

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

DEC 28, 2020 - JAN 1, 2021



MONDAY

Genesis 1:18-26; Psalm 8:3-9

In transitioning from a taxing 2020 into 2021, this week's devo explores the theme "Created in God's Image." Hopefully, you are encouraged to know that God created us to be in loving relationship with Him; in His perfection, however, God possessed no unmet needs that we satisfy. Humankind's creation—the pinnacle of God's work—displays God's charity, goodness and lovingkindness. We are an expression of God's creativity and *agápē*, the boundless and godly love which selflessly asks nothing in return.

As God's earthly representatives fashioned to reflect God's nature, all people bear the image of God—you *will never cast eyes on anyone not created in God's image*. I believe also, though some disagree, that our Savior sacrificed for all—every person is so precious to Jesus that He willingly died also for each one. We are called to love and serve accordingly. Being God's image-bearers includes our privilege to: enjoy intimate, meaningful relationship with God Himself; reflect God's glory; live in loving community with others; and steward creation faithfully.

"On the last day of creation, God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness' (Genesis 1:26). Thus, He finished His work with a 'personal touch.' God formed Adam ... and gave him life by sharing His own breath (Genesis 2:7). Accordingly, humanity is unique among

all God's creations, having both a material body and an immaterial soul/spirit ... [which] sets human beings apart from the animal world, fits [us] for the dominion God intended [us] to have over the earth (Genesis 1:28), and enables [us] to commune with [our] Maker. [Ours] is a likeness (to God) mentally, morally, and socially." (GotQuestions.org)

Consider the following, indicating our awesome favor and mission as God's children: "... in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself ... and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). Can you think of anything more amazing and humbling than the relationship God desires and the corresponding calling He entrusts to us?

Please spend the week reflecting and praying over this. How will you be God's faithful image-bearer in 2021?

QUESTIONS

Why and how are we "*created in God's image*" (Genesis 1:26)? Given this, what are the related responsibilities and privileges of Christ followers?

PRAYERS FOR ECO CHURCH PLANTING

As 2020 comes to an end, church planting in ECO Southern California is blessed by having many opportunities unfolding. Our Presbytery Church Planting Team needs the help of our congregations to keep the momentum going. Pray that our congregations would be excited to partner with us for another year.

TUESDAY

Genesis 1:18-26; Hebrews 2:6-11; Romans 8:20-21

Yesterday we considered good news—our honor and joy in bearing God’s image; today let’s address the flipside of that coin. If you are anything like me, you sometimes feel quite ungodly and see lots of problems all about you. Things, including me, are not as they should be. “We still bear the image of God (James 3:9), but we also bear the scars of sin. Mentally, morally, socially, and physically, we show the effects of sin.” (GotQuestions.org)

“*And God saw that it was good*” (Genesis 1:18, 21). God, as the universe’s Creator and Moral Authority, defines goodness. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve sought this singular privilege of God’s—wanting to “*know good and evil*” (Genesis 3:6)—which prompted humankind’s fall. This is the continuing yearning of rebellious man—wishing “to make the rules”—and the stuff of relativism. It is where and how alienation from God—our broken relationship—commenced and the goodness of God’s creation fell under a curse we brought upon ourselves.

“*Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26). Why the plurality here and with whom is God speaking? The Hebrew word employed for God amidst creation, *Elohim*, is a plural term used in singular context—indicating one God in three Persons. The second Member of the Triune God—the Word of God—came to earth on a

rescue mission as Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:1,14) to sacrificially reverse the curse of humankind’s and creation’s fallenness.

“The good news is that when God redeems an individual, He begins to restore the original image of God ... Through Christ, we are made new creations in the likeness of God (2 Corinthians 5:17).” (GotQuestions.org)

As addressed yesterday, God desires loving, intimate relationship with us. However, such closeness is thwarted by the sinfulness combatting God’s holy perfection—thus the world’s distress, which any sensible person can see. Here’s a great place to engage those apparently living apart from God: our fallen world. Meet them where they are, then walk with them to the foot of the cross—the only Way to restored goodness, where all are welcomed in Christ!

