

The Image of God in the Self

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Preacher: Dave Nannery

[0 : 0 0] This month, we have five Sundays in this month, and it's going to be five Sundays and five sermons on one particular doctrine of the Christian faith, the image of God. And this is a doctrine that, as I mentioned in my prayer, you may not realize it, but this doctrine is probably the single most controversial Christian doctrine right now, not only in the Christian world, but in our culture at large, the image of God. This is a huge flashpoint. Not many people realize it's a flashpoint, but I think as we proceed through this sermon series, you'll see that it is that, especially in politics, whether it's the progressive left or whether it's the conservative right, the image of God is not a popular doctrine. It is not a popular doctrine. It is one that is either denied or ignored in our world today. And in a sense, that's not new. This is a doctrine that has been neglected all throughout church history. But there's sort of an acute sense in which it is under attack in a very acute way right now, perhaps as never before. Now, let me begin by saying a couple weeks ago, I started doing a bit of a survey. I started asking a question to people I know, people I know from the gym, people I know from a trail running club I'm a part of, people I know from a refugee sponsorship group I'm a part of. And I started asking a few of these folks, what makes you valuable? What makes you valuable? And I got a lot of different answers. And over the course of the sermon, I'll relate to you some of those answers and what that reveals to us about the mindset of the folks in our culture, the people that you know, your friends and neighbors around you. And so I ask this question because it is really vital to understand what is it that makes you valuable? What makes you valuable not only as a Christian, but also as a human being? Where does your worth as a human being come from? Where does your glory come from? Do you possess worth or is yourself basically worthless? I know that many people struggle with that feeling of worthlessness.

Now, if you understand the answer to this question, this question of worth, this question of value, of glory, of identity, then you can be transformed. You can be transformed in ways that maybe right now seem impossible to you. God, the Holy Spirit, he will work in you if you can begin to grasp what it means to be the imago dei. That's Latin. Imago dei is Latin for the image of God, the image of God.

And this doctrine that human beings, all human beings are created in the image of God, that is found right on page one of the Bible, or if you're using my Bible, page two, I guess. If you turn with me to Genesis chapter one, we're going to use this as the basis for our talk about the image of God in the self today, how we understand ourselves and who we are as individuals. Genesis chapter one, verses 26 through 28. Let me read these words for us.

Then God said, So God created man in his own image.

In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them.

And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[4 : 0 9] So we are seeing that right from the beginning, right from the start, the thing that sets human beings apart from the rest of God's creation, that sets us apart from all the other matter he has made, all the rest of the space and time in the universe, the thing that sets us apart from the plants and from the animals, from everything else in creation, is that we as human beings, everyone in this room, every human being in this world, we are made in the image of God.

We are made in the image of God. And that raises an important question. What does it mean to be the image of God? What does it mean to be the image of God?

That's the first of four questions we're going to ask and answer today. What does it mean to be the image of God? Now, this idea, the image of God, the imago Dei, for me, confession right now, this is probably the single most intimidating subject I've ever preached on.

And that's because this question is not a new question. It's been debated for thousands of years. It's been debated ever since the book of Genesis was written. We have theologians, philosophers, biblical scholars.

They have all wrestled with this. What is the imago Dei? What isn't it? How is it significant to the way that you and I view ourselves? So, for our purposes this morning, I want to not go beyond the expertise that I have.

[5 : 36] I don't want to aim for a really tight and precise definition of the imago Dei because I'd be way out of my depth in making that attempt. What I'm going to do is put together a simple working definition, a simple working definition of the image of God.

So, this definition won't be exhaustive, but it will be sufficient for our purposes. It's going to help us understand how the image of God is significant.

How it's significant to the way that you and I perceive ourself, the way that you and I perceive our worth. So, let me put together this working definition of the imago Dei.

And to do that, we're going to look first at a pair of words that are used right here in Genesis 1, verse 26, where we read, So, we have two words that are used in parallel, image and likeness. Image and likeness. And each one of these carries just a little bit of a different shade of meaning to it. Now, these words, image and likeness, they're not deep and complex and mystical words that, oh, you know, you need to have a deep understanding of the Hebrew language and there's just so much mystery to them.

[6 : 56] They're actually ordinary words. They're just as ordinary in Hebrew as they are in English. An image is a representation of something else. An image is a representation of something else.

An image can be made out of many different media. It can be made out of gold or silver, made out of wood or marble, made out of paint or pixels. And in the Old Testament, the word image, it's found quite frequently through the Old Testament.

And it's most commonly used to describe an idol. An image is an idol. It's a statue or sculpture of a god. And here in the book of Genesis, it's used a little bit differently.

