St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Sermon: Still Becoming
Scripture: Genesis 1:26-31, Romans 8:18-30
Rev. Steve Filyk
November 15, 2026
Opening Hymn: For The Beauty Of The Earth (Dix) #434
Choruses: Blessed Be Your Name, Living Hope
Hymn after sermon: Be still my soul #749
Closing Hymn: How Firm a Foundation #685
Children's Song

As we age, we complete various tasks in living…

We pursue education or training that relates to our interests.
We find work and careers where we can excel.
We build relationships, perhaps find a spouse and raise children.
We enjoy different hobbies and diversions.
We find ways to give back to our surrounding community.
We advise and encourage a younger generation.

As we age, we complete various tasks in living
and a certain time in life, we may question
Whether all of our tasks have been completed.

We have built careers in which we've found satisfaction and accomplishment.
We have married, sometimes remarried,
Raised children of our own and others.
We have volunteered countless hours in the church and surrounding community.
We have explored a variety of hobbies
and have travelled to places nearby and faraway.

We may arrive at a point where we feel
That the important work of our lives is well behind us.

But what if we've misunderstood our greatest purpose?
What if all those things we've given all our time and attention
Were never the most important end
for which we were created?

Today's first Scripture reading describes the sixth day of creation,
the day when God created humanity.

We are told that "God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female, he created them." [Genesis 1:27]

In this way, the Bible
describes the incredible dignity of humanity.
We are a reflection of our Creator.
We are designed to be his image-bearers
Even as we tend to the world around us.

In the chapters that follow, we discover
That the first couple abandoned the purposes
For which they were created,
distorted the image they were intended to bear
And damaged the world around them in the process.
No sooner have they left the garden
And we have the first murder.

The rest of the Bible is the story of God's determination
to save us from ourselves
choosing first a people
and then sending his own Son
to lead us back to paradise
through his life, death, and resurrection.

Jesus saves us and the world from self-destruction
And allows us to fulfill our intended destiny.
We are enabled to become God's image bearers
Even as we are remade into the image of Christ.

We hear about this in our second lesson,
Where Paul provides us with a cosmic view
Of God's plans for us and the world around us.

The creation is waiting for its great and final liberation
Even as we are remade into Jesus' likeness
And "conformed to the image of [God's] son" [Romans 8:29]

Did you notice that?
What is it that God is working
in the good of those who love him?
"For those God foreknew he also predestined
to be conformed to the image of his Son." [Romans 8:29]

I like how British pastor and theologian John Stott explains this:
"In the simplest possible terms,
God's eternal purpose for his people
is that we should become like Jesus.

The transformation process begins here and now
in our character and conduct,
through the work of the Holy Spirit,
but will be brought to completion only when Christ comes
and we see him and our bodies become the body of his glory.
[John R.W. Stott "The Message of Romans" 252]

God's greatest purpose for us,
Is not that we graduate from University summa cum laude.
Or that we traverse the Seven Seas,
Or that we are recognized with a community service award.
[Not that these things are without value.]

God's eternal purpose for us
Is that we should become like Jesus.

That in this life we develop those qualities
That we have been talking about this fall,
the Fruit of the Spirit:
"love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control…" [Galatians 5:22-23]

God's eternal purpose for us
Is that we grow to exemplify Jesus' character
And that when the time comes for God
To renew all things, that like Jesus
We might receive resurrected bodies and enter the glory
That has been prepared for us.

Does this sound like Good News?
I think it is, especially for those wandering without purpose.
For those discovering that other tasks in life are completed
and in the fullness of their years
are finding former diversions less enjoyable
and often replaced with aches and pains.

You are not a congregation that complains much.
But many of you are groaning under the weight
Of some of your challenges.

Did you notice that Paul describes a lot of groaning
In his depiction of cosmic salvation?
There is the groaning of the created order.
There is the groaning of us in our broken bodies.
There is even the groaning of the Holy Spirit within us,
Who is seeking for God's will to be done.

But Paul sees this groaning
Not simply as a sign of death and decline,
But part of something larger:
Like in childbirth, the old order is giving way to the new.
And while for some this is extraordinarily difficult,

It is not without meaning and purpose.
God is doing something that reaches beyond
The suffering we presently experience.

Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychiatrist
who survived the Nazi concentration camps,
wrote about the importance of finding meaning
even in the most terrible circumstances.

He recalled a saying of Friedrich Nietzsche:
"He who has a why to live for
can bear with almost any how."
Frankl understood that having a reason to live,
a sense of purpose, could sustain people through extraordinary suffering.

And I think there is something here
that connects with what Paul is telling us.
Our hope is not simply that we might endure
whatever circumstances life brings.
It is that God is doing something in us,
even through circumstances we would never choose.
What does Paul say elsewhere in his letter
To the church at Corinth?
“Therefore we do not lose heart.
Though outwardly we are wasting away,
yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.
For our light and momentary troubles
are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.
So we fix our eyes not on what is seen,
but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary,
but what is unseen is eternal. [2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NIV]

Don’t read this as Paul being unsympathetic to your own suffering.
By the time Paul is writing his letter to the Romans (AD 56–58),
he has already endured tremendous suffering for the gospel:
multiple imprisonments, five occasions of 39 lashes,
three beatings with rods, stoning, three shipwrecks,
constant danger, hunger, thirst, exhaustion,
and relentless opposition [see 2 Corinthians 11:23–28)].

What Paul is inviting us to realise is that
The enormity of the good awaiting us
Will one day put even our greatest difficulties
Into a different perspective.

PAUSE

Could it be that even after life’s notable accomplishments
and amidst the challenges of ageing,
That God’s work in you is still continuing?

I’ve seen God’s work in places you’d least expect…
Among people you might think have done
Everything they were ever intended to accomplish.

In places like care homes and hospitals
among people who need help with day-to-day activities
Like bathing and toileting, I have heard
That God is teaching people new things about love,
That God is opening hearts to Jesus.
I’ve also observed God’s work in families
Happening as one nears the end of their journey.

I’ve witnessed how suffering in a hospital bed can create opportunities
For estranged siblings to reconcile,
For families that have grown distant to draw closer,
And for faith that has waned to be strengthened.

Our culture worships comfort and autonomy,
But what if the most important things God accomplishes in someone's life
Happen when that person has very little to offer?
What if new space is created for God's work
Even when we think we've already done everything important,
And find ourselves surrounded by pain and loss?

Could it be the greatest accomplishments of our lives aren't behind us
And won't be achieved by our industry or effort?
Could it be God isn't finished with us yet?
May it be so. Amen.