Who are we?

Why do we need God's rescue?

Psalm 33 Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!
2 Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him…**3** Sing to him a new song;

6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!
9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

13 The LORD looks down from heaven;
he sees all the children of man;
14 from where he sits enthroned he looks out
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
15 He who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.

These verses from the 33rd Psalm very naturally raise an important question in our minds. Or, at least they should. The question –

When God looks down on **all** the children of man…
When he looks out on **all** the inhabitants of the earth
whose hearts He's fashioned, how does He size us up?

Does what God thinks good news, or tough news?

Her name was Nancy, and when our young family lived in Colorado, she was one of our trusted baby sitters. Nancy was married. She and her husband had two delightful young boys. Nancy was a relatively new Christian, and it was clear that through no real fault of her own, she brought a lot of "baggage" into her new walk with Jesus.

If you met Nancy, you'd encounter a cheerful "Hi!' and a winning smile. But the external presentation, she struggled in her marriage, in her view of herself, and in her walk with the Savior. One day, as we were trying to sort some things out, I asked Nancy this question: *Nancy, when God thinks about you…when God brings you to mind, what does He do? Does He smile…or does he frown?*

Before the words had barely escaped my mouth, her answer shot back. "He frowns. Of course he frowns!"

Her answer was no surprise to me. Nancy had been sexually misused as a girl. She was naturally wired a perfectionist, she had grown up in a home where very few things were right, and the pattern of "life not being right" continued into her young adult life. She had married a man who always cut corners (it drove her up the wall). And yes, she had heard and believed in the gospel—

that Jesus had satisfied the penalty for her sins and that God adopted her into His family—she KNEW that. But the pain and confusion of the past continued to cripple her heart. Bottom line – she deeply struggled to believe that God could be anything else than deeply disappointed in her.

Is there any GOOD NEWS for us about this…about what God thinks when He looks at us? Who are we? What DOES God think about when we come into His mind? In our sharing of the GOOD NEWS – the GOSPEL – what can we say [to ourselves and to others] about how God looks at us?

I'd like to offer that there are 3 things we should be ready to open a bible and share with others about HOW GOOD LOOKS at each one of us? There's something true about us because

#1 We are made IN God's image
#2 We are IN Adam
#3 We can be IN Christ

#1 We have an INHERENT **DIGNITY**
God reveals to us that each of us are **MADE IN HIS OWN IMAGE**
Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1, 9:5-6, James 3:9-10

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man **in our image**, **after our likeness**. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." **27** So God created man **in his own image**, **in the image** of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 5:1 This is the book of the generations of Adam.
When God created man, he made him **in the likeness of God**.

What does it mean, that both the human male and the female together are created and fashioned in keeping with the image of God? There are hundreds of ideas about this – but with our Bibles open, let's get our answer from what God said.

- First, the image of God is about **HAVING DOMINION** (Gen. 1:26). God's image in human beings is seen *in our ability and responsibility to "exercise dominion" over everything else God has created* (vs.26). Human beings – you and I - have authority over the earth, and we are to manage the resources God has given us as God's representatives. If I may put this rather personally, when God put something in your hands – some portion of the resources in this world – you/I are responsible to manage and use those resources well.

- Second, the image of God is about being the **GLORY AND HONOR** of all creation. In other words, human beings were the greatest of all God's creative handiwork. God did his best creating at the end of the 6 days. Humanity was the crowning creative achievement of God. His most valuable creation. We still are. Psalm 8 could not be clearer.

Psalm 8:3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
5 Yet you have **made him** a little lower than the heavenly beings[h]
and **crowned him** with glory and honor.
6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

- Third, the image of God is about our capacity for **LOVING & HOLY RELATIONSHIPS** with God and others as we multiply within creation. Look carefully – vs. 26: "Let US make man in OUR image." These words are the first indication we have in Scripture that God is a being of plurality – later He reveals that He is Father and Son and Holy Spirit – which thrives and pulsates with holy love within relationships. The note in the ESV study Bible has it right:

"The capacities that set man apart from other animals –
reason, morality, language and a capacity for
relationships governed by love and commitment,
and creativity in all forms of art…

"Man represents God in ruling, and in establishing
worthy relationships with God and with one another,
and with the rest of creation."[i]

IN the image of God , you/me/everyone is…

- RESPONSIBLE DOMINION
- GLORY AND HONOR
- LOVING, HOLY RELATIONSHIPS[ii]

When my daughter was born, the delivery nurse turned to me and said, "It never ceases to take my breath away. It's a miracle each time a child is born." The supreme gift of human life. In the very first chapter of the sacred record, God's Spirit could not have been more clear.

#2 We have an INHERENT **LIABILITY**
God reminds us that each of us are born and fallen **IN ADAM**
Gen. 3:17-19, Hosea 6:7, Romans 5, 1 Cor 15:22a

As miraculous and wonderful as God has made us, something tragic happened to us all in Genesis chapter 3. Endowed with the powerful capacity of free choice, Adam and Eve plunged themselves, and us, into a mess. We who had an inherent DIGNITY have been crippled with an inherent LIABILITY. Please join me in the 5th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans.