In Genesis, the word image, it is not applied to man-made inanimate works of art that represent false gods.

It's not applied to man-made inanimate works of art that represent false gods. Instead, it is applied to living, God-breathed works of art that represent the one true God.

[8 : 01] That's you. Any image of a thing, it is a recognizable reflection of that thing.

So the picture of Queen Elizabeth on a \$20 bill. It portrays the queen. That image of the queen, it depicts her authority over her subjects.

Wherever that money is being circulated, the queen has authority there. Even in the ancient world, emperors, they, you know, back in ancient times when the book of Genesis was written, the practice of printing the emperor's face on money had not yet come into vogue.

What emperors would do instead was they would set up giant statues of themselves in the lands that they had conquered, lands that the king could not be present in.

And so they set up giant statues of themselves to demonstrate through these images that their authority extended to that place, that they were sovereign over that domain.

[9 : 09] So every human being who has ever lived is one of these images. We bear the image of our creator. We represent him. We represent his authority throughout the world that God has made.

That's why Genesis chapter one, verse 26, talks about let them have dominion. We represent the authority of our God. Any, let's consider the word likeness.

Let's consider the word likeness next, much like that word image. The word likeness, it actually means exactly what it sounds like it means. Any image that accurately portrays its subject is a likeness.

Even if you have never in your life turned on the TV or seen a photo or seen a video of Queen Elizabeth, if she were to walk in those doors right now, you would know who she was.

You would recognize her at once. Why? Because you've seen \$20 bills. You've seen a \$20 bill. That image on the \$20 bill, it is indisputably a likeness of the queen.

[10 : 18] There is no mistaking it. And everyone would agree it's accurate. No one has ever looked at a \$20 bill and said, I don't know if that's really the queen. That's not really her. We all know it is. The likeness is accurate.

And so in the case of, in Genesis one, in the case of the first man and the first woman, to be the likeness of God means that they represented him accurately.

They represented him accurately. They portrayed God as he was. They portrayed God in his love and his justice, his righteousness, his mercy, his wisdom, his presence.

Now they didn't portray him completely. No likeness is ever complete. That likeness of the queen, the \$20 bill, does not reveal everything there is about the queen, but it reveals the queen sufficiently.

A scale model of a building does not completely capture all the details, all the character of the building. And the wisdom of God, the power of God, the presence of our God, it can never be fully captured by anything in creation, anything finite and limited.

[11 : 26] But though we are an incomplete likeness, we were at first, at one time, an accurate likeness. An accurate likeness of God the creator.

And so what does it mean to be the imago dei? What does it mean to be the image of God? It means this, that you accurately reflect his character and represent his authority. You accurately reflect his character and represent his authority.

Now, let's ask a second question. Let's apply this working definition of the image of God. Let's apply it to the self. Let's apply it to the way that you and I perceive ourselves as individuals.

The next question we're going to ask is this, what does the image of God tell me about my intrinsic worth? What does the image of God tell me about my intrinsic worth?

That means the worth that you have in yourself. Now, since we are the image and likeness of God, that means that you and I know, if we believe that, we know a fundamental truth about human nature.

[12 : 34] We know a fundamental truth about the self. And the truth is that our identity, our worth, our glory, whatever identity you have, whatever worth you have, whatever value you have, whatever glory you have, it comes as a reflection of something else.

It comes as a reflection of something else. You and I are fundamentally an image, a likeness. You are fundamentally an image. Our worth is a borrowed worth, a reflected worth.

Our glory is a reflected glory. Think about it. Think about the moon. How much light does the moon produce on its own?

Does anyone know? We've got a hand raised back here. How much light? None. The moon does not produce any light of its own.

It is dark and it is hidden unless the glory of the sun shines on it. Whatever light the moon produces, and if you've ever been out during a full moon, you know that the moon's light can be incredibly bright at night.

[13 : 45] But whatever light it produces is reflected sunlight. And so you and I are dark and hidden. You and I are empty and without glory.

You and I are void of identity except that we shine with the glory and worth of God, our creator, whose image we bear.

this is true of yourself whether you know it or not, whether you believe it or not. That's what's true of you.

Your glory, your worth, your value, your identity, none of it comes from you in and of yourself. It comes from the God who shines through you, his image bearer, his imago dei.

So then, if you are God's creation, if you are God's image, that means that you belong to God.

[14 : 44] You belong to God. Consider this. If a rich businessman commissions an artist to paint his portrait, then that portrait, when it's painted, it's the property of the businessman.

He can take it and put it on his wall in his office. But the portrait, in a sense, belongs to the artist as well. It'll have the artist's signature on it. Everyone who looks at that will say, that's the artist's painting.

