



DIGGING DEEPER

Rooted: In His Image...

Wanna do some more study, follow a few rabbit trails and get a more rich understanding of this past week's sermon? Here are some of the things that either got briefly mentioned in the sermon or had to get omitted due to time. Have fun!

What does it mean that humanity is made in the image of God (imago dei)?

Having the “image” or “likeness” of God means, in the simplest terms, that we were made to resemble God. Adam did not resemble God in the sense of God’s having flesh and blood. Scripture says that “God is spirit” (John 4:24) and therefore exists without a body. However, Adam’s body did mirror the life of God insofar as it was created in perfect health and was not subject to death.

The image of God (Latin: imago dei) refers to the immaterial part of humanity. It sets human beings apart from the animal world, fits them for the dominion God intended them to have over the earth (Genesis 1:28), and enables them to commune with their Maker. It is a likeness mentally, morally, and socially.

Mentally, humanity was created as a rational, volitional agent. In other words, human beings can reason and choose. This is a reflection of God’s intellect and freedom. Anytime someone invents a machine, writes a book, paints a landscape, enjoys a symphony, calculates a sum, or names a pet, he or she is proclaiming the fact that we are made in God’s image.

Morally, humanity was created in righteousness and perfect innocence, a reflection of God’s holiness. God saw all He had made (humanity included) and called it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Our conscience or “moral compass” is a vestige of that original state. Whenever someone writes a law, recoils from evil, praises good behavior, or feels guilty, he or she is confirming the fact that we are made in God’s own image.

Socially, humanity was created for fellowship. This reflects God’s triune nature and His love. In Eden, humanity’s primary relationship was with God (Genesis 3:8 implies fellowship with God), and God made the first woman because “it is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Every time someone marries, makes a friend, hugs a child, or attends church, he or she is demonstrating the fact that we are made in the likeness of God.

Part of being made in God’s image is that Adam had the capacity to make free choices. Although they were given a righteous nature, Adam and Eve made an evil choice to rebel against their Creator. In so doing, they marred the image of God within themselves, and passed that damaged likeness on to all of their descendants (Romans 5:12). Today, 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.

The good news is that when God redeems an individual, He begins to restore the original image of God, creating a “new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). That redemption is only available by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior from the sin that separates us from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Through Christ, we are made new creations in the likeness of God (2 Corinthians 5:17). For fun, check out 2 Peter 1:17 to see how Peter interprets this event. For more fun, check out these passages that use the quote “This is my son” Deut. 14:1; 2 Sam 7:14; Isa 42:1; Jer 31:9; Ps 2:7. Enjoy!

Book Suggestions

NONE LIKE HIM

Jen Wilkin

God is self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign, infinite, and incomprehensible.

We're not.

And that's a good thing.

Our limitations are by design. We were never meant to be God. But at the root of every sin is our rebellious desire to possess attributes that belong to God alone. Calling us to embrace our limits as a means of glorifying God's limitless power, Jen Wilkin invites us to celebrate the freedom that comes when we rest in letting God be God.

IN HIS IMAGE

Jen Wilkin

Sometimes we ask What is God's will for my life? when we should really be asking Who should I be? The Bible has an answer: Be like the very image of God.

By exploring ten characteristics of who God is—holy, loving, just, good, merciful, gracious, faithful, patient, truthful, and wise—this book helps us understand who God intends for us to be. Through Christ, the perfect reflection of the image of God, we will discover how God's own attributes impact how we live, leading to freedom and purpose as we follow his will and are conformed to his image.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY

A.W. Tozer

This timeless gift breathes a spirit of devotion for all Christians, from those who are newly arrived to those who are committing themselves anew to Jesus Christ.

The Knowledge of the Holy by beloved evangelical author and Christian mystic A.W. Tozer illuminates God's attributes—from wisdom, to grace, to mercy—and in doing so, attempts to restore the majesty and wonder of God in the hearts and minds of all Christians. Informative as well as inspirational, The Knowledge of the Holy returns the towering Christian concept of God to the center of the religious mind, fostering a renewed appreciation of the magnitude of God's glory.

A modern classic of Christian testimony and devotion, The Knowledge of the Holy shows us how we can rejuvenate our prayer life, meditate more reverently, understand God more deeply, and experience God's presence in our daily lives.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

A.W. Tozer

For A. W. Tozer, no question is more important than, "What is God like?" The desire to know God consumed his entire life and ministry.

That's why those who read him come to know God more intimately.

