

The Image of God in Our Neighbour

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[0 : 0 0] All right. During the English movement to abolish the slave trade in the late 18th century, there was one work of art that was unusually effective in how it aroused sympathy for the freedom of African slaves.

And this work of art was commissioned by the potter Josiah Wedgwood, who mass-produced a series of medallions just like this one, these medallions depicting an African slave, and he is pleading, Am I not a man and a brother?

Am I not a man and a brother? And then in 1968, in America, during the Memphis sanitation strike, you have African-American workers taking up that cry again, rallying behind the slogan, I am a man.

I am a man. Now, what made these doctrines particularly effective? And particularly effective in that cultural climate is that they are appealing to a doctrine, appealing actually to a theological statement, something that was assumed by the cultures of their day.

And that doctrine is the one that we learned about last week. This doctrine that in Latin we call the imago dei, the imago dei. That means the image of God, the image of God.

[1 : 2 3] And last week we saw that in Genesis 1, verse 27, and we read there, God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them. God created man in his own image. And we learned that to be the image of God, whether you're a man, woman, or child, to be the image of God means that you reflect his character, you represent his authority.

So the first man and the first woman that God created, they were accurate representations of who God is. They accurately represented who God is.

And the problem that we encountered last week, a problem that shows up three chapters into the Bible, is that this man and the woman and the rest of the human race that followed in their footsteps, and that includes you and me, we've turned away from God.

We've turned away from representing who God is. The image of God has been smeared and distorted by our behavior, our words, our thoughts, our actions.

[2 : 3 4] We tell a lie about who God is. That's his image bearers. That's the stranglehold that sin has on our lives. And that turning away from God, that misrepresenting God, that's what led to African slaves.

That's what led to black sanitation workers suffering at the hands of their brothers, their fellow men, who treated them as though they did not bear the image of God. They were treated as though they did not bear the image of God.

That may be what other human beings said and thought about them, but that is not what God says about them. That's not what his word, the Bible, has said about anyone and everyone who is our neighbor.

Here's what God's word does say. It shows us that the image of God, the image of God was not lost when human beings rebelled against him.

In Genesis chapter five, this is after human beings have turned away from God, after they have rebelled against him. In Genesis chapter five, we pick up the story of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman.

[3 : 41] And here's what we find. As the torches passed from Adam to the next generation, this is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God.

Male and female, he created them and he blessed them and named them man when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness after his image and named him Seth.

So now Adam too is producing a man in his own likeness after his image. And then many generations later, God speaks to Seth's descendant, Noah. And here's what he says to Noah in Genesis chapter nine.

You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. And for your life blood, I will require a reckoning.

From every beast, I will require it. And from man, from his fellow man, I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

[4 : 48] Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in his own image. And you, be fruitful and multiply, increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it.

So let's make three observations here from these verses. First, first of all, God is telling Noah that even now, every man, every woman is made in the image of God.

And you can see that in verse six. Every man, every woman is made in the image of God. God's desire is that the whole earth be filled with his image, his glory on display throughout the whole world so that the whole world can see it.

And so in verse seven, he reiterates that commandment that he gave in Genesis chapter one, be fruitful and multiply. We still bear his image. Our mission to reflect the character and authority of God has not changed.

Our mission to see God's image bearers throughout the world. Our mission to see people following God, faithfully portraying who he is in every corner of the world. So that's the first observation.

[6 : 08] Second, God places, and this is almost really an aside, we're not going to spend as much time on this, but this is, I think this is really important here. God places unusual value on the human body. He places unusual value on the human body.

Verses four and five, he emphasizes the value of the flesh, the value of the lifeblood of man. And that was, that's unique in a number of cultures throughout history because many cultures have devalued the human body.

The ancient Greeks, they were notorious for this. They had a saying, and in classical Greek, the saying was, soma sema. It's a catchy word, catchy phrase that just rolls off the tongue, soma sema, and what that phrase means is, the body is a tomb.

The body is a tomb. In other words, death is a wonderful release because now your soul, your immortal soul is freed from that body that held it down. It's shedding its wrapper.

It's time to get rid of that body. When you believe that your body is not really part of who you are, when you believe that the real you is unrelated, disconnected from your body, it's got nothing to do with it, then you tend to treat the body the way that the Greeks did, the way that, frankly, our own culture does.