But consider this. What if the artist paints a portrait of herself? What if the artist paints a portrait of herself on her own dime? Then the portrait belongs to the artist and belongs in every sense of the word.

And so God has created an image of himself. He has commissioned his own image and created his own image. And his image belongs to him in every sense of the word.

And that image is you. That image is you. And so, just as the Heidelberg Catechism says, you are not your own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to God.

[15 : 55] In body and soul, in life and in death, you belong to God. And the doctrine of the Imago Dei, it not only reveals that you and I belong to God, but because we're image bearers that belong to Him, that means that we are responsible to accurately reflect God.

You and I are responsible to accurately reflect God. The purpose of an image is to portray its subject. The purpose of a likeness is to accurately reveal the subject's nature and character. That's what you and I are here for. That's why we're here on earth. This is where we learn that the Imago Dei, it not only assigns you a tremendous dignity, it not only assigns you a tremendous dignity, but it also assigns you a crushing responsibility.

Absolutely crushing responsibility. Because as a living, breathing image, that means that everything that you do and say and think and desire, it is all a statement.

It is a statement about who God is. It is a statement about what God is like. And so if I do things that are just, if I speak loving and truthful words, if I think noble thoughts, if I desire good things, then what I'm doing is I am portraying God as just, as loving, as true, as noble, and as good.

[17 : 23] I am accurately portraying God. But if I steal, if I lash out in anger, unrighteous anger, if I tell a lie, if I obsess over fearful thoughts, if I crave sexual sin, then I am portraying God as a thief, a vindictive tyrant, a liar, a coward, an unfaithful adulterer.

I'm slandering the Most High God. Whenever you break God's law, whenever you sin, what you are doing is you are saying that God is an evil and corrupted being. How awful that thought.

Should you not tremble in fear that you have insulted, you have slandered the Almighty God to whom you belong? Is He not a creator?

Is He not an artist who has every right to dispose of His corrupted image as He sees fit? This is a terrifying thought. This thought has filled mankind with such fear that most of us live in absolute denial of the truth.

We suppress it down, down to the unconscious level, down so that we don't even know that we know it anymore. We cannot bear the implications of the Imago Dei.

[18 : 39] So we suppress the truth. We make every effort, whether on a conscious or on an unconscious level, to be free of the God to whom we belong.

So we deny it. We deny the Imago Dei. We try to set ourselves free. And we're like, we're like a homeowner who is trying to convert our house to an open concept design.

We want spaciousness. We want to be freed and liberated. But to make this happen, we've knocked out the load-bearing wall at the center of our home, at the center of our being. And that spaciousness and freedom will not last us long.

We've been doing this ever since Genesis chapter 3, when that first man and woman, when they refused to bear the Imago Dei, instead of being God's image, they wanted to stand in their own place, taking God's place, supplanting Him as Lord and Master of the world.

They tried to find their glory, their worth, their value, their identity somewhere else. In Romans chapter 1, the Apostle Paul writes about this. Although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him.

[19 : 50] But they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened. Let's talk about how this plays out in the real world. Our culture tries to tell a different story of where you get your glory, a different story of where you get your worth, your value, your identity.

And in order for this to be a plausible story, like any counterfeit, it has to be a counterfeit of the true story in Genesis chapter 1. You don't buy into a counterfeit unless it looks a lot like the real thing.

Remember that true story in verses 27 through 28. Look at those words. God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them.

And God blessed them. So here we see man's intrinsic worth, the worth that you and I have just for being who we are as image bearers. We also see man's affirmed worth, the worth that is spoken over us by a wise authority.

And we're going to talk about those two in a moment. First, we're going to look at the intrinsic worth. First, in the true story of Genesis chapter 1, your intrinsic worth comes from these words.

[21 : 04] God created man in His own image. God created man in His own image. And as we can see, by man, it simply means not just male, but female.

Men and women both created equal in value and dignity and worth in the image of God. You have glory, worth, value, and identity because you bear the image of the glorious, worthy, valuable I am.

Your worth comes as a reflection of one who is worthy. And so human beings in rebellion against God, what we are trying to do is we're trying to block out the sun. And when we do that, the moon grows dark.

The self loses its source of glory, worth, value, identity. The image becomes this impenetrable mist. It becomes white noise on a TV screen. It becomes a shapeless lump of clay. Men and women, and you know many of them, they are left to wander through life, lost, confused about who they are, why they matter, what they're here for.

We have this innate need. Every human being has this innate need, this drive, this sense that I am an image bearer. That's something that sets human beings apart from animals.

