Thanks again to Hannah and her team doing a great job with our summer camp.

I'm Pastor Dave, and I'm one of the pastor's here at Cornerstone.

Throughout my life I have I lived all over US and Canada.

Because I've moved often finding my sense of belonging was always high on my list, and low on my understanding.

Back in college, I went to a Christian retreat for a weekend

I remember sitting there and this verse came up paraphrased

"Every tribe, ever tongue, every nation, will come before in worship of Jesus"

A great verse in scripture.

But I remember the next part put me into a bit of a tailspin as the speaker continued

Every tribe coming to worship Jesus.

With Koreans over there, and Canadians over there, and Chinese over there, and on and on.

I remember asking myself,

We can find false starts

I have a diverse heritage, not really finding I belong to one.

Do we have a Japanese, Canadian, Ukrainian, German, American, tribe?

That doesn't even include all the places I've moved and lived, and a host of other things that make me, me.

We all want to belong.

But our sense of belonging can be a troubling thing.

Families themselves in places of conflict, loss, re-marriage, and blended families put kids and parents' in-between places of belonging.

New classrooms, new workplaces, new people.

Every person has struggled with belonging on some level.

Whether belonging to a group at school, a mom's circle, or a church.

It's a universal struggle; it seems like an important place to focus our attention as we move into a new sermon series

ON THE WAY TOGETHER: FINDING & EXTENDING BELONGING IN JESUS' FAMILY

As Cornerstone steps into this next era of ministry, our Four Guiding Priorities are our strategic roadmap to bring restoration to our local neighborhoods, workplaces, and families and we find belonging as one of the core places.

Belonging is not a luxury but a necessity.

Beyond food and shelter, nothing promotes human flourishing like having a people and a place.

Through a lot of my moves, and changes, instead of a people or a place, I would aim at “fitting in”

To look at a situation and become what others need or what we think others need us, to be.

Fitting in, is altering ourselves to better hide.

To change style, fake content, overspending, nodding along, or faking perfection.

Fitting in though, is not belonging.

Where do we start?

I’m an in-between culture kid growing up not Asian enough for Asian people, and not white enough for the white people.

Painfully, people make comments revealing how they belong to a group, and I do not.

Friends move away; Break ups happen.

You win at your old school, and suddenly, you’re the new kid, with no idea who you belong with.

Work is no solution, careers change, economies crash.

Great managers move on; bad managers take over.

We look for our belonging in our skills, abilities, homes, success, work, and any definition that seems to help us fit.

The problem is it seems to work.

At least for a while.

We can make ourselves fit in, but what ends up happening is we lose our selves

But what if belonging is not something we find, but something we are created for.

Dr Kristen Neff a professor in psychotherapy says,

“You can’t feel belonging if you’re trying to hustle for it, worthy of it, or prove yourself for it. It’s something that we carry in our hearts.” - Dr Kristen Neff

Belonging is not starting with something you hustle for, get worthy of, or prove.

Something we all carry, because we are Created for Belonging.

True belonging means being fully known and fully loved by God and one another.

Not fitting in but known.

It is rooted first in God's initiative through creation.

We may be in places where we aren't sure we believe in God and we certainly don't feel like we "belong" to God.

What if though, that desire we all feel for belonging, is not based on whether we believe or don't believe.

But is a longing, placed deep inside each one of us.

A baby is thirsty for milk before they can believe in thirst, or liquids or concepts.

A baby is created with a fundamental need of being fed.

We are created to belong, before we even understand what belonging is or to whom we should belong.

But we have a resistance in us.

"Most of us have two lives. The life we live, and the unlived life within us. Between the two stands Resistance." Steven Pressfield

We know we are to belong, we feel the need to belong, but to know true belonging is a chasm of resistance.

The resistance of the effects sin, death and separation.

Today, we are going to go back to the beginning.

Not only the beginning of Scriptures in Genesis, but the beginning of the Gospel.

Many of us first came to understand the gospel as this: because of our sin, we were separated from God.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are forgiven, reconciled to God, and given the gift of eternal life.

That is wonderful news.

It changed my life, and perhaps it's what first drew many of us to Jesus.

As we continue reading Scripture, we discover that the gospel is even bigger than that.

If forgiveness were the end of the story, we naturally ask, "Why am I still here?"

Yet Jesus doesn't simply forgive us and tell us to wait for heaven.

The gospel doesn't end with being rescued from sin; it continues with being invited into the life and mission of Jesus' Kingdom.

The Cross doesn't only save your soul for heaven; it reclaims your design for earth

The Garden Gospel is where we will explore to see that design.

Starting all the way back from Genesis 1, open your Bible to Genesis

The garden is highly important, this is how we are introduced to who God is, a creative creator.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Gen 1:1 (NIV)

Genesis doesn't simply tell us that God created the world—it reveals what human flourishing was meant to look like before sin entered the story.

God creates a world that is good and then places humanity within it to live in relationship.

From the opening chapters of Genesis, four foundational relationships emerge. They become the framework for understanding what it means to belong.

We will explore the with the word man representing humankind.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man

We are created to belong, broken by sin, and restored by Christ.

We find this by belonging and realizing our core place is with God.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man God

A perfect relationship with our creator.

We know where we stand in creation and with God.

“So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.” Gen 1:27 NIV

This is called the Image of God an “eternal intrinsic value of worth”

Our sense of worth is not artificially created.

Rather it's discovered.

We didn't create our hearts as the source of our life; we did though discover its value to our body.

Each one of us are worthy.

Not because of what you did, or how good you are, or because your parents told you so.

The image of God is created in us, what is discovered is the true value of it to how you look at yourself.

Finding our sense of belonging in the worth of the Image of God.

This lends into our second fundamental. Man and Woman.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man God

Man Woman

Before any brokenness of sin or wrong or miscommunications, there is a moment when God says things are "not good"

"The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Gen 2:18 (NIV)

When you consider the story of creation and the Bible, this is an amazing line.

We are not made to be alone.

Man and woman were created, to be radically different and yet incomplete without each other.

We are called to embrace and find our belonging in each other.

It's not only about marriage, but a fundamental longing of belonging to one another.

Every human relationship and in fact, God made the universe on an atomic level of positive and negative forces embracing each other.

We belong to our families, cultures, and generations.

We belong with friends, community, groups, and all bonds of human relationship.

We are created to belong, over our series, we will be diving deeper into what that means

The next aspect of belonging is work.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man **God**

Man **Woman**

Man **Work**

We find God giving humanity meaningful work.

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Genesis 2:15

Work takes up a significant part of what it means to be human.

For some, work is the job that pays the bills.

For others,
"I'm working on my marriage."
"I'm working on my grades."
"I'm working on getting healthy."

Kids, your work might be cleaning your room, practicing piano, finishing homework, or helping set the table.

It may not earn a paycheck, but it still matters.

Work is anything that requires effort, responsibility, and care.

God created work before sin.

That means work itself isn't the problem.

It was originally designed to be good, meaningful, and life-giving.

We work because God works.

From the opening pages of Genesis,

God creates, orders, names, blesses, and delights in what He has made.

His work is creative, purposeful, and good.

And because we are made in His image, He invites us to share in caring for His world.

Our final sense of belonging comes as humankind connects with Self.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man **God**

Man **Woman**

Man **Work**

Man **Self**

A perfect relationship of knowledge of self and purpose

"Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Genesis 2:25 (NIV)

Mankind is fully themselves, body, mind and soul, and they are secure in their identity as God's children.

This is not self-love, meaning feeling good about yourself.

This is a perfect sense of self. A clear knowledge of purpose, direction, and transparency.

In the Garden, it was good, belonging is full and humanity is fully in union with God.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man **God**

Man  **Woman**

Man **Work**

Man **Self**

Everything was right

Until it was not.

Gen 3:6-7 (NIV) [6] …she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. [7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

What's the big deal with eating some fruit?

The problem isn't the fruit; the problem is acting outside of God's plan.

Instead of finding belonging in God and using these four aspects to sharpen their understanding.

They looked to replace belonging with God by being God.

We break all Four of these relationships by sin.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man **God**

Man  **Woman**

Man **Work**

Man **Self**

Humanity has lost their entire relationship with God by trying to replace God.

By trying to be God, we make these other places of relationships, work, and self our new gods.

And when we realize that they will fail, we hide

Gen 3:7-8 **"**[7] Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. We hide behind our fig leaves, believing that if we hide behind some leaves we don't have to account for God.

Adam and Eve didn't lose their image of God as creators; they transformed a little bit of God's creation into something practical.

But they weren't doing this to build up, they were doing this to hide themselves.

In other words, the image of God became tarnished, and our response is to create things to hide.

If we create enough technology to distract ourselves.

If we get the fastest car, the best phone, if we have those shoes.

If we fit in so much that nobody will see that we are just some scared kids running away.

And when the hiding fails

Adam and Eve immediately blame each other for destroying belonging

The default mode of the human heart moves from relational unity to self-justification.

We no longer look to each other for belonging, we lose and deny one another.

We lost how to relate to one another, and since we can't understand each other's differences, we make the other inferior.

Adam and Eve go to conflict "She said and he said, and they did that"

And none of us have done better

The gap between man and women is now a chasm.

The gap between us and them is well defined.

We fight with our spouses, our kids, our neighbors, we fight with strangers on the internet

We fight with our words and looks and body language.

We demand and scream at our partners to do better.

We mock each other's strengths as weaknesses because it's not like ours.

As we get angrier and fights get bigger.

We fight with swords, and missiles, and entitlement and ignorance.

We fight with sympathy without action; we fight with outrage without justice.

And it all just breaks.

Instead of recognizing how broken we are

We shame each other with same shame we feel ourselves.

And as we turn away from each other, we turn to our work to save us.

We use our work to control our little worlds and at the same time be weighed down by our kingdoms of stuff.

The ground that once flourished now resists.

God tells Adam,

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life." Genesis 3:17

Work didn't disappear.
It became difficult.