[7 : 22] We're a culture that does not value the body, which is kind of funny because we talk incessantly about our bodies, work on our bodies all the time, but the way we treat our bodies is as though they are a fashion accessory.

We work hard to re-sculpt and re-fashion them according to our own expectations, according to our own passions, our own feelings. We lose weight. We tone and shape and paint and style our bodies to win the approval of others or of our own selves.

Our bodies are not just something to be kept healthy. They're something to be made to look perfect. We cut into our bodies with knives to alter their appearance through plastic surgery.

In our culture, it's become common even now that if our own self-perception, our own sense of who we are doesn't match our body's sexual structure as male and female, if your body is male but you don't feel male, then you take the genital organs, you carve them up and mutilate them until they appear the way you wish.

No doubt. Just a bit of future casting, looking down the road, there are advances in genetic engineering, genetic editing technologies.

[8 : 37] We will have more and more opportunities to devalue, to dishonor our bodies, to reshape them as we see fit, to treat our flesh and our lifeblood as though they are just raw materials that can be torn apart and renovated for our own purposes.

That is not the way that God values the human body. God treats the human body as precious. And his attitude toward the body is revealed in verse 5 when he says that if a human being is killed, God himself, verse 5, will require a reckoning for the life of man.

He's saying that God himself will ensure that someone who kills another human being is punished most severely. Why? Because in verse 6, God made man in his own image.

what he's saying is this, the act of murder. It is not merely an act of violence against another human being. The act of murder is an act of violence against God himself.

It is an attempt to assassinate the Most High God because you're attacking his image bearer. If you go after the governor of general, you're going after the queen.

[9 : 58] It fills God with absolute fury when his image bearers are dehumanized, when his image bearers are killed. He will not let any murder go unpunished.

An assault on the image of God is an assault on God himself. In the New Testament, in James chapter 3, we are told that killing the body, that is not the only murderous act that we can commit against the image of God.

There are other murderous acts that we can do, acts of anger. In James writes, in James chapter 3, no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil full of deadly poison.

What does poison do? It kills. With it, we bless our Lord and Father and with it, we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. Curse people who are made in the likeness of God.

James is opposing, is exposing that hypocrisy of this deeply religious person who is blessing God and saying wonderful words of praise about God with our tongues and then turning around and cursing his likeness.

[11 : 01] Cursing his image, his fellow image bearers. When we curse the image bearer, we are uttering curses and threatening damnation against God himself. This is the value that God places on each and every human being.

Now, if God looks at us in that light, what if you and I were to look at one another in this same light? What if we were to look at every single human being in that same light?

I mean, take a look at the person seated next to you. You are looking at the image and likeness of God himself. You're looking at the image and likeness of God himself.

I don't care how they smell, right? You're looking at someone that God identifies with. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that remarkable?

You're looking at someone whom God values more than all the gold and silver in the world. So that is the first thing that we learn from God's word. All human beings are created in the image of God and counted by God as valuable.

[12 : 08] All human beings are created in the image of God and counted by God as valuable. That's true for every single one of you. It doesn't matter what you feel.

what matters is the words God has spoken over you. If you still do not believe this, consider the words that Jesus Christ himself spoke in Luke chapter 12.

He writes, Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. God doesn't forget a single sparrow.

Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows. All human beings are created in the image of God and counted by God as valuable.

Now that statement, at first it sounds really good, but what I'm going to say next is this. That is quite possibly the single most politically charged, single most politically controversial statement you can make in the Western world.

[13 : 13] All human beings are created in the image of God. All human beings are counted by God as valuable. This doctrine, the image of God, is deeply under attack in our culture.

It's under attack from every direction. It's under attack from the leftist progressive. It's also under attack from the conservative populist. This is probably, this doctrine is probably at one of the low points in terms of its popularity in world history.

And before I venture further, I'm going to say that we are going to get into politics today as we are, you have to when you're talking about the image of God because it affects the way that we think about other people.

I'm not going to advocate for any particular political action this morning. What I'm going to, and the reason I'm not going to do that is because it takes a lot of careful wisdom. We don't have a lot of time to develop that this morning.

It takes a lot of wisdom. It takes a lot of insight and care. I don't envy politicians their job. Our focus here this morning is on asking this, what kind of attitude should we have toward our fellow human beings?