[22 : 24] A bald eagle is not bothered by whether it's glorious. A weasel is not worried about its worth. You know, a porpoise isn't troubled about its purpose. They just go about their, you know, eagly and weaselly and porpoisey lives.

They don't worry about these things. They just go about and do it. They're not loaded down with that tremendous dignity and crushing responsibility. But human beings, we are image bearers down to the core of our being.

We instinctively, innately sense that we need to display glory, worth, value, identity. Everybody believes that. You, it's in your bones. You cannot escape it.

So we've got to display it. But if we don't wish to derive this glory, worth, value, and identity from the imago dei, where are we going to turn? Where are we going to get it? Well, every culture has its own unique blend of answers about where we're going to turn.

I find it helpful to put the answers that are found in many cultures under three categories. Category one, pedigree. Category two, performance.

[23 : 30] Category three, passions. We'll look at each of these in turn. These three categories, pedigree, performance, and passions, we are told, whatever culture you're in, you're told that one or a mixture of those are what you need to make yourself valuable if you suppress or deny the imago dei.

Let's think about pedigree first. Pedigree. This is something that is much more prominent, much more front and center in traditional cultures, especially cultures that are clan-oriented, family-oriented.

You get your identity and value and honor from your family or your clan, from your race or your ethnicity. The Apostle Paul warned against this sort of self-righteous honor.

He remarked in Philippians chapter three that he could have turned to his own pedigree for glory. He writes, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. Paul is the best, Israelite, best Jewish man, the most Jewish man who ever was.

[24 : 45] If you want to take pride in that pedigree, he's like, you don't hold a candle to me. If this is a competition for who can draw the most glory from their pedigree, I win. In our present day culture, this emphasis on pedigree, it's a lot, it's less pronounced, it's still present.

We see a remnant of it. And people who take pride in where they come from, their city of origin, they take pride in their national identity as American or Canadian. Now, it's not wrong to value that. I mean, it's Canada Day. Some of you are wearing Canada Day, Canada shirts, so I'm not coming down on you for that. It's not wrong to recognize, yeah, I'm Canadian. I come from Squamish.

I come from such and such a family, and I like that. And I think that's a good thing to celebrate.

That's great. Great. The problem is when you believe that this is what makes you valuable, this is what makes you worthy, this is what gives you glory, value, identity, worth, at a fundamental level. It justifies your existence. Because if you buy into that, we'll talk about this a little more next week, but if you buy into that, then you're able to justify any sort of prejudice towards those who don't share your pedigree.

[26 : 02] We find ourselves unable to take a stand against evil behavior that is present within our own family, within our own ethnic group or nation, maybe even within our own church.

This is the counterfeit glory of pedigree. There's a second source of glory, worth, value, or identity. It can come from our performance. So we've got that pedigree glory, now let's talk about performance glory.

This is one that is much more front and center in our culture. And it is front and center whether you're progressive or liberal or whether you're conservative and traditional. We live up to the

expectations that others place on us or that we place on ourselves.

That's what we're about, living up to those expectations. We are kind to others. We contribute good to society. I set myself apart with my, maybe I set myself apart with my superior aesthetic tastes. I carefully curate and choose the clothes that I buy, the music I listen to, the brands I support, the wealth that I accumulate, the lifestyle I live, our performance. As a source of glory, it is especially appealing in our culture.

[27 : 13] Our culture wants to emphasize our autonomy as individuals, our ability to create and manufacture our own identity, to manufacture the self, the self-made man.

The American dream is built on the foundation of glory by performance. Glory by performance. If you go out there and work hard and pick yourself up by your own bootstraps, you will live the glorious life.

You will live the glorious life of having a family and a house with a white picket fence and 2.1 kids. This performance glory, it attempts to draw value and worth and identity from our social role, our usefulness, our righteousness.

This one's a little bit tricky because there is some truth to it. You can't have some sort of instrumental value in the sense of you can be useful to others. That's a good thing.

But it's easy to let that instrumental purpose, easy to let that serve as a substitute for our intrinsic value, to serve as a source of glory rather than simply a useful benefit.

[28 : 18] The Apostle Paul warned about this too. He warned about it once again in Philippians chapter 3 because once again, just like his pedigree, he could have turned to his own performance for glory and just like how he could have a better pedigree than any of his countrymen, he had a better performance than any of his countrymen.

He writes, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more. As to the law, the Pharisee. You know, these guys who are just absolutely on top of every law.

As to zeal, a persecutor of the church. Can't get more zealous than that. As to righteousness under the law, blameless. Blameless.

Nobody could point a finger at him. This week, I asked a few friends, what makes you valuable? And the most common answer would reference their performance.