Originally preached as sermons at Southside Alliance Church in Chicago, this first volume of The Attributes of God examines ten attributes of God. It also includes a study guide for an in-depth look at each attribute:

Infinite

Good

Merciful

Omnipresent

Holy

Immense

Just

Gracious

Immanent

Perfect

Steeped in Scripture and filled with the Spirit, Tozer preached with striking clarity and power. The sense of his sermons comes through on every page, bringing the Word of God to bear upon you.

Image of God Overcomes Racism

This year has been a challenging year, so many tragedies on too many fronts. From our living rooms, we witnessed brutality and murder of black people followed by protests and counter protests. Rage and fear were on so many faces.

COVID is a reality for most of us, and a conspiracy for some. Like many other disasters, we have left the poor, alien, and the oppressed to fend for themselves. And some have died. Yet we proclaim and maintain positions and counter positions. As we do, may we have ears to hear God's word. May we love God and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Race Relations work is not a standalone work or an add-on to the gospel message. It is central to the calling found in Luke 4:18-19 and Mathew 28:18-20. Anti-racism honors people as Image Bearers. As beings created in the Image of God all people have dignity and must be treated with dignity. Antiracism is giving sight to the reality of being set free from a blinding racism, a worldly identity.

Racism forces believers and unbelievers into a corrupted identity of hostility toward one another. Racism assumes a hierarchy of peoples destined to harming of Black peoples, First Peoples and the strangers. In contrast, the mission in Mathew 28:18-20 is to make disciples of all nations. It is a call to repentance from a worldly identity in exchange for the rich gift of freedom to love God and our neighbor as ourselves.

Fear should not keep us from addressing racism. The Apostle Paul warns Titus to avoid foolish controversies about the law because they are unprofitable and useless[1]. The aim is a sound doctrine that leads to what is good[2]. In leading, he instructs Titus to rebuke sharply Jewish myths and cultural norms[3] otherwise they produce actions that deny Christ.

Racism is our modern day myth. It is a sin to refute. It has divided the church. Yes, supporting moral stances on abortion, sexuality, and same sex marriage unites our local church. But ignoring the prophetic texts on the orphans, widows, and the strangers divides God's church. The question of faithfulness to scripture requires discernment. Knowledge of the truth leading to godliness[4] is difficult, especially in political decisions. So, what will inform us most? Will it be scripture or the fear that drives racism? God lead us to godliness in doing what is good.

Scripture provides great response to the evil sin of racism. With the imago Dei, God gives the humans a measure of sovereignty over all the earth. God makes man a rule over His creation[5]. "God notes not only their common humanity, but also their specific histories, their particular psychological, social, and embodied selves with their specific needs[6]."

What might this reality look like in contrast to nationalistic narratives? A history grounded in a belief in the imago Dei will not neglect the elite and privileged members of society, but it will also demand a fundamental reordering of the stories we tell about the human actors we meet in the past[7]. Pursuing what is good for America cannot supersede our heavenly call to love God and our neighbor here or abroad.

God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1).

Sometimes what we learn early in life becomes so familiar that it becomes routine. As a Race Relations staff member, I would like to encourage all of us to revisit the meaning of being created in the image of God.

What does that mean for me in how I see myself in relationship to my neighbor?

What does that mean in my action or inaction when dignity is not seen in our neighbor and is not treated with the dignity God gave them?

What does it mean for the church to teach congregants to see their neighbor through the lens of imago Dei or Image of God? Christ approached a hated people by have a conversation with the Samaritan woman. He also gave the example using this hated group in the parable of the good Samaritan. What people are our modern day Samaritans? Think of a specific person from that Group and ask God to help you do what Christ did.

As a church seek ways to engage with congregations in your neighborhood or city not to teach or to help but just be in fellowship.

IF you are more of a tech nerd consider researching statistics on social issues that show a trend that is leading your community away from recognizing the dignity in everyone and creating laws or policies that are harmful to people. As you find those, raise awareness about the injustice and find biblical grounds for a response.

In this post, I have focused on leading us back to seeing everyone as Image Bearers. I hope that no one will take offense at my starting ground for addressing racism. While we all have this in our minds, I wonder if it has penetrated our hearts. I also recognize that many of us are working out of a belief that we live see everyone and treat everyone as God's image bearers. Yet part of our faith is dealing with the Fall. So in my next post I will focus on the connection with racism and the fall of humankind.

[1] Titus 3:9

[2] Titus 3:1

[3] Titus 1:10-14

[4] Titus 1:1

[5] Imago Dei, by Mark Ross Tabletalk Magazine; April 1, 2013

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/imago-dei/>

[6] Christian Historians and the "Imago Dei" by John Fea; July 8, 2020

<https://thewayofimprovement.com/2020/07/08/christian-historians-and-the-imago-dei/>

[7] Christian Historians and the "Imago Dei"