

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

AUGUST 2 - 6, 2021



COURSE SERMON SERIES
5/9 - 8/1
CORRECTIONS

THE MINOR PROPHETS

MONDAY

Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 5:8; 1 John 2:2

This week's theme is "loving those different from us." We will survey this scripturally regarding various groups, considering God's heart throughout. Start here: Every human was made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). Everyone you have ever met—or will meet—carries the image of God. Let that soak in. "God ... created us to reflect aspects of His beauty and character. ... As God's image-bearers, we are all equal ... in dignity and worth ... Of all the creatures in God's creation, we are the only ones created in His very image ..." (Trillia Newbell)

Secondly and also fundamental, all are loved by God (John 3:16). The LORD formed and fine-tuned creation to share His glory and love with and through humankind. Given His unconditional love, God wants all to be in right relationship with Him (2 Peter 3:9).

Thirdly, everyone lives in a fallen, broken world (Genesis 3). You can meet anybody in this truth as Jesus' witness. Others may criticize Christianity or have other problems with us, but no one can deny that this world "is not as it should be," that things are amiss. Moreover, each of us is personally fallen, desperately needing the Savior. "There is no one walking the earth who is not in need of the gospel" (Newbell), "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23).

Our tendency to marginalize others evidences our fallenness. “We are more likely to appreciate the individuality of those within our group than those outside of it. We are more likely to empathize with ... and to give [‘insiders’] the benefit of the doubt ... [Conversely,] we are more likely to view outsiders through ... stereotypes ... less likely to think of ... and treat them as individuals ... [while] quicker to take offense at what they do or say [and] more likely to judge their motives.” (David Shumate)

“We love God because He first loved us and gave His Son [as] a ransom for us (1 John 4:9). ... Our lives proclaim what we know about God in love for [others] and for God.” (Newbell)

QUESTIONS

What does “all people were made in God’s image” mean to you? How can you translate this into your everyday dealings with others? How can the world’s fallen condition (Genesis 3) become a conversational “meeting place” with anybody else, regardless of their background or worldview?

BRANDON AND KENDRA KERTSON, CHI ALPHA SDSU CAMPUS

Pray that God would raise up new staff members to join the Chi Alpha team at San Diego State University (SDSU). Most of the staff has moved on to pioneer other Chi Alphas across the USA. We are so proud of these amazing leaders, but the Kertsons also find themselves back where they started seven years ago with one staff member and themselves.

TUESDAY

Leviticus 19:33-34; Luke 10:27-35; Acts 10:24-28, 34-35; Revelation 7:9

Jesus' Luke 10 Good Samaritan parable is so familiar that we might miss how its message astonished His Jewish audience: ancient Hebrews despised the hero's ethnic makeup, which intermingled Jewish and Assyrian lineage. For context, imagine this story with Saddam Hussein substituted for the Good Samaritan to appreciate the story's shock value among ancient Jews: your despised "enemy" may be virtuous and godly.

"[Jesus] had plenty to say about race. The racial tensions ... in the ancient world [paralleled ours] ... Jews hated Gentiles ... [Regardless] Jesus went out of His way to minister to Gentiles. ... Jesus' first recorded [Gentile] encounter ... was with a Roman Centurion (Matthew 8:8; Luke 7:2). ... Jesus' next encounter ... occurs in the Decapolis [area where He journeyed] ... to heal the demoniac(s)... [In] the region of Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21) ... a Syrophoenician woman begs Jesus to [cure her demon-possessed daughter]. (Matthew 15:22). ... Jesus travels from Tyre ... in Mark 7:31 ... [where some] bring a man with a speech impediment for Jesus to heal. ... [Later, in a Gentile] region ... Jesus fed the 4,000 (Mark 8:1-10)." (John Newman)

"It is a sin to be ... discriminatory, because it falls short of God's character and glory. ... The deep human need to bolster and justify ourselves produces some form of 'Othering,' choosing a group of people to define yourself against by despising them as inferior to you."

(Tim Keller) “Racism reflects a universal human tendency to implicitly sort people into various categories depending on how much like us they seem.” (Shumate)

Believers must reject racism not only personally, but also oppose systemic injustice. “The Bible supports the idea that there are such things as unjust social structures. ... [It] denounces judicial [and economic] systems weighted in favor of [some while unfairly disadvantaging others].” (Keller)

“When we allow racism into our hearts and society, we minimize the priceless value of God’s image in others, which limits our ability to honor, love, and serve them the way God calls us to.” (Miles McPherson)
Is your heart open, loving and unprejudiced like the Lord’s?