One man said to me that he had a pretty quick response as far as what made him valuable. His response was, I'm honest, easy to deal with, and ready to help. I'm honest, easy to deal with, and ready to help.

[29 : 23] And then I followed up with him, what if you weren't like that? What if you weren't like that? And his answer was, then I would be less valuable. I'd be less valuable. He explicitly identified his value as coming from the role that he played, from his performance in being a good person.

It's not wrong to do good for others. It's a good thing to make yourself useful. It's a good thing to be successful, to live a righteous life too. But when we believe that this is what makes you and me intrinsically valuable or worthy, then we, what's going to happen is we're going to look down our nose at those around us who fail to match our performance.

Those around us who fail to match our ideals of good behavior toward others, who fail to match our expectations of usefulness and success, who fail to match our rules of righteousness.

We're going to start viewing other people as less than us. And we're going to start turning a blind eye to our own sin, to our own weakness, or to our own failures.

Or possibly feeling discouraged and in despair because our own sin, our own weakness, our own failures are absolutely unmistakable and we can't get around it. This is the counterfeit glory of performance.

[30 : 45] The counterfeit glory of performance. So we've got pedigree glory, performance glory, and the third source of glory is, I think, it's helpful to summarize it under the word passions, or passions glory.

When I deny the imago Dei, I hollow out myself, I hollow out myself of glory, worth, value, and identity. And so what is left in that ruin?

What is left in that rubble and that decay? All that's left is your passions and your experiences. That's all that's left to you. And so that's what we emphasize in our culture a lot.

I identify myself with the things I'm passionate about. Now, you can talk about that in terms of causes, passionate about a cause, or passionate about ideas, or passionate about hobbies, or passionate about amusements.

Those are some obvious things. That's how you choose your identity, is your passions. Now, there is one passion in particular, though, that has really risen to prominence, and has really become a political hot topic over the last couple of centuries in the Western world.

[31 : 51] One of the most intense and fundamental passions in the human experience is the desire for sex. It is. Thinkers like Sigmund Freud insisted that, Freud was revolutionary insisting that sex is the fundamental human passion.

It is the passion that drives everything else. Now, Freud, he thought that sexual passion had to be repressed. You had to repress that, keep that id bottled up, in order to keep society functioning. Because if everybody let that out, we would descend into chaos and anarchy and conflict as everyone pursues their own sexual desires. Now, thinkers after Freud went in a different direction with this.

They took his thought and ran with it in a different way because many of them were influenced by Marxist ideas, a Marxist opposition to repression. Marxism focused on the plight of the worker, the laborer, the common man and saw him as being repressed, oppressed by the upper class. And then some thinkers began to think about Freud's teaching on sexuality in the same way. And this gave birth in the 20th century not to an economic revolution.

[33 : 01] It gave birth to a sexual revolution. The chief demand of the sexual revolution is that sexual passion should be unleashed, not repressed. It ought to be unleashed, not repressed.

And so today, it's taken for granted in our culture that you are your sexual passions. It's taken for granted that this sexual identity, it is the real you.

It is the real self. It's taken for granted that to repress one's sexual passion is to bring harm on that individual.

That by doing so, you threaten their very identity, their very value, their very worth, their very glory. BK mentioned at the start of our service that a court case handed down from the Supreme Court of Canada a week ago.

And there, the Supreme Court ruled against Trinity Western University. The background was Trinity Western wanted to start a law school. They had a community covenant that required any student attending their university, any student attending their law school, that they needed to restrict sexual activity to the bounds of a one-man, one-woman marriage.

[34 : 12] The Law Society of British Columbia and a couple other provinces would not grant accreditation because they saw that as oppressive. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled in favor of the Law Societies against Trinity Western University.

and here's what our Supreme Court says about what your identity is. This is the official position of the Supreme Court of Canada about your identity. The Law Society of British Columbia's decision prevents the risk of significant harm, note that phrase, significant harm to LGBTQ people who feel they have no choice but to attend Trinity Western University's proposed law school.

These individuals would have to deny who they are, note that phrase, they would have to deny who they are for three years to receive a legal education. Being required by someone else's religious beliefs to behave contrary to one's sexual identity is degrading and disrespectful.

It's degrading and disrespectful. This kind of statement only makes sense if you have denied the imago Dei, if you have said that our identity, value, worth, and glory comes from our passions and our sexual passions in particular.

that we are harmed if we are not permitted to live them out. You realize that is the exact same logic that the man several weeks back in Toronto used to shoot a number of women because he was denied his sexual passions.