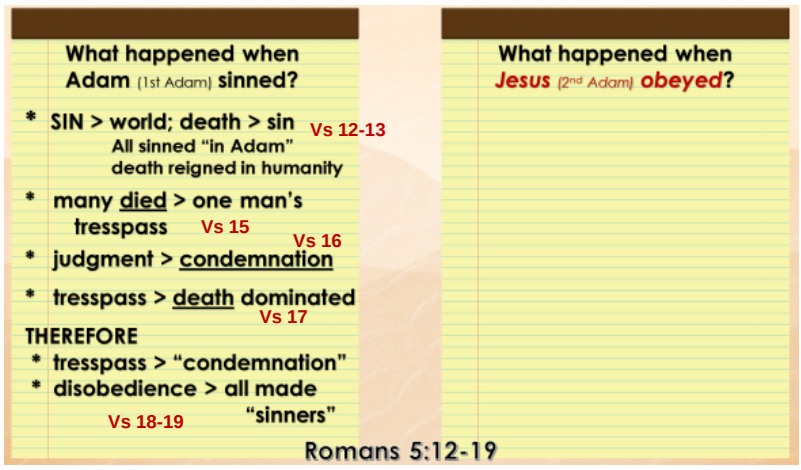
Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— **13** for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. **14** Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. **16** And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. **17** For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

18 **Therefore**, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness[s] leads to justification and life for all men. **19** For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

If we were in your living room today and doing a Bible study together, we might grab some pads and pens and do some digging. On the left, "What happened when Adam (the 1st Adam) sinned?" and on the right, "What happened when Jesus (the 2nd Adam) obeyed?"

Slide #16



Spiritually, God knows that as wonderfully made as we are--as much dignity is ours because of His image--we also all have a deeply imbedded liability. God knows, even if we don't want to admit it

- We do not merely have a chest cold, we have cancer in our circulatory system
- We are not merely ignorant needing more education and affirmation, we are rebellious and need the truth and the Spirit's transformation
- We must not merely pat ourselves on the back and say, "I'm OK, You're OK." We must look each other in the eye and say, "I need a Savior; You need a Savior."

Two chapters previous, the Spirit dialed back the self-righteous Jews when he said (Romans 3:9-10),

"What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin. As it is written (quotes from 6 Psalms, from Ecclesiastes, Isaiah) None is righteous, no, not one."

[PACKER] "A corruption of our moral and spiritual nature that is total *not in degree* (for no one is as bad as he or she might be) *but in extent*. It declares that no part of us is untouched by sin and therefore no action of ours is as good as it should be. Consequently, nothing in us or about us ever appears meritorious in God's eyes. We cannot earn God's favor, no matter what we do; unless grace saves us, we are lost." (JI Packer Concise Theology)

In 2006, the world famous geneticist William French Anderson was convicted of child molestation. In a press conference, Anderson's attorney attempted an explanation. He said, "Nothing about having a 176 IQ means you have good judgment."[iii] Brilliant or dull, rich or poor…it matters not. If you are a son of Adam, a daughter of Eve, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23)

God wants us to be clear about who we are. In His Image, honored and dignified. In Adam, sinful, condemned, spiritually lost. But there is one more piece to our puzzle.

#3 We have a **GRACE-PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY**:
A replacement for being IN ADAM…
that we might be **IN CHRIST.**



There's a free gift the God who created you and loves and values you wants to give you. It's a gift that flows out of his grace. A gift that comes because when God the Son became a man He fulfilled all the righteous demands of God's holiness for us. A free gift that brings God's justification in and over all of your life. His declaration that you are righteous because of what Jesus did for you. A free gift that can reign and dominate in your life, now and into all eternity.

But it is a FREE GIFT that must be received. God extends it to you, but you must reach out and take it. And you take it, freely, by faith.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is eternal life
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 4:4,22-25

To the one who does not work but believes in Him who
justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness.
But the words, *it was counted to him* were not written
For his sake alone. But for ours also. It will be counted
To us who believe in Him who rasied from the dead
Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses
and raised for our justification.

CONCLUSION

I hope you will come to worship on Good Friday evening. With God's help, we want to re-enact for you the conversion of the Philippian jailor, as reported by Luke in Acts chapter 16. A story about a proud man, an accomplished man, a self-reliant, self-sufficient man who was brought to his knees when he realized how desperately even he needed to be saved.

You may be a "Nancy," with a cratered self-image that hounds your heart. You may be like too many of our political leaders, with an ego that is badly over-inflated. Most of us are somewhere in between. But what we may think about ourselves needs to surrender to how the God who created our hearts and gives us life knows us to be.

In GOD'S IMAGE – we have immense value to God.
Every one of us.
In ADAM – we have a sin liability that threatens to condemn us
Every one of us.
In CHRIST – we can become all that God ever created us to be
Any one of us.

We said it last week – as disciples of Jesus Christ, you and I have the most important information in the world. There is no other message so important; there is no word that our neighbors, our friends, our children, our colleagues need to hear from us than about who God is, who we are…and what we need. When God looks down, when God observes all the children of men – each one of us – He sees His image. He watches our rebellious sinfulness. And in desperate love, He sent God the Son in order to offer us the one FREE GIFT every person needs.

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[i] ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 51, see note on Genesis 1:27.

[ii] #1 UNDERSTAND HUMANITY'S INCOMPARABLE VALUE: There is nothing in the entire universe that is more valuable and precious to God than a human being. Human beings were and are the very best of the creative handiwork of God. The stamp of His likeness on us, in us, is priceless to God.

- Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1

#2 PROTECT LIFE VIGOROUSLY: The image of God in each man is so important to God that no human being's life should be taken from him without God's moral and legal permission. Apart from natural causes, the only time a human life should be ended is as a moral and legal penalty for unjustly taking another's life.

- Genesis 9:5-6, Cf. Romans 13:3-4

#3 HONOR HUMAN LIFE CAREFULLY: The image of God should not even be dishonored in the way we talk about or to others.

- James 3:9-10

  8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **9** With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. **10** From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers,[a] these things ought not to be so.

[iii] From "The Buzz," *World* (July 29, 2006).