QUESTIONS

What in the Good Samaritan parable would have been most shocking to Jesus’ Jewish audience? Why did Jesus seemingly go out of His way to connect with, heal and respect faithful Gentiles? What can you do to oppose systemic injustice where it prevails in our society?

BRANDON AND KENDRA KERTSON, CHI ALPHA SDSU CAMPUS

Pray for this year’s student leaders and interns as they navigate a new world of campus ministry after the pandemic. Pray that the Kertsons will be able to equip them to be good ministers of the gospel and bring new students into the Chi Alpha ministry.

WEDNESDAY

Leviticus 19:14; James 1:27; Matthew 25:34-46

The Bible is clear in commanding care for the marginalized, disadvantaged, downcast and outcast. These include not only those of “different” ethnicities, races and/or nationalities along with distinctions we’ll explore tomorrow and Friday, but also the poor and/or homeless, the disabled, orphans and widows, and those previously or currently imprisoned.

“*God is no respecter of persons*” (Acts 10:34 KJV)—He is unmoved by worldly status. “*God ... shows no partiality ... [He] administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving [them] food and clothing*” (Deuteronomy 10:17-18 NKJV).” Some apply this truth to an extreme emphasis upon the “Social Gospel ... a movement among Christians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries ... [stressing that humankind’s] primary issue was evil in society, and only when these evils were conquered could a person concern [himself/herself] with [his/her] own personal sin.” (CompellingTruth.org)

Some criticize “Social Gospel” enthusiasts for overstressing *social* while deemphasizing the *gospel*. Conversely, others label “highly theologically-oriented churches” as lax regarding societal issues. Pastor Jon Courson once quipped, accordingly, “I grew up at a church that viewed the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Bible.”

As always, Jesus is our Example, displaying a balance we should aspire to. He lived and taught the gospel throughout His ministry, while continually emphasizing social justice and care for the disadvantaged. Of Jesus' thirty-seven discrete miracles shared throughout the Gospels, over half healed disabilities and ailments—blindness, leprosy, paralysis, etc.—often among social outcasts.

Glenkirk Church embraces and aims to embody Christ-like balance between biblical truth and loving service in Jesus' name. June's "Race to the Rescue"—supporting IJM in its aim to rescue and restore victims of slavery or human trafficking—is a recent example. Glenkirk's annual winter homeless shelter is another. Glenkirk spawned the Shepherd's Pantry, which cares for those facing extreme, recent hardships and the homeless. Glenkirk people are active also in prison ministry, Glad Tidings India and Three Angels Haiti, to name a few of several avenues. As the post-pandemic "new normal" continues to emerge, how will you lovingly serve others in need, bringing Christ to them?

QUESTIONS

What does "*God is no respecter of persons*" (Acts 10:34) mean?
What is the "Social Gospel" and what do you see as its pros and cons?
Where might you serve the disadvantaged, with and through one of Glenkirk's supported ministries?

BRANDON AND KENDRA KERTSON, CHI ALPHA SDSU CAMPUS

Pray that the Kertsons meet lots of new freshmen! That the Chi Alpha ministry would be a place of life and love and lasting transformation for them. Pray the Kertsons can create a sustainable pace of ministry while still reaching and discipling new students.

THURSDAY

Colossians 4:2-6; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Galatians 6:2

In Christ, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek ... slave nor free, ... no male and female, for you are all one ...*” (Galatians 3:8). While this is helpful in relating to fellow believers, it is typically inapplicable to relationships with non-Christians. Few things have greater potential for discord than an unchurched person’s faith background and how it informs their views of Christianity.

Yet if we are to bring Christ to people, we need to understand how to love them amidst an increasingly anti-Christian culture. Disapproving unbelievers may emphasize the church’s mixed history—e.g., the Crusades, “hypocritical Christians,” denominational splits—and/or have had bad church experiences personally. Some misperceive the Bible, challenging its authenticity and/or claims. Others cannot believe in a God who “claims to be loving and all-powerful while permitting evil, disease and strife in the world” or “sends people to hell.” Many resist accountability, thus rejecting any faith “with rules.” Others were raised in religions with worldviews opposing the Christianity they perceive.

