

God loves. I'm guessing when most of us saw this title we thought, "Seriously? Like I didn't know that. We're gonna talk about THAT for half hour?!"

But I'm thinking that there are some people who are where I used to be. You see all the horrific stuff going on all over the globe...you see abusive parents...people praying for people who die anyway.

If that's where you are—I am sorry that life has bruised you or people close to you.

But let's imagine this: Imagine a sweet-spirited, ever-smiling, ever-encouraging grandmother. (Maybe you have one.) Imagine that on a series of three consecutive visits to her house-- that something bad happened to her grandson.

On trip 1, he was so excited, he slipped getting out of the car—did a face-plant and got a huge knot on his sweet 4-year old head.

On the 2nd trip, the illness that had been coming on the last couple days finally arrived full-force and after dinner he ended up tossing his cookies...

On the 3rd trip, the out-of-control, one-year-old, over-affectionate golden retriever got out of the neighbors yard and jumped right up on the little grandson —knocked him down in the dust with a forceful mighty thud—followed by an explosion of tears.

After all this, does the grandson wonder if his grandmother loves him?

No. The grandson still thinks he has the most amazing loving grammy in the whole world.

And we think this is a stupid question to ask: why would the kid not love his grandmother?

In fact, when the kid slips, gets sick and knocked down—he needs his grammy's love more than ever—right? →

So it is with God. We slip, get sick and knocked down---and in those times we need God's love more than ever---right?

We'd never cast blame upon grammy when bad things happen—we'd seek her love.

And in the same way, we don't blame God when bad things happen—we seek His love. God loves.

((((SELAH))))

Alright---let's get into the doctrine of God loves. If you have a Bible turn to Genesis 1:26-27 (we have them in the back...)

(sidebar: If you want to get into the Bible more—become more familiar with it—BRING IT!)

(PP1) Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27 NLT

(Keep this passage open—we'll come back to it...)

In the verses before this, God is creating:

- Heavens & the earth
- Light
- Sky
- Land
- Vegetation
- Stars & moon
- Fish & birds
- Land creatures
- Finally—US.

And verse 26 says that God loved us so much, He created us in His image. We are the ONLY things created in the image of God.

What's one of the first things we wonder when a child is born? "*Who does she look like?*"

There is something in us that values that these little 7 lb "buddhas" are born in our image.

And the fact that we're in wide-eyed wonder and joy--- over these tiny versions of us, comes from God—because He loved us so much—that we are the ONLY thing created in His image.

The Bible was translated in Latin around 380 A.D. and the Latin phrase for Genesis 1:25 "in God's image" is **Imago Dei** (PP2) (*eh-mah-go Day*).

Let's say that: "Imago Dei" (play w/it...)
And what's it mean? "In God's image."

(PP3) Imago Dei means when God created us:

He "crowned us with Glory and honor." Psalm 8:5 says.

"To be like Him in true righteousness and holiness." Ephesians 5:24

With the ability become like Christ. Colossians 3:10

Let's just stop here a second. Some of us may feel like we're a million miles away from words like: glory, honor, righteousness and holiness & Christ-likeness

Maybe you've never been treated like you're honorable...maybe life and people have beat you up and you don't feel like you are glorious...maybe you've behaved yourself into a dark and condemning place and you don't think there's anything righteous or holy or Christ-like about you.

Guess what? If you are a human (not Christian—HUMAN), you were born Imago Dei. Whether you've every known that, whether you've reflected those truths, whether you feel worthy of it, just like we've given birth to kids that breath, think and talk like us...

By your birthright, God has crowned you with glory & honor—created to be like Him in true righteousness and holiness and given you the ability to become like Christ.

If you can't think of yourself with words like: glory, honor, righteousness, holiness & Christ-likeness. Then think of it this way: you have an inheritance that you never knew you had coming and that you need to claim. And there's no forms to fill out.

((((SELAH)))

Let's look at verse 28, Genesis ch 1:

(PP4) Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground." NLT

Not only did God love us enough to create us in His image, but he also put us positionally UNDER God—or submitted to God, like Mark taught last week-- and OVER the rest of God's creation.

Get that? God created us to be UNDER God and OVER everything else He created.

Ok this point here—is an HOUR discussion ;-) Couple points:

1) Immediately after creating Adam and Eve, God TALKS to them. He didn't talk to anything