QUESTIONS

What was the crux of Adam’s and Eve’s fall—causing sin, wanting to “*know good and evil*” (Genesis 3:6)? Why did God declare, “*Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26)—why the “Us” and “Our” in this?

PRAYERS FOR ECO CHURCH PLANTING

Pray Luke 10:2 that the harvest will be plentiful, and the Lord will raise up workers and others to support these fledgling churches. Ask that the Lord would send healthy and mature leaders to help establish these churches.

WEDNESDAY

Genesis 1:26-30; Revelation 21:1-7, 22-27

I used to bristle when some would push to celebrate “Earth Day,” sometimes silently musing, “Why? It’s all going to burn up someday anyway.” Another thought would often follow: “Worship the Creator, not the creation!” While there is merit to the second complaint, the first one is misguided. Genesis 1:26-29 illustrates that God calls us to stewardship over the earth and its resources: “... let [humankind] have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth ... [along with] every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit.”

The Bible teaches that God will ultimately remake earth, redeeming it combined with heaven in forming the New Jerusalem per Revelation 21. We are to steward God’s creation until that time. Moreover, Christ Himself defies philosophic views that “all that is material is flawed and evil; only things spiritual are noble and good”—our Lord and Savior was fully man (material and spiritual) while also fully God. Ancient Gnostics stumbled here, dismissing Jesus’ humanity.

Naturalists, particularly those with scientific leanings, often go too far in opposition to Gnostics. Unbelieving naturalists see natural laws and the observable as “all there is,” viewing anything beyond this as “superstitious nonsense.” Ironically, however, the vast majority also

embrace evolution as explaining earth’s varied species populating earth despite such claims being entirely unscientific—not observable, measurable, nor repeatable.

Among God’s gifts to us are earth itself—optimally designed to support human life—and the surrounding universe, also amazingly fine-tuned. God’s image in us enables handling His delegated responsibility to manage the earth while not worshipping it. We’re to care for creation, as it is God-given.

Reject the radical environmentalist and materialistic, hyper-scientific routes, but also don’t abdicate responsibility for stewarding the earth and environment. Remember: just as we are redeemed, so will the earth and universe be redeemed following Jesus’ return. Thankfully, God is not through with me yet; likewise, He is not yet finished with creation itself.

QUESTIONS

Is it wrong for Christians to be environmentalists? What are some aspects of the stewardship that God calls us to? What are some parallels between the New Jerusalem and Jesus Christ Himself?

PRAYERS FOR ECO CHURCH PLANTING

Pray that many people would be led to Jesus and that the Lord would shower new believers reached by these churches with the full measure of God’s grace. Pray that these churches would become places of growth, fellowship, and edification for all who come to them.

THURSDAY

Genesis 1:26; Romans 12:4-13; 1 Peter 5:5-9

“Let Us make man in Our image after Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). One aspect of this Scripture yet unexplored this week is its call to Christian community. God—in Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is Himself a holy, eternal “community” of sorts. As His image-bearers, we are to function in loving community—there is no place for “Lone Ranger Christians.”

Jesus Himself was close with siblings Mary, Martha and Lazarus, staying with them before and during His crucifixion week. The Messiah also called twelve disciples and spent much of His time with them throughout His First Coming mission. Paul had Barnabas, Timothy, Silas, Aquilla, Priscilla, and many others.

Christian community is “*vital for personal growth*. We need other Christians to teach us, encouragement us, pray for and with us ... to hold us accountable and provide us with godly counsel. ... Christian community is important because *it’s vital for our well-being*. ...When we fall on hard times, we have somewhere to turn. ... Christian community ... *is vital for our mission* ... [as] we are called to make disciples.” (Christianity Matters)

There is another practical reason for community. Our enemy, the devil, loves to isolate Christians, to “divide and conquer” so that he can pick off wayward believers. Peter experienced this firsthand, warming himself by the enemy’s fire as Jesus’ false trial unfolded. It was there that Peter

denied Christ three times, fulfilling the Lord’s related prediction (Mark 14:54-72) despite Jesus’ earlier warning, “Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat” (Luke 22:31).

