

March 10, 2024

MADE FOR LOVE

John 3:14-21

Occasionally, we are asked questions that we have never been asked before or even considered ourselves. The sort of questions that make us stop and think deeply because they are by no means trivial, and they are not asked to test our knowledge but with a sincere desire to know and learn.

I had one such moment some years ago when the younger of my two girls, who was not yet a teenager, asked me a question - the sort of question that often comes from a child's curious mind. It was a question that, in all my years of theological education, I had never asked, nor had ever been asked, nor have I ever read about it or heard it discussed.

That question was why did God create us? I don't know what prompted the question, but it certainly caught me flat-footed – totally unprepared.

We are here, and we believe that we are part of God's creation, but why did God create humankind?

Have you ever thought about that question? Does anyone have an answer?

As we seek to answer that question, let us get some perspective on things.

Scientists tell us that there are probably between 200 billion to 2 trillion galaxies in the observable Universe. A galaxy is an enormous collection of a few million to trillions of stars and other particles held together by gravity. Our planet, Earth, is in the Milky Way galaxy, and our Sun is just one of an estimated two to four hundred billion stars in the Milky Way.

So, in the larger scheme of things, earth is but a speck in the universe and each one of us is like a molecule.

Against that background, we need to see the deep significance of the question: Why did God create us? And even more importantly, "Why do we matter to God?"

It was a question that engaged the mind of David; in Psalm 8: 3&4, he writes: *“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; ⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?”*

When I was asked the question: Why did God create us? My first inclination was to brush it off by saying, “I don’t know, but maybe we will find out the answer when we see God.

But then I realized that this is not a question to be sidestepped - this is not simply the curiosity of a child; this is a question that is fundamental to our understanding of ourselves and our relationship with God and each other. And frankly, I was astonished that I had never really asked the question myself before.

Why did God create us?

I believe that the best way to begin to answer that question is by looking at how we view the things we have.

We all have things that we have made or purchased. Why do we have those things? The most common reason is that we see them as serving a purpose - whatever that purpose may be. We need them in order to function; they make things easy, they bring us joy, they add beauty to our surroundings and our lives, they remind us of people and places, they make us feel good. Whatever the reason, they serve a purpose.

But interestingly, that is the very reason why we get rid of things as well. When the things we have no longer serve their purpose, when the need for them no longer exists, we get rid of them. So we get rid of the stove and the television that are no longer working. We throw out the chair that we can no longer sit on because it is broken. Likewise, we get rid of that employee who no longer serves our purpose, and sometimes, we even get rid of that friend with whom we no longer see eye to eye.

Back to the question: Why did God create us? Did God create us simply because God has a purpose for us to fulfil? If that is so, what happens if we don’t fulfil that purpose? Does it mean that there is no longer a place for us in the Kingdom of

God? Does it mean that we have outlived our usefulness? That God no longer cares about us? That we can no longer expect blessings from God?

If that is the case, is that not an uncertain and shaky basis on which to build a relationship? Is that not the reason behind the failure of many of our relationships, where persons are valued only for their usefulness?

Why did God create us?

What I am about to say may surprise you, but I want you to think about it.

I don't believe that the reason God created us is because God had some special task for us to perform. I don't believe that God created us because God was looking for people to save the world, to feed the hungry, to look after the sick, provide for the needy, to work for justice etc. It may give us a sense of importance to think so, but I don't believe that's the reason why God created humankind.

Now, before you run off with the wrong idea, let me be clear: I am not saying that we should not concern ourselves with those things; we most certainly need to. They are important, they are necessary, and they are required of us. As the prophet Micah reminds us, "*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*" (Micah 6:8). So yes, such work is required of us, but they are required of us for the simple reason that LOVE demands no less. If we are to love God and one another, then we can do no less.

That leads us to what I think is the answer to the question: Why did God create us? John 3:16 says, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*" May share in a life that is whole, full, and free, as God, in love, intends it to be.

Everything God does flows out of God's love, including calling forth and valuing life in all its forms and expressions.

At this time, as we focus our attention on the temptation, suffering and crucifixion of Jesus, it is important for us to understand that Christ came and suffered and died on the cross not to satisfy the wrath of God but to express the love of God. To preserve that which was birthed in love and for love.

God saves us from perishing because God loves us, and that is why God created us in the first place. We are the objects of God's love.

That is why Paul gives us that grand assurance that in Romans 8: 38-39

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Nothing can separate us from God's love, but that is not to say that we cannot walk away from that love. And that is the greatest human tragedy. Many have walked away from God's love and from the love of others because they have allowed hatred, bigotry, selfishness, and greed to come between them and others.

Why did God create us? I believe the answer is that we are expressions of God's love; we are products of God's love. We are made for love - to receive and give love. And that has implications for how we live our lives and how we treat each other and all of creation.

The very nature and essence of love is that it gives of itself.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son – God gave of himself.

When we love, we are living out the reason for our creation – the reason for us being here.

As John writes: (1 John 4: 7-12) *“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God ... for God is love.... Since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.”*

When we love, we reveal the love of God that is in us. And love is not passive; it is active. Love doesn't stand on the sidelines and look on at the struggles of others; it gets involved, it gives of itself to ease those struggles. Love is not just about doing no harm; it's equally about doing what is right, and good, and just, and kind.

To love is to do what you know is in the best interest of others, even without them asking.

What greater reason can there be for existing than that of knowing that we are expressions of God's love?

What greater calling can there be in life than that of sharing love, especially with those who feel overlooked and unloved?

What greater assurance can we have than that of knowing that we are loved, regardless of who we are and what state we may be in - we are loved?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”

I end with a quote from author Carla Jo Masterson, who writes:

“Value life in whatever house it dwells. For when it comes time that we are all stripped to bare bones before the divine and facing eternity, we will understand that the only law we were meant to follow was to love Nothing more ... nothing less.”

We are made for love.

Thanks be to God.

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