[14 : 22] What kind of attitude should we have toward our fellow human beings? And let's take a look at what happens when we deny the image of God and when we ignore the image of God.

When we deny the image of God and when we ignore the image of God. And we're going to take a look at what happens when we do that on both a political level and on a personal level. On a political level and on a personal level.

So first, we abuse the image of God when we deny the full value of every human being. We abuse the image of God when we deny the full value of every human being.

You'd think that after the atrocities of the African slave trade, after the Holocaust, very stunning examples, horrifying examples of what happens when you say every human being is not fully valuable.

You'd think that we would have learned this message. We have not. As long as human beings want to deny the image of God, we will keep forgetting this lesson. In our culture, we speak and act as if there are certain human beings who are not valuable or who are perhaps less valuable than others.

[15 : 34] I'll give an example, the case of the country of Iceland. Last August, an article appeared in CBS News and it was titled, What kind of society do you want to live in inside the country where Down syndrome is disappearing?

And one geneticist explained in the story, my understanding is that we have basically eradicated, almost, Down syndrome from our society, that there is hardly ever a child with Down syndrome in Iceland anymore.

That sounds like a wonderful advance. That sounds like, man, that's great news, a wonderful advance in medicine. But the devil's in the details because it's clear what's happening is that in most cases when a woman is pregnant, she opts to have her child tested for Down syndrome in four out of five cases.

Now that prenatal screening test, the article says, is only 85% accurate. But if the child tests positive, most women choose abortion. And one pregnancy counselor explains, we don't look at abortion as a murder.

We look at it as a thing that we ended. We ended a possible life that may have had a huge complication, preventing suffering for the child and for the family.

[16 : 45] And I think that is more right than seeing it as a murder. That's so black and white. Life isn't black and white. Life is gray. Now, apart from that whole preventing suffering for the child and for the family, and any parents and families with Down syndrome would be quite upset that you're talking about their life in such a negative manner.

But notice the dehumanizing language. Notice the dehumanizing language. A thing that we ended. A possible life. A huge complication. Life is gray.

That's not how you speak if you believe in the image of God. That's not how you speak if you think every human being is in the image of God and is fully valuable.

That's how you speak about a goldfish. Here's how God thinks about his image bearers before they were born, before you were born, whether or not they have Down syndrome.

David writes in Psalm 139, you, he's talking to God, he writes, you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb.

[17 : 54] I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them. Isn't that beautiful, the way that God looks at every human being?

God values all his image bearers, whether they are born or unborn, whether they are healthy or disabled. We as human beings, we don't share his fatherly compassion. Here in our own countries, there are no federal laws governing abortion whatsoever.

Canada is the only Western democracy in which that's true. There are four countries in the world that have no federal abortion laws. Canada, China, Vietnam, North Korea.

That's the kind of company we keep. Those governments. We have the lifeblood of man on our hands as we deny the image of God. This denial of the image of God, it extends to end-of-life care.

[19 : 08] We have physician-assisted suicide becoming legal, and it's understandable why. We don't want people to suffer. But we act as though killing a human being is anything less than awful and terrible violence against the image of God.

In European countries, there's a clear, slippery slope. Assisted suicide is extended not only to those who are terminally ill, but also to those who suffer from despair or depression and see no hope.

Those who are elderly or terminally ill, they feel pressure to end their lives, to relieve their family from the load of caring for them. Death is seen increasingly as an escape. Suicide is honored and celebrated instead of mourned.

But we abuse the image of God when we deny the full value of every human being. Now, denying the full value of every human being, that is not the only way that we abuse the image of God.

Here's the second way. We abuse the image of God when we ignore the full value of every human being. We abuse the image of God when we ignore the full value of every human being.

[20 : 15] When we say that, oh yes, every human being is fully valuable, created in the image of God, but then we act like it's not true. we act like it's not true. We don't treat them that way. We conveniently forget when it becomes inconvenient or when there's something else that we want to protect.

So let me show you what I mean. I want to show you what I mean through three encounters that Jesus Christ had with other people. Now, in each of these three cases, and this is just a representative sample, there are so many examples of Jesus encountering people like this from the Gospels.

But in each of these cases, we're going to look at those around Jesus, the people around, whether it's the disciples or the crowds or the religious leaders, they look and they see someone who is worthless, someone who is needy, someone who is disgusting.