The key to connecting with unbelievers is getting to know them personally, to “notice, respond, care and connect. ... Ask someone this question: ‘How are you?’ ... When the person begins to answer, actually listen.” (Jim Henderson) Henderson advises that we think of non-Christians not as “the lost,” but as someone made in God’s image for whom Jesus died, one simply “missing” presently from

God's family. Be caring and genuinely interested. "Conversations are emotional on-ramps we provide one another to signal our potential interest in moving closer." (Henderson)

Start with prayerful availability to God. Then be available to others, praying for them, even with them if they are willing. Gently understand where they are faith-wise—is their "faith" a loosely-held and unexamined set of opinions, an enduring and defining attribute, or something in-between? Lovingly learn of their issues and challenges—after all, like everybody else, they live in a fallen world. If they are pre-Christian, "God is already at work in them, calling and wooing them to Himself ... Be attentive to what God is already doing in seeking to bring them to His Son." (Debra Hirsch)

QUESTIONS

What are some of the common complaints that unbelievers have regarding Christ followers and Christianity? How is it useful to think of unbelievers as "the missing" instead of "the lost"? What is key in connecting with others from non-Christian faith backgrounds?

BRANDON AND KENDRA KERTSON, CHI ALPHA SDSU CAMPUS

Pray for the Kertson family and children as they try to make room for rest and family time. Their oldest will be entering high school this year and they hope that this year will be a year of healing for them.

FRIDAY

Ezekiel 16:49-50; Proverbs 10:12; John 3:16-17

Among ancient Israel's issues was the view of God's kingdom as "closed," available only to Jews; however, salvation is for any recognizing their need for Jesus, repenting and turning to Him—God's system is "open." The church has erred similarly, vilifying certain groups versus seeing all as God's fallen image-bearers. So it has been regarding "alternative lifestyles"—as the father of a professing Christian, lesbian daughter, I find today's devo highly convicting.

"The [LGBTQ+] population is at about five in one hundred. ... [70% of these] say a relationship with God is 'very important' (Barna). ... 58% say that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus. ... We, as a church, have rejected [LGBTQ+] people who once [professed] belief in Jesus, or even those ... interested in getting to know [Him]. ... They *leave our churches* or dare not walk in them. Not only do they leave our churches, but they are deeply wounded and hurt by Christians ... *in the name of Jesus*. ... [LGBTQ+] teens are 8 times more at risk of suicide ... than their heterosexual counterparts ... Parents [often disown] them." (Kathy Boldock)

"Where we are tempted to put sexual sins at the top of the [hierarchy of sin], Jesus names greed and pride. ... "[LGBTQ+ behavior] becomes depersonalized and [relegated simply] to being less-than-human or morally deficient. ... [Biblically,] acceptance preceded repentance ... the type of redemptive love Jesus models ... [and] expects. ...

“When we see people first and foremost as sinners ... our job becomes primarily about cleaning them up ... But this view tends to limit the gospel to a combination of sin management and behavior modification. ... [Instead, we should focus] on their innate potential to imitate their Creator ... to help them to both see and become like the One they reflect. ...

“God never waits for us to get our lives ‘right’ ... before He extends His love toward us (Romans 5:8). ... All of us hobble into heaven and get there by grace. There is no room for self-righteousness and exclusion based upon disputed interpretations on nonessential issues of the Bible.” (Hirsch)

QUESTIONS

What does “God’s system is ‘open’” mean to you? Which sins did Jesus put at the top of His list as humankind’s “biggest problems”? Why is it unhelpful to see people first and foremost as sinners?

BRANDON AND KENDRA KERTSON, CHI ALPHA SDSU CAMPUS

Pray that all those who come to interact with Chi Alpha would feel the love of God. May all of Chi Alpha SDSU campus events, conversations, and discipleship groups bring glory to God.

Sources

- Trillia Newbell's quotes are from <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/bearers-gods-image/#:~:text=As%20God's%20image-bearers%2C%20we%20are%20all%20equal.%20We,so%20we%20have%20dominion%20over%20the%20rest%20%281%3A28%29>
- David Shumate's quotes can be found at https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2020/07/29/gods-image-bearers/#identifier_1_13971
- John Newman's quote is from www.newhopelafayette.org/jesusandthegentiles/
- Tim Keller's quotes can be found at <https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/the-sin-of-racism/>
- Miles McPherson's quote is from his book, *The Third Option: Hope for a Racially Divided Nation* (New York: Howard Books, 2018).
- CompellingTruth.org's quote can be found at <https://www.compellingtruth.org/social-gospel.html>
- Jon Courson's quote was from his Christian radio teaching program, "Searchlight" and can be found at <https://www.joncourson.com/radio>
- Jim Henderson's quotes are from his book, *Evangelism Without Additives: What If Sharing Your Faith Meant Just Being Yourself* (Colorado Springs, WaterBrook Press, 2005, 2007).
- Debra Hirsch's quotes are from her book, *Redeeming Sex, Naked Conversations about Sexuality and Spirituality* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015).
- Kathy Boldock's quotes are from www.Canyonwalkerconnections.com

