he knew whose he was. You should be self-confident because God loves you. If you will never forget you are a child of God, say, "**Amen!**" Do you know who you are? Do you know whose you are? Do you know where you are going?

### **Do you know where you are going?**

Third, Jesus was self-confident because Jesus knew where he was going. You know where Jesus went. You said it this morning in the creed. *He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.* Jesus knew he was going to heaven when it was all over. Never forget it.

The problems of this world are temporary. Heaven is eternal. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt completely defeated? There doesn't seem to be any escape and every day is a challenge. If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, if you know him as your Lord and Savior, you can sink your roots into this part of the Good News. Someday the challenges of this world are going to be over, and you get to go to heaven! The only things that really matter are the things that will matter in one hundred years. The only thing that will matter in one hundred years is your relationship with Jesus. Someday we are going to heaven! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

Late Friday afternoon, Kathryn and I returned from the Southwest. We went to celebrate our thirtieth anniversary and we were part of a touring group. We started in Phoenix and saw the Grand Canyon. Then, we went to Monument Valley and spent two days at Lake Powell. Then, we went to Bryce Canyon National Park and Zion National Park. We left the group in Las Vegas, where we spent two nights. I can't believe I am saying this: We saw Donny and Marie at the Flamingo. (The things we do for love!) There is no other way to say it. It was a great trip.

The raw nature was impressive. It reminded me that God is good. Listen to the next line. God's creation was beautiful, but it couldn't hold a candle to God's greatest creation, YOU! This is the Good News for today: You are a disciple of Jesus Christ. For that reason and for that reason alone, you should be filled with self-confidence. Do you remember the words of William Shakespeare? He once said, "*Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft we might win, by fearing to attempt.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"