And Jesus looks and he sees people differently. First, Jesus sees a crowd of people differently and it's in Mark chapter six.

Mark chapter six, Jesus looks at a crowd of people, sees them differently. And so Jesus and his disciples, the background to this, as you read it, you learn that they're exhausted. They've been just doing a lot of frenetic traveling and work.

[21 : 36] They are in bad need of a little R&R.; It's time to take a break. And so Jesus gets his disciples in a boat. They set across the Sea of Galilee to the other side to a desolate place.

So they're going on a little bit of a wilderness retreat. Unfortunately, the crowd beats them there. The crowd sees what's happening and they walk around the lake. They get there first. And now, as the boat with Jesus and the disciples approach the shore, they see that there's a huge crowd of people waiting for them.

Now, if that were me, my heart would sink like lead. You know, there's a whole huge crowd of people in my retreat center. I'd be like, well, maybe I'm just going to jump into the water for you.

Let's forget about this. But that is not what Jesus felt. My initial response would not be the same as Jesus, which shows that I've got a lot of work to do. It shows God the Holy Spirit has a lot of work to do in me to make me more like Christ.

Verse 34, Mark chapter six, verse 34. Here's what Mark says Jesus, how Jesus responded. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd.

[22 : 40] And he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. And then later on, you can read what happens in verses 35 through 36.

At the end of the day, you read this. His disciples came to him and said, send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. His disciples are like, all right, all right, good enough, send them away.

Get them, let them go find something to eat. Jesus will not send them away. As we saw in verse 34, Jesus saw them.

Notice that. Jesus, the very first verb, the very first thing Jesus does is he sees them. And because he saw them as they really were, he had compassion on them.

Like a good shepherd, Jesus has them sit down in groups on the green grass and he feeds them himself. Jesus' disciples saw a problem that needed to be sent off, sent away.

[23 : 54] You can almost hear the words of Adam's son Cain coming from their mouths. Am I my brother's keeper? Am I my brother's keeper? But Jesus, he is the good shepherd who cares for his sheep.

Jesus sees people whom others look at. Other people look at them and think, oh, so needy, so needy. And Jesus has compassion on his image bearers. Let's look at a second encounter in Mark chapter 10.

Now, in our day, we have a common saying that politicians are shaking hands and kissing babies. Or sometimes I hear it the other way around.

They're kissing hands and shaking babies. People want celebrities. They love that, right? People want celebrities to coo and to fawn over their children. It's great for the photo op. The celebrities love it too.

And as it turns out, that's not a new thing. That's been a theme throughout all of human history because that happens here too. People are bringing their children to Jesus in Mark chapter 10.

[24 : 56] And his disciples, in verse 13, they get irritated. They are irritated by this. Jesus is an important teacher. Jesus is a king. His time is limited.

He doesn't have time for your snot-nosed little brat. Mark writes in verse 13. They were bringing children to him that he might touch them.

And the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, let the children come to me.

Do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Notice, once again, the disciples are irritated by other people.

[25 : 56] Other people, these people are a problem. They are a threat to Jesus' time and energy. In verse 14, Jesus is the one who sees.

He sees the children and he welcomes them. Jesus sees those people whom others consider worthless.

And Jesus has compassion on his image bearers. Mark chapter 2 is a third encounter. Now this encounter features one of the least popular kind of people who ever lived.

In Mark chapter 2, one of the world's least popular occupations, the tax collector. How many of you love tax collectors? Raise your hand. Nobody.

But tax collectors in Israel, they were especially hated. And you have to understand the historical reason for why they were hated. It wasn't just because they took your money. Tax collectors were collaborators who worked for the hated Roman authorities.

[27 : 02] Tax collectors, not only did they collect taxes for the oppressive Roman government, they also collect a little extra for themselves. That's how they made their money. They cheated and they extorted their countrymen.

They would take extra money for themselves from Jewish families who were just scraping by. These were bad people. Everyone hated the tax collectors. They were like a legalized mafia backed by the power of Rome.

One of Jesus' own disciples, by the way, a man named Simon, was called Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were basically terrorists. Simon, in his former life, would have been happy to target and kill one of these tax collectors, one of these traitors.

And the Galilean town of Capernaum, Jesus and Simon and the rest of his disciples, they encounter one of the local tax collectors named Levi. Levi, his other name is Matthew, and he ends up writing the Gospel of Matthew.

