

Introduction: Tribute to Mother

We have recently polished off our three-month series on Trinity, which quite frankly could have gone on for three or perhaps 30 more years. Talking about our Three-In-One-God is trying to describe, in lavish detail, a beautiful sunset or emptying out the ocean with a teaspoon. It's exhilarating, exhausting, and eternal. Our series now shifts from the heavenlies to the earthly, i.e. from the complexity of God to the simplicity of man. Our banner scripture for the next four weeks is Psalm 8:4 where King David asks God a direct question:

What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

What is man? There are many ways to answer this question but because we are the church we are committed to do so from a biblical perspective. So for the next four weeks we will look at Man: The Good. Man: The Bad. Man: the Redeemed and then, lastly, Man: the Transformed.

Imago Dei

Man, the Good, begins when an eternally happy God took his joy public in the creation of the universe. Man was created on the 6th day as the crescendo of God's "out of nothing" creative works (adam: male/female lit. "out of the ground ones" -Prime Rib?). Only after man is formed does God declare his creation, "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Why? Because out of all the "good" creatures God had previously made only the *adam* are said to be made in God's "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demut*) (Genesis 1:26-27). With a few exceptions, these words are used interchangeably but intend that humanity alone is made in the moral, spiritual/eternal, rational, and the relational image of God (not physical image for "God is a Spirit" John

4:24). A few other scriptures reinforce this “image of God” concept. Genesis 5:1 and 9:6 tell us:

*This is the book of the generations of Adam.
When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.*

*Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed for God
made man in his own image.*

While in the NT, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:7 :

*For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of
God; but woman is the glory of man.*

In his famous/infamous talk on the tongue, James adds (3:9) :

*With the tongue we bless the Lord and Father,
and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God.*

This passage infers that when we gossip about others we are actually slandering God, but I digress! However, both Testaments affirm the uniqueness of humans made in the image/likeness of God in a way that is distinct from the rest of creation. Because he was made in the image of God, David could look in the mirror and say (Psalm 139:14):

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

And say about humanity in general (Psalm 8:5):

*God made man a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.*

How Many of You Need to Do Some Mirror Work?

God Esteem

Once we really allow these scriptures to sink in we will enjoy our intrinsic value, significance, and worth which the world can't give and the world can't take away. I like to call this God-esteem which is predicated on the irrevocable fact that we are created in his image and nothing can ever change that (he loves us unconditionally to boot). Self-esteem, on the other hand, is wrought primarily through accomplishment and achievement. To be healthy, emotionally and spiritually, we actually need both "esteems." However, who are we when we can't accomplish or achieve anymore? The good news is that we will always be of infinite worth to God! Jesus gave us a rough estimation of what this worth is when he asked in Mark 8:36:

What does it profit to gain the entire world but lose your soul?

One single solitary soul is of greater worth than the entire world and all that is in it. Now that deserves another WoW! Believe it? Really?

To Bear

Why did God create us in his image and endow us with so much worth? The four mammoth biblical reasons are:

That we might:

- (1) Delight in God by having a personal relationship with him.*
- (2) Rule Over/Steward his physical creation.*
- (3) Procreate and fill the earth with little “imago deis” (the fun part lol).*
- (4) Enjoy the abundance of God.*

These are tremendous motivations to get us out of bed in the morning but another I'd like to add is that God created us to be his image bearers. What is an image bearer? We get a clue in Jesus' provocative answer to religious leaders when they asked him if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not (Mark 12:16-17):

16 Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. 17 Then Jesus said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

Jesus' point here was not to solve the age-old problem of “taxation without representation” but simply to teach that whoever bears your image belongs to you (e.g. children). As we have seen, we bear God's image therefore we belong to him and as such, we reflect, refract, and represent his character and beauty into every relationship and situation in life. As Michael Snyder puts it:

The whole universe reflects God's glory and creative energy. The universe is made to radiate and reveal God's majestic beauty. Human beings find their purpose in praising God, mirroring his glory, enjoying the earth. All creation reflects God's glory—God's image.

The 3rd of the “Ten Commandments” also reminds us that we have been created as God’s image bearers and strongly warns us that we ought not to bear his name in vain (Exodus 20:7):

You shall not bear [carry] the name of the LORD your God in vain...

“To bear the name of the Lord in vain” is much more serious than saying a few cuss words using his name. That behavior is prohibited because we are to revere the name of God at all times. However, to bear something in vain means to make it empty, irrelevant, or worthless. Practically, it means to live our lives as though God does not exist. To live this way is polar opposite of our creation purpose.

Conclusion

What are the seismic ramifications of image bearers not properly imaging forth God’s goodness and glory? Come back next week to find out. Today however, let’s close by celebrating, with Holy Communion, the greatest miracle of all: that our Creator, Jesus Christ, both the Son of God and God the Son, incarnated himself in his own image, to become an *adam*, i.e., one of us. This miracle of all miracles not only magnifies our intrinsic worth as God’s “very good” creation but also provides a way for lost image bearers to be redeemed and reconciled back to his Father, our Father. Let us pray.