[35 : 47] He identified himself as involuntarily celibate. Women didn't want sex with him. So what did he do? He went out and shot women for revenge because he could not live the good life.

He did not get to live out his sexual passions. And the Supreme Court of Canada, each member of that Supreme Court would be horrified by that logic but it is their own logic.

It is their own logic that this man viewed himself as being degraded, disrespected, he had to deny who he was and he was being significantly harmed and so he sought vengeance.

If you buy into this line of reasoning it is because you have first denied the imago Dei, you have first evacuated the human self of glory and worth and you have filled that empty shell with the counterfeit glory of sexual passions.

That's one way in which passions has become a source of glory in our culture. Now, another way is this. The word passion, if you look at the etymology of the word, it's history in the English language. [36 : 52] When it was first introduced to the English language, it came from Latin through French to English and the word passion originally meant suffering. That's why we have that phrase, the passion of Christ.

It's the sufferings of Christ leading up to and on the cross. And so, it's this source of passion, a person's horrendous experience of suffering.

Oddly enough, that also has become a source of glory, worth, value, and identity. So, the man or the woman who's been robbed of other forms of self-worth, something terrible has happened to them.

Maybe, now, whatever other forms of self-worth they have have been stripped away from them. They can't perform anymore. Perhaps their pedigree has been disgraced and defiled. And what do they have left?

Well, they have that intense emotional experience. They have the pain, the shame, the victimization. And now, our culture, which still is a hangover of Christianity, our post-Christian culture still rightly emphasizes the Christian values of pity and compassion towards the harassed and helpless.

[37 : 59] And that's a good thing, but the problem is without the imago dei, this compassion, what it does is it encourages the sufferer to continue to perpetually identify as a victim.

In fact, your victimhood becomes your chief identity, becomes your worth, it becomes your glory. I am a victim. It becomes that single lens through which you view all of your life, the single lens that others around you are permitted to view you through.

You're a victim and that's all you are. That is how everyone around you has to perceive you and only through that lens. You are always a victim and you are never a perpetrator.

This too is the counterfeit glory of passion. And so these are three counterfeit glories, pedigree, performance, and passion. And do you see how bankrupt they are?

Do you see how threatened and insecure anyone is who turned to these things for glory, for worth, for value, for identity? Do you realize that so many of these things are tenuous, can be taken away from you and will be taken away from you?

[39 : 12] You cannot hold on to them. If this is you, I urge you to repent.

That means to turn away from these counterfeit glories. Don't settle for them. Embrace your true identity as the imago dei, as the image and likeness of God.

If you recognize that your intrinsic worth comes from reflecting the glory of God, not from your pedigree, your performance, your passions, then I promise you, you aren't going to be repressed like the Supreme Court thinks you'll be.

You won't be repressed. You will finally be free. You will finally be liberated to embrace the glory of the immortal God, liberated to embrace the good life that God created us to live.

Let's turn now from examining our intrinsic worth as the image bearers of God. Let's talk about our affirmed worth. Let's talk about our affirmed worth.

[40 : 15] So that's our third question today. What does the image of God tell me about my affirmed worth? What does the image of God tell me about my affirmed worth? We see the glory of the first man and woman affirmed in Genesis 1, verse 28.

And we see it in this sentence. God blessed them. God blessed them. God spoke words of affirmation over them.

He spoke words that weren't just empty words, just positive things to say. They were words that contained power and promise because they came from a wise authority.

They came from a wise authority. They contained power and promise. These words of affirmation are words of blessing. Now why did God bless them? We see in verse 28, he blessed them so that they could carry out his mission on earth.

God blessed them and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[41 : 25] So God is blessing the man and the woman. He is speaking and affirming their glory, worth, value, and identity. God is doing it so that they will then be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with the image of God.

They will reproduce themselves, not merely just to fill the earth with human beings, right? This isn't just, this isn't some sort of breeder cult here, right? This is them reproducing themselves because the world needs to be filled with people who represent the good and wise authority of God, that represent his dominion over every living thing.

What would this world be like if every man and woman and child on this earth in every corner of this world were honoring and serving God and representing his character perfectly as he is?

Here at Squamish Baptist Church, one of our three values, our third values, to engage the world with the gospel. Whereas the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28, the Great Commission Jesus Christ gave us, we're here to make disciples of all nations.

To make disciples of all nations, to fill the earth with the image of God. This is the Great Commission in seed form, this command to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth with the image bearers of God.

[42 : 45] This is our purpose, this is our mission statement. It all comes back to the Imago Dei. In order to be commissioned for this great, this greatest and noblest assignments that God has given us, you and I, we have to receive the blessing of God.