Mark writes about how Jesus approached Levi in verse 14. Mark chapter 2, verse 14. Notice that once again, Jesus saw Levi.

[28 : 17] Notice that once again, Jesus saw Levi.

He looks at him. He sees him as he is. And then he simply says to Levi, follow me. He doesn't shake his fist at Levi.

He doesn't rant about him. Jesus welcomes the tax collector to join his band of disciples. And then Mark continues the story in verse 15. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?

And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

[29 : 31] So the religious leaders, the fine upstanding citizens of the community who enjoyed popular support in the community, they are appalled. This fellow rabbi, he would sit down, he would share a meal, demonstrating that he is on good terms with the low-life scum, like these tax collectors.

And guess what? Guess who are the only friends of tax collectors? All the dirty, low-life people, the criminals, the prostitutes, everybody else, the scum of the earth, the margins of society. Jesus sees those people whom others consider disgusting, and he has compassion on his image bearers.

So let's summarize. Here's how you and I tend to look at our neighbor. Who are we to identify with? We're meant to identify with the disciples and the Pharisees. Well, we do the same thing.

We glance quickly at our neighbor. We see only someone who is needy or worthless or disgusting. So we respond to our neighbor in irritation attended with skepticism.

We respond to our neighbor in irritation attended with skepticism. We abuse the image of God when we ignore the full value of every human being.

[30 : 50] Now here's how Jesus looks at his neighbor. Jesus, as we have seen, this happens over and over, dozens of times when he encounters people. The very first thing it says is, Jesus saw or Jesus looked.

And he doesn't do anything until he sees and looks first. He takes time to see them as they really are. To look at them and see the image of God. To see what the needs are.

To see what kind of person they are. And Jesus responds to his neighbor in compassion tempered with wisdom. I say tempered with wisdom because Jesus is not a bleeding heart without a brain.

Jesus, as we saw the feeding of the 5,000 in Mark chapter six, where Jesus feeds this entire crowd, he doesn't just keep doing that forever. When they want to turn him into a bread factory, he stops.

Why? Because he's got something better for them. He's got the bread of life himself. Jesus wants what really is best for them. That's how he loves them. And so he has compassion tempered with wisdom.

[32 : 01] And that's so different from the way we respond with irritation attended with skepticism. Jesus looks and Jesus has compassion.

The author, Paul Miller, points out that over and over again, Jesus looks, he sees before speaking and acting. That is how he treats everyone. From the smallest child, all the way to the rich young ruler in Mark chapter 10.

Someone that you and I might look at and be sort of critical of as we sort of see this guy. In Jesus, in Mark chapter 10, we read, Jesus looking at him, loved him.

Jesus looking at him, loved him. And so he responded to him, honestly, with hard words, but words that were exactly what the rich young ruler needed to hear.

Words of wisdom. Because he loved him. Let's talk about this first on a political level. Then let's talk about this on a personal level.

[32 : 59] On a political level. This means that we as Christians, we ought to have a gut response. We ought to have a gut response when we see, whether on the news or in our town or in our city, when we see others, when we see those whom others see as needy or worthless or disgusting.

Other people see a needy or worthless or disgusting person and we must have a different gut response. We have to have a Christ-like gut response of compassion. Compassion.

That has to be the first impulse because that was Jesus' first impulse. There are certain political issues where I notice professing Christians and their gut response, their gut response seems to be irritation and skepticism.

When I listen to them talk about the poor, when I listen to them talk about the homeless, when I listen to them talk about immigrants, when I listen to them talk about refugees, I notice how eager conservative Christians are to look for reasons to dismiss them, to eagerly listen to those who give reasons to dismiss them, to blame them, to view them as threats to our way of life, as threats to national security.

We respond at a gut level the way the disciples and the Pharisees did. We see the needs and we want to send them away to get their needs met somewhere else. Anywhere else.

[34 : 31] We don't really care where, just somewhere else. But a Christian response is to look at them, see the image of God, see the image of God, listen carefully to their stories, feel compassion for them, and then let wisdom guide us in responding in a way that helps them without burning out our own people and our own resources.

How can I help without burning out our own people and our own resources? Our own Lord and Savior was a refugee and immigrant in the land of Egypt. In a similar manner, we also ought to look for and listen carefully to those in our culture who have been put down, who have been treated by others as less valuable, whether because of their skin color, their ethnicity, whether because of their sex or their sexual behavior, or because they're elderly, or because they're disabled.

