God made us in His image on purpose for us to live with purpose.

INTRODUCTION:

–Gen 2:15 (HCSB), The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. I said in my 1st message that who we are is inseparable from what we do. We bear our Creator’s “likeness” to reflect and represent Him by our own creative work. HOM.idea.

I’m using 5 questions to explore this purpose. Here’s the 1st one...

I. “Why did God create us as body-spirit beings in the first place?”

A. This cosmos is our home! God made us from stardust, calling the world of matter “good” and our material bodies “very good.”

B. Heaven is also home—when God “breathed” spiritual life into the 1st Adam, He was creating a race of body-spirit creatures with both animal and angelic natures: we’re a physical and spiritual combo.

C. God made us in His image for a special purpose: to represent Him.

1. Our job was twofold: 1) to populate creation with His “image” and “likeness,” and 2) to “have dominion” or to “rule over” creation.

2. We began with just “the garden”, but the career of Christ as the 2nd Adam shows that this human government was intended to be both cosmic and celestial (over “a new heaven and a new earth”).

TRANS: As participants in both worlds, we’re meant to be mediators between them. As God’s image-bearers, we’re meant to “rule over” those worlds. At the outset, Adam failed in these roles. But God’s Son, the 2nd Adam, redeemed us and reestablished us as God’s representatives, to “work” and “watch over” His creation. But let’s explore this further....

II. “How does the Incarnation define our calling in a fallen world?”

A. Sin disrupted creation, but we are still body-spirit embodiments of God’s image. (Our original incarnation was the basis of Christ’s Incarnation, and His Incarnation restored the impact of ours.)

1. Sin damaged, but didn’t eliminate our incarnational abilities: mind still worked with matter [Gen 4:19-22] lists tent-building, skill with musical instruments, animal husbandry, mining and metallurgy, tool-
Both to lead His image-bearers Back to safety, by rebirth, And to purchase restoration For the heavens and the earth.

We were meant to serve in Eden, Paradise beyond compare. We were fashioned from her soil, Our unfinished job is there. The description of our duties Was not changed the day we fell. While awaiting her renewal, We must work with her as well.

1. On earth, Jesus spoke prophetically for God. (Now it’s our job.)
2. His priestly work on the Cross calls to us: “Take up your cross!”
3. And as King with “all authority in heaven and earth,” He bids us, “Go!”

TRANS: Our destiny isn’t to “get past the pearly gates” but to serve in the throne room. God’s salvation has a remedial purpose: to repair His lost human project. We see no church services or prayer meetings in Gen 1-2. Our work was tending and guarding His work, naming and ruling over life forms, procreating more of ourselves for the gigantic job of governing the universe. Getting saved and growing spiritually aren’t ends in themselves but the conditions necessary for getting us back on the job in our Creator’s workforce. So, now....

III. “What material and spiritual tasks make up Christian ecology?”

A. Gen 2:15 helps answer this—The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.

1. Satan still cultivates the body-spirit schizophrenia he started in the garden by alienating us with shame about how God designed us (Remember God’s question: “Who told you that you were naked?”)
   a. Through this alienation between body and spirit, Satan leads some people into materialism: “Matter is all that matters.” (“Exploit it while you can! Who dies with the most toys wins!”)
   b. Or he leads us into Gnosticism: “Spirit is all there is.” (“To be holy, you must hate the flesh and despise all things physical.”)

2. But “the Maker of heaven and earth” has one will for both realms: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Our fleshly embodiment is strategic for God’s plan to manage creation! In our body-spirit natures, we’re to be His servant-leaders, governing “all things.”)

B. I addressed our call to tend and guard in a poem [DIVINE ECOLOGY]

The creation longs for freedom From a bondage not her own, For the creatures in God’s image Brought the curse that makes her groan.

We, the race meant to attend her And to govern her with care, Have abused and plundered nature, Adding grief to her despair.

But the LORD so loved the cosmos, With His handiwork arrayed, That He entered her Himself To bear the image He had made,

Both to lead His image-bearers Back to safety, by rebirth, And to purchase restoration For the heavens and the earth.

We were meant to serve in Eden, Paradise beyond compare. We were fashioned from her soil, Our unfinished job is there. The description of our duties Was not changed the day we fell. While awaiting her renewal, We must work with her as well.

C. Before exploring the 1st word in Gen 2:15 that describes our job of caring for the garden, I want to look at the 2nd one: “to watch over.”

1. [šāmar means to keep safe, take care of, keep your eyes on, watch diligently, guard, protect, preserve, defend.] It implies some threat in “the garden.”
   a. Physically (in terms of modern ecology), this danger might be a misuse rather than a preservation of the natural environment.
   b. But spiritually, the context shows that an evil being was loose in creation and that a spiritually dangerous tree was in the garden. Creation needed protection from both.

2. What does this “guardianship” terminology imply for us today?
   a. In our physical work on earth, we’re to be preservers, not wasters, careful observers, not unconcerned passers-by; protectors of all God brings under our care, not slackers.
   b. Spiritually, we must protect against spiritual evil where God has placed us, and keep what’s forbidden safe from misuse.

TRANS: God made us in His image on purpose for us to live with purpose. As body-spirit beings, we guard in two realms. On an earthly level, we’re to be better ecologists than those who don’t believe in the Creator. In heavenly terms, we should be skillful spiritual warriors. As God’s image-bearers, we represent Him bodily through our ecological watch-care over creation, and spiritually by using His authority over evil worldly forces. That’s what this 2nd term in caring for the garden is about. We’ll look at the 1st term in the next sermon.