We have to receive the blessing of God, but how can God affirm a people who are corrupted, who have sinned against him, who are slandering him with their behavior? Well, God's word reminds us in Romans chapter 3, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All have sinned and fall short of that glory, the glory of God. Our deep-rooted rebellion against God, we have obscured, we have deformed and suppressed the glory of God.

We have smeared the Imago Dei with our sin. And maybe you remember a major news story from six years ago. It's a story about the restoration of a famous painting by a Spanish painter, a fresco that he titled Eche Homo, an image of Jesus Christ.

And this fresco was hung in the Sanctuary of Mercy Church in the Spanish town of Borja. And there's an elderly woman in that church who took it on herself, did a little bit of freelancing.

[43 : 58] She attempted to restore the weathered painting. She ends up smearing this valuable work of art until it's barely recognizable. And now this painting actually has become a bit of a tourist attraction, popularly known as Potato Jesus.

Right? That's kind of a funny story. It's just one of those things that makes the art critic within you just cringe, but it is still pretty funny. When this is done to human beings like you and me, it's not as funny.

It's not funny anymore. That's what sin does to the image of God. It smears and slanders and degrades the glory of God. It dehumanizes the self.

It dehumanizes one another as his image bearers. And that is terrible news. Because it means that if we deny and disobey God, we incur his right and appropriate anger towards us.

He'd be wrong not to be angry. So as individuals and as a culture, we try to escape the identity and mission of the imago dei. We don't want to bear his anger and the punishment that is coming.

[45 : 06] The judgment. We do not accept the identity as God has created for us. Instead, we try to manufacture or create an identity for ourselves out of our pedigree, our performance, our passions, but we still sense a need for affirmed worth too.

We sense not only that we need intrinsic worth, we need affirmed worth, we need a blessing over what identity we can create for ourselves. We all know, we all sense this need, even among the spiritual but not religious tribe.

We claim his blessing. People like to talk about how, yeah, you know, they like to think of God as happy with them. Deep down, though, we know we don't have it or don't have any confidence in it. There's an insecurity there.

And among the secularized tribe, which simply wants to put God on a shelf and stick him in the back room and just trot him out only when convenient, there is no divine blessing to claim whatsoever.

So where do we turn for blessing? We do need it. We do need that affirmed worth. Well, what we do is we turn to the closest thing to God we can find. If you don't have God and you've locked him away in a closet, what do you turn to?

[46 : 19] You turn to his image bearers. You turn to other people. In two of the conversations I had this week, the word value was interpreted as something that other people call out and identify in you.

One of the people I spoke to said, I've always thought of value in terms of being valuable to someone else. In other words, you become valuable when other people perceive you as valuable. Oh, how many people, especially young men and women, are bullied and hurt and are treated as though they are not valuable and they believe it.

And they believe it. We all know the danger of trying to get other people to perceive us as valuable. So, so many problems, so much sin in our lives. When we are working so hard, craving their words of affirmation and approval, craving them to celebrate and affirm us, longing for their love and acceptance, demanding their respect and support.

We ache for it. We ache for the blessing. In Jesus himself, he saw this fear, he saw this insecurity in the people of his day. He saw it even among people who are religious leaders.

[47 : 38] You don't have to be irreligious. You don't have to be secularized to have this fear. Many very, very religious people also are looking for blessing in all the wrong places.

His apostle John writes in John chapter 12, many even of the authorities believed in him, believed in Jesus, but for fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it.

They wouldn't come out and say it. So that they would not be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

They sought glory, worth, value, and identity from the approval of others rather than the approval and blessing of God. We look for our affirmed worth in man and the blessing of other people because we know that unless something is done for us, we know that we cannot find it in God.

We can't earn, we've sinned against God. There is no affirming that. But this craving for blessing, it's never going to be enough.

[48 : 44] The authority and wisdom of other people is not enough to carry the divine glory that we need to bless us. Their reliability, their goodness is not enough to match the eternal goodness of the God who once blessed us.

And if we look for our affirmed worth in other human beings, we are always going to be left fearful and left anxious and left insecure. We know that this glory can be taken away and deep, deep down if we admit it, we know this glory will be taken away.

It will not last. Denying the imago dei will always leave us unaware of our intrinsic value and lacking an affirmed value. Without the imago dei, you will be without glory, worth, value, and identity if you take a long, hard, honest look at yourself.

Now let's say you agree with God that your intrinsic value comes from reflecting His glory, but that this value has been corrupted by sin. And let's say that you agree with God that your affirmed value comes from His blessing, but that this blessing is not spoken over sinners who rebel against Him and slander Him with their behavior.