We should not be quick to dismiss other people simply because the political figures we listen to do it. But we cannot follow their example. We have to chart our own course following our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We ought to conform to the image of God in Jesus Christ. We ought to think of ourselves as our brother's keeper. That's the political level.

Let's talk about this on a personal level. How do we look at, how do we approach our neighbor whom we encounter on a daily basis, whether it's your next door neighbor, or your friend, or your coworker, or your family member?

[36 : 03] Parents, this is how you approach your children. Your child is your neighbor too. Once again, you can glance quickly at someone and you can size them up. Oh, you're that kind of person. Ah, I know what you're about.

You can respond to your neighbor with irritation attended with skepticism. Or you can take time to see them as God sees them, as they really are, as the image of God.

You can ask questions and listen carefully and silently and search, because you realize every person you encounter is the image of God, which means every person has a story, every person is interesting, every person is fascinating, every person has glory.

And you search for the glory of God within each man, woman, and child. And you can respond to your neighbor in compassion, tempered with wisdom, as God the Holy Spirit works in you to make you like Christ.

This is the way that you and I live in the family of God. This is the way of life in the family that is called by his name. We act out of love, not out of self-preservation.

[37 : 21] If we give people our time, our money, and energy, we do it out of love for them. If we withhold our time, money, and energy, we do that too out of love.

We do it out of a wise love that is not going to continue to enable a person to abuse the friends and caregivers that God has provided them. We never act out of self-preservation.

We always act out of love. You and I abuse the image of God when we deny or ignore the full value of every human being. But third and finally, we honor the image of God when we see and embrace the full value of every human being.

We honor the image of God when we see and embrace the full value of every human being. There's a shorthand, a word that means this, a word for doing this.

The Bible uses the word love. God's word, the Bible, teaches us the law of love. You realize all of God's laws in the Bible, they're not this sort of restrictive code to crush you and to limit you.

[38 : 29] They're guides that teach you how to love. The whole law hangs on the law of love. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, love your neighbor as yourself.

All the rest of the laws teach you how to do that because our culture doesn't know how to do that. It will tell you how to do things that are not loving to people, that feel loving but are not. But God's law will tell you how to love people.

When we love God for who he is, when we look at our neighbor and see the image of God, then we love them too because we see the value, we see the character, we see the authority of God in them.

Now maybe as you hear these words and as you take stock of your life and honestly line your life up to the law of God as revealed in his word, you know, and this is, if you are being honest, every one of you and me, myself too, you know that you have fallen far short of the glory of God.

You know you don't love people as you ought to do. You know you're guilty of abusing the image of God and how you ignore the full value of your neighbor.

[39 : 43] Or maybe you've realized you've been denying the full value of your neighbor as many political leaders want you to do. Maybe you've abused the image of God and that you've denied the humanity of others.

I mentioned abortion earlier. There are no doubt some among us who have had an abortion. If any of that is true, know that the God whose image you've abused, he is a God who is merciful.

He is a God who is compassionate. He is a God who is eager to forgive on his toes, ready to embrace.

If you identify as a sinner in need of his mercy and forgiveness, then you are just the person his son Jesus Christ came to save. That is your qualification. That you're a sinner in need of grace.

Remember the words that Jesus spoke about even the tax collectors. In Luke chapter 5, he says, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

[40 : 48] I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. If you identify as the person who is righteous and doesn't need Jesus, that means that he didn't come for you.

He didn't come to call you. He came not to call the righteous. He came to call those who are sick, those who are not righteous, those who know they don't have the compassion and love of God, those who know they need to turn and repent and embrace the new way of life that God has called us to as his image bearers.

Turn from your sin. Believe in Jesus Christ. There is hope. Genesis 9 tells us that we deserve the death penalty for abusing the image of God.

But Jesus has taken the death penalty in our place. Jesus was the one whose blood was shed. Jesus was crucified and died and was buried for you.

And now Jesus is raised to new resurrection life. He is the perfect image of God. So that you too may be restored to his image.

[42 : 03] That you too may be raised to life and live a new life and have a promise of a future resurrection. As you live a new life, you too can honor the image of God and you can see and you can embrace the full value of every human being.

May God the Holy Spirit do this in you. Amen.