Just as God called for the created animals to “*be fruitful and multiply*” (Genesis 1:22), He reminded Noah of related human responsibility upon the Flood’s conclusion (Genesis 9:1). We call the Lord’s Supper “communion,” emphasizing community. “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2)—Jesus called us to reflect God’s triune nature, loving Him and others. Faithfulness here enables God’s work of building His family, His church.

Are you active in Glenkirk’s community? Do you enjoy a loving accountability relationship with another believer or two? How will you, God’s image-bearer, be a community-builder in 2021?

QUESTIONS

What are some of the most famous “communities” described in the Bible? Why is it important for believers to function in Christian community?

PRAYERS FOR ECO CHURCH PLANTING

Pray that church planting in ECO would become a powerful movement. Pray that the work God is doing in these church plants would go beyond their building walls, into the local community, and around the world.

FRIDAY

1 Corinthians 10:31; Exodus 33:18-34:8; Isaiah 60:1-3

We began the week with the declaration that God created us to be in loving relationship with Him. While true, it's right to add "for His glory." The Westminster Shorter Catechism's first question is rightly answered, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." How do we, God's image-bearers, glorify God throughout our lives?

"All of God's creation is to be absorbed with putting the glory of God on display. When the angels announced the Savior's birth, they were joined by the heavenly host, glorifying God (Luke 2:14). The shepherds responded by glorifying God following their visit to the Christ-child in the manger (Luke 2:20). Even the physical creation incessantly declares His glory (Psalm 19:1-2).

"[There are] six ways you can put the glory of God on display: 1. Confess sin. When we confess sin, we are putting on display His glory by declaring His righteousness. ... 2. Forgive others. Our God is a forgiving God (Psalm 130:3-4; Micah 7:18-19). When we forgive others, we are proclaiming His compassion and eagerness to forgive. ... We are never more God-like than when we forgive. ... 3. Trust God. ... Demonstrating our trust in Him [displays] His nature and character ... reflecting who He is. ...

"4. Produce fruit. Jesus says: '*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit*' (John 15:8). Living a (fruitful) life that adorns God's attributes puts His glory on display. ... 5. Give thanks. ... Expressions of gratitude to

God sets His glory on a pedestal. ... 6. Pray. ... Prayer shines the spotlight on God's attributes of goodness and omnipotence. ... Glorifying God is not a memorized mantra of special words or phrases. Rather, it is a life that reflects the attributes of God ... [thereby reflecting] His glory." (The Master's Seminary)

We began the week also emphasizing that, in His perfection, God needs nothing. He is not insecure, seeking glory for reassurance. God's glory is an outpouring of His character. Revealing Himself and exhibiting His glory is perhaps the most generous, loving thing that God can do. How will you glorify God—realizing your purpose—in 2021?

QUESTIONS

What is "God's glory" and why is it seemingly so important to Him?

What are six ways to put the glory of God on display?

PRAYERS FOR ECO CHURCH PLANTING

Pray that our congregations would raise up the necessary monies to support church planting. Ask that God would do exceedingly abundantly above what we could ask or imagine in His provision for these new churches. Praise Him in advance for His faithfulness.

Sources:

- GotQuestions.org quotes can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/image-of-God.html>
- The Christianity Matters quote is from <https://christianitymatters.com/2013/12/13/4-reasons-christian-community-is-important/#:~:text=4%20Reasons%20Christian%20Community%20is%20Important.%20First%2C%20being,All%20of%20which%20are%20vital%20for%20Christian%20growth>
- The Westminster Shorter Catechism quote is from www.shortercatechism.com/resources/wsc/wsc_001.html#:~:text=Man%27s%20chief%20end%20is%20to%20glorify%20God%2C%20and,thy%20counsel%2C%20and%20afterward%20receive%20me%20to%20glory
- The Master's Seminary extensive quote is from <https://blogtms.edu/gods-glory-on-display>