How then can our glory be restored? Don't you long for that glory to be restored? Don't you long to know that you are valuable in showing the glory revealing the glory of God and that His blessing is spoken over you?

[50 : 07] Fourth question and final question, how can the image of God be fully restored in me?

How can the image of God be fully restored in me? We need this. Remember that you are an image bearer.

That means you can only reveal glory that you receive. You can only reveal glory that you receive. The moon only shines brightly when it faces the blazing glory of the sun.

It must face the sun. And so for the image of God to be restored to full brightness, for the image of God in you to be restored to full brightness, you must turn to look in the face of this fearsome glory of God.

To look on this fearsome glory of God because it is a glory that transforms and shines through you. There is one man on earth who has done this.

There is one man on earth who can do this. One who has seen God the Father in all of his glory, stared straight into the sun and come away shining.

[51 : 21] The Apostle Paul writes about this one man in Colossians chapter 1. He is the image. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

And in John chapter 1 we read, No one has ever seen God. The only God who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. The only God who is at the Father's side, he became a man.

This one man, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus is not only a man, he is fully God as well. Jesus has eternally existed in the presence of God the Father.

In eternity, facing the blazing glory of his Father. He is the perfect image of God. He is perfect in his character. He is complete in his likeness. He lacks nothing.

He is exactly like his Father. And though no one has ever seen God, no one has ever seen God the Father, yet Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

[52 : 26] And as you encounter Jesus Christ, you encounter him reading about all that he said and did in the New Testament, as you come to know the promises of Scripture that Jesus fulfilled, the promises God made, and the promises that he has yet in store for you and for this church and for believers and for our world, as you worship and you serve Jesus alongside your fellow believers here at Squamish Baptist Church, you will be transformed.

You will be transformed. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3, where the Spirit of the Lord is, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ is, there is freedom.

There is freedom, not repression, but freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed transformed into the same image, into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. So you and I are set free. We're set free from those enslaving anxieties, set free from those counterfeit glories, as we look straight in the face of the true glory, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we behold Him, so we become like Him.

You become what you behold. God has created us so that our self shines the most brightly. Not when we're inwardly gazing on ourselves and worrying about who we are and trying to create an identity for ourselves and trying to make ourselves feel worthwhile and just focusing and fixating on the self.

[54 : 07] we shine brightly. Your self shines the most brightly when your eyes are no longer fixed on yourselves but your eyes are fixed on Jesus Christ. And you are looking to Christ and thinking about Christ and dwelling on Him and desiring Him.

We become self-forgetters and Christ-rememberers. Self-forgetters, Christ-rememberers. And then we are transformed. You are transformed.

You undergo a metamorphosis. Day by day, from one degree of glory to another, you become like Jesus. Don't you want that?

Don't you want to be like Jesus? Have you met Him? Have you looked, have you read through His life and looked at that and thought about who He is?

What He's really like? This is the certain destiny. If you believe, if you have believed in Jesus Christ, if you are justified before God, not on the basis of your own performance, not because of your own performance glory, I pray to God that you don't come away from the sermon thinking, oh, I've got to go out and perform better and be a better image bearer.

[55 : 28] No. You come to God on the basis of Jesus Christ's performance, His perfect obedience, His life, His sacrificial death so that your sins would be paid for in full.

His resurrection to glory so that the resurrected King will begin resurrecting you. We will look like Christ. We will become like Christ.

That's what it means to be human. Some people say, well, if Jesus was fully God, maybe He's not as human as you or I. Jesus was more human than you or I. He was the most human being who ever lived because He was the truest and is the truest image of God.

As the Apostle Paul puts it in Romans chapter 8, those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be firstborn among many brothers.

That's you. And those whom He predestined, He also called. And those whom He called, He also justified. And those whom He justified, He also glorified. Make glorious like Jesus Christ.

[56 : 40] The image of God is fully restored in you as you confess your sin against God, as you turn in faith to see and to enjoy and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And then transformation happens. As we saw, this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. God the Holy Spirit, He takes you and He transforms you.

You don't pick yourself up by your own bootstraps. As you continually look to His Word and speak to God in prayer and worship Him, the Holy Spirit uses these means of grace.

As you come to the table and take the bread and drink the cup, and remind yourselves what Christ has done, you are transformed. He transforms you and me so that we become what we behold.

And so you will become like God, your Father, just as we are told in 1 John 3. Just as this final reality of who we are going to become, we who believe in Christ.

[57 : 43] Beloved, we are God's children now. And what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is.

We shall become like Him because we shall see Him as He is. What a promise. Our God, our Father, as we prepare to come to communion, to come to the Lord's table, we come.

We come.