Instead of joyful cultivation, there is sweat.
Instead of abundance, there are thorns.
Instead of simply creating, we now struggle.

Kids, have you ever tried to clean your room, and somehow thirty minutes later it looks even messier than when you started?

Adults, we've probably felt that too.
We finish the laundry—and tomorrow there's more.
We answer one email—and five more arrive.
We solve one problem at work—and another takes its place.

We know what it feels like to work hard and still feel like we're falling behind.

That's work corrupted by sin.

The curse isn't that humans work.
The curse is that work now comes with frustration, exhaustion, conflict, disappointment, and we idolize it.

Finally, **self is fractured.**

We look at ourselves and, instead of seeing the image of God, we see shame.

Where once there was transparency, now there is hiding.
Where once there was freedom, now there is comparison.
Where once we knew we were God's good creation, now we wonder if our worth must be earned.

Image becomes something to project.
Success becomes something to prove.

Self becomes selfish.

Our sense of self fractures as we spend our lives trying to repair what we were never meant to fix ourselves.

The questions begin:

"Am I enough?"
"Am I loved?"
"Am I forgiven?"

"Do I belong"

The Garden shows us that sin doesn't just separate us from God.
It fractures every relationship a human can possibly have.

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man		**God**
Man		**Woman**
Man		**Work**
Man		**Self**

Our relationship with God.
Our relationship with one another.
Our relationship with work.
Even our relationship with ourselves.

All broken by sin, death, and suffering.

Genesis isn't introducing us to strangers of some far-off story.

It's introducing us to ourselves.

My friends...

I know you're waiting for me to say, "But God..."

We'll get there.

Jesus was called "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

I've often wondered why.

When I look honestly at what sin has done.

Families divided.
Marriages breaking.
Wars raging.
Children suffering.
Communities turning against one another.
Hearts filled with shame.
People fleeing churches because of sin or political ideologies.

When you begin to see the depth of what sin has broken, we begin to understand something of Christ's sorrow.

And only then do we begin to understand the richness of His salvation.

God didn't leave humanity alone in Genesis 3.

He began His rescue plan.

Even in the middle of judgment, God made a promise.

Genesis 3:15 points forward to One who would come and crush the power of sin, death, and Satan.

The brokenness would not have the final word.

Paul says it this way:

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:4–5 NIV

God takes the initiative.

He always has.

Before we searched for Him,
He came searching for us.

Before Adam and Eve came out from hiding,
God came walking through the garden.

Before we knew that we needed to belong,

He created us to belong.

That is the story of Scripture.

The story of belonging starts by God pursuing people and remaking them

4 Fundamentals of Human Belonging

Man **God**

Man **Woman**

Man  **Work**

Man **Self**

Jesus mends the broken relationships of mankind.

We are reconciled to God.

We begin learning to forgive one another.

Instead of self-justification of what we are owed, it’s love without transaction.

It’s loving each other in a way as if Jesus lived your life.

We learn to live new and while the past still hurts, the past is not the whole story.

Our work is reclaimed with purpose.

Our shame is covered by grace.

None of this happens because we earned it.

It happens because God loves us and created us to be loved by Him.

That is the gospel.

To believe in Jesus to restore all our belonging.

And that is why belonging begins with God.

Not with us.

We don't create belonging.

We receive it.

Now learning to live in that belonging, that takes time.

Families are messy.

Work is messy.

Churches are messy.

There are misunderstandings, disappointments, pain, forgiveness, laughter, tears, and grace.

He entered brokenness and always been entering into the story.

Adam and Eve made themselves fig leaves to hide from God, and God gave them better with

Gen 3:21 "**21** The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."

We make our fig leaves, and our sense of belonging is found in everywhere else except where it should be.

Jesus comes to give us new life, and he clothes us with care we don't deserve and can't hustle for.

Whether we've been walking with Jesus for fifty years...

Or today wondering if we even believe any of this...

We were created to belong.

If you want to receive and ask.

Start with "I give myself to Him, I belong to Jesus, and now I start new."

We belong because we were created by a God who has never stopped pursuing you.

And through Jesus Christ, He is making all things—including you—new.

And one of the ways Jesus continually reminds us that we belong is through this table. (communion)

This isn't just bread and a cup. It's a visible reminder that Christ gave His body and shed His blood so that broken people could be welcomed into the family of God.

I'll invite those who are serving Communion to come forward.

As we gather around the Lord's Table, we're reminded of our hunger and thirst,

Not only for food, but for hope, forgiveness, and life itself.

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Jesus welcomes us—not because we are perfect, but because He is full of grace.

At this time, we're going to celebrate Communion.

On the screen you will find instructions.

- Ushers will guide you to the nearest station row by row.
- Receive the bread and cup at the table, then return to your seat with the elements.
- Eat and drink when ready.
- In-seat service is available for those with limited mobility. Simply raise your hand, and one of our mobile servers will be happy to serve you where you're seated.

Let’s celebrate the Lord’s Supper together. He invites you to come to His Table