

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JANUARY 4 - 8, 2021

SHATTERED MIRRORS

SERMON SERIES

Jan 3 - Feb 14

MONDAY

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

In Sunday's message from Tim Peck, we learned that all humans, without exception, are created in the image of God. We are different from all creation, including animals. Our identity, value of life, and purpose come from being "Created in God's Image." Our lives are to reflect God's nature, care for God's creation, and reflect God's glory to others. God gave us freedom. Unfortunately, we have used that freedom to follow the "Father of Lies," Satan, who says: "You can be like God. You do not need God. You can be self-sufficient." The first humans chose to disobey God. Their relationship with God was broken; theologians call that "The Fall."

As a result of "sin" (disobeying God), God's image is corrupted. It is sometimes difficult to see another person as someone in God's image when that person is destructive or evil. We may become angry or jealous when others seem to have an easy life while we struggle. Read Genesis 4:1-10. Note how quickly jealousy leading to hatred occurred.

It is because of sin (disobedience to God) that death occurs: "*For since death came through a man ... For as in Adam all die ...*" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). It is not just a physical death. There is death of relationships. First, our relationship with God is shattered. Then our relationships with our family, friends, co-workers, spouses, and children are shattered.

Death is something few of us think about until we face it head-on. Death is a mystery caused by fear and denial. Yet, it is something each of us will face at some time or another.

COVID-19 has brought death into the headlines, impacting each one of us through loss of freedom. Our primary relationship with one another is through Zoom or other Social Media. God did not want us to be alone (Genesis 2:18). That is why not only marriage but also Christian Community (Body of Christ) are so important. The Good News is: *“Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:39). Neither COVID-19 nor loss of income, death nor life, angels nor demons, present nor future, nor any powers can separate us from God (Romans 8:38-39).

QUESTIONS

What marred God's image in humanity? What and who enabled the renewal of God's image in us?

PRAYERS

As we begin a new year, let us pray that God would do an amazing work in 2021. Pray that more doors would open for our mission partners to show the love of Christ and that they could develop creative ways to minister to those around them.

TUESDAY

1 Corinthians 15:12-28

The first church where I served as a pastor was on the edge of the University of Minnesota Campus. “Death” was not a subject students wanted to face. Unfortunately, it was too real. Drug overdoses, the war in Vietnam, and crime on the streets brought death head-on with their ideal life that they thought was invincible.

One of the most attended lectures on campus was “Death & Dying.” As much as the students tried to stop the process of death by denying it, believing their youth would protect them, death is one element that humanity cannot control. When a 21-year-old recent bride died of cancer, the whole congregation was in shock. Death had invaded our ideal view of life. We centered on the hope and promise of Scripture, reflecting on the meaning of Jesus’ death, which conquered the power of death through His resurrection from death.

The foundation of our study, prayer, and application was 1 Corinthians 15. We learned that the cause of death was sin. The young lady did not do anything wrong to cause cancer. Drug overdose, crime, and war could be understood as causes of death, but not cancer. That is when we learned that “sin/the fall” (broken relationship with God) brought about death. We live in a “Broken World,” resulting in sickness, plagues, unexplained accidents, and crime.

The Good News, we learned, was that the “shattered image of God” in

humanity was restored through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The "marred image of God" was renewed by Christ, who is the perfect image of God. Death does not have the last say. God does. We may ask: "Is there really a resurrection? Is there really life after death?"

Paul begins with a negative: "*If there is no resurrection ...*" (1 Corinthians 15:13-19). Then he continues with a positive/truth: The word "if" is removed and truth is affirmed: "There is a resurrection!" (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). The shattered image of God is renewed. We do not need to fear death. We know that upon our death we are taken into the presence of our risen Lord and Savior.

For the college students and congregation, death was a reality. Although we could not address the "Why?" we learned we did not need to fear death but live our lives in the promise and hope of Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

Where have you experienced the "Broken World" in which you live?
How does Paul answer the question: "Is there really a resurrection?"

PRAYERS

Pray that hope would occupy all areas of life for our mission partners. Pray that as our ministry partners go to work or serve, they would be filled with hope given to us through Jesus and be expectant towards His kingdom. Pray that they would have opportunities to share that hope with others as well.

WEDNESDAY

Colossians 1:15-23

Over a period of 30 years, the Hubble Telescope Team has photographed roughly 265,000 galaxies out to 13.3 billion light-years (MIT Technology Review), giving a *lofty* view of the Universe that one can't fathom. Light travels at an approximate speed of 186,000 miles per second or 671 million miles per hour. That means light travels nearly 6 trillion miles in a year. When we look at this *lofty* view of the universe, it's mind boggling.

But this is nothing compared to *all* that God has created, and compared to how God restores us to His image through Jesus. We have just commemorated God becoming human; Immanuel (God with us) was born as a baby. That is the Good News of Christmas. Jesus came that we might be *renewed to God's image* and given the privilege of calling God "Father." God, who is omnipresent, hears our prayers wherever we may be.

In Colossians 1, Paul gives a *lofty* view of Jesus Christ. This passage of Scripture is one of the strongest statements about the divine nature of Jesus Christ found in the Bible. It is such a *lofty* view that it is difficult to comprehend. Notice the great things that are written about Jesus.

1. He is "*the image of the invisible God*" (v. 15a). He is the exact likeness of God and is God. The Greek word *ΕΙΚΟΝ* means image, representation, manifestation. If you want to see what God is like, look to Jesus.

2. He is “*the firstborn over all creation*” (v. 15b). He was not part of creation; He was before creation. “*In the beginning was the Logos*” (Word). “*The Logos was with God, and the Logos was God*” (John 1:1). Nothing more is necessary.
3. “*For in Him all things were created*” (v. 16).
4. “*He was before all things. And in Him all things hold together*” (v. 17).

Verse 18 affirms great things about Jesus and the Church. The first line of a well-known hymn—“The Church’s One Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord”—states clearly what this verse means. The Church is His New Creation; Jesus is the source of our corporate lives and the director of our activity. We may have a *lofty* view of the Universe. Let us also have a *lofty* view of the One who created and sustains the Universe!

QUESTIONS

What does it mean to you that God came to Earth in human form?
What *lofty* views of Jesus are stated in these Scriptures?

PRAYERS

Pray for peace for our local and world partners. As uncertainties continue for many of our partners’ ministries, pray that the peace of God would guide them in their decision-making, planning, and ministry efforts, especially as government policies and stability changes.

THURSDAY

Colossians 3:1-10

Reading Instagram, Facebook, etc., may lead to comparison and despair. Seeing friends traveling, receiving promotions, or simply having a good time may lead to jealousy or even anger. We may think, “How does she or he get to do that, and I am not.” The reverse may be true. We post on social media to show others how well we are doing.

This concern was the theme of a podcast on the “Theology of Work Project.” The interviewee said it was difficult not comparing himself with others in his industry. The temptation was to focus on his success or failure to give him meaning and purpose, rather than his core beliefs in Jesus Christ. “I constantly need to re-center on my core beliefs: I am a child of God through Jesus Christ who is my Lord and Savior. My value is in Christ’s faithfulness and not my success,” he said.

Colossians 3:1-4 is a transitional paragraph connecting the first half of the letter—which is primarily theological—to the second half with specific mandates. Verse 5 says: “*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.*” Verse 10 says: “*Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the **image of its Creator.***” Paul explains that true Christian behavior is putting on the new self by accepting Jesus Christ and regarding the old self as being dead.

We change our moral and ethical behavior by letting the “reality of Christ” live within us, shaping us into the person that Christ wants us to become. This is parallel to “*Since you died with Christ*” (2:20), repeated in 3:3 “*For you died.*” Baptism is a vivid picture of how we die and rise again. In baptism by immersion, a person is lowered into the water as being buried in death. The person is lifted from the water like Christ was resurrected from the dead. If this is so, a Christian cannot rise from baptism as the same person as the one lowered in baptism.

A Christian thinks on things above, not on earthly things. She or he will put heavenly priorities into daily practice. “*Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don’t shuffle along, eyes on the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you*” (Colossians 3:1b-2a MSG). Paul is not saying a Christian is to withdraw from work or activities in this world. But he should be focusing on the other-worldliness, contemplating on eternity.

QUESTIONS

What are the core values/beliefs that guide your life? What does Paul tell his readers to do in this passage? Have you done it?

PRAYERS

Pray for a double portion of joy for our different mission partners. While this year has had its share of hardship, the joy of the Lord gives us strength and encouragement to keep ministering. Ask on behalf of our mission partners that they could overflow in this next season with joy.

FRIDAY

Colossians 3:1-17

We began this week reflecting on being “Created in God’s Image.” Unfortunately, because of disobedience to God, that image was marred. “The Fall” impacts all creation. The Good News is that the image of God was renewed through Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is the perfect image of God.

Yesterday, we read one of the two vivid pictures used in Colossians 3:3-4. Baptism reflects Jesus’ death and resurrection. The old self is left behind and the new self is raised, focused no longer on trivial issues.

The second vivid picture is a *journey*. “*When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory*” (v. 4). A life in Christ is a journey and not a static condition. This present life is nevertheless a “hidden life” (v. 3) awaiting its full manifestation when Jesus returns. Christ gives us power to live in this reality now and in the hope of His return.

In the rest of this chapter, Paul explains how we should act on the journey. Do we fully live for Jesus? Is Christ our life or is music, sports, work, politics, etc.? As a Christian, Jesus Christ is the most important thing in life; no, He is life itself!

Paul moves from deep theological reflection to ethical application of our faith. Read Colossians 3:5-11. When we die in Christ (baptism), we are raised to new transformed lives. Our focus changes from ourselves to

God and others. Our ethical principles change. Even as a butterfly exiting from a cocoon is susceptible to the effects of the old nature (falling off a limb if it chooses not to fly), we too are susceptible to this world's pressures and old nature. But our new life gives us the capacity of coping and living life to its fullest while we are still on earth.

One of great effects of Christianity is destroying the barriers that divide humanity. "*There was neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, ... slave nor free*" (v. 11). In Christ all barriers are demolished. Christ accepts all people who come to Him. As Christians we should seek to build bridges rather than walls (vv. 12-14). We are renewed through Christ, who is the perfect image of God. May our lives reflect the reality of Christ within us, shaping us into the person God has renewed.

QUESTIONS

What was the second vivid image in today's Scripture? What are some of the ethical principles that Paul calls us to follow? What enables us to follow those ethical principles?

PRAYERS

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving over our partners for their endurance this last year as well as their faithfulness. Pray with thankful expectation for what God intends to do this upcoming year as our mission partners continue to follow the calling God has on their lives.

Sources:

- Tim Peck's message referenced in Monday's devo can be found at www.glenkirkchurch.org.
- The church referenced on Tuesday is Bethany Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Today it is named Stadium Village Church (ECO).
- The lecture referenced on Tuesday is based on the book, *On Death and Dying*, written by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).
- The MIT Technology Review article can be found at <https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/05/13/65798/this-hubble-photo-captures-more-than-265-000-galaxies-in-one-image/>
- The podcast "Making It Work: God and Your Work" is produced by The Max De Pree Center for Leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary and the Theology of Work Project (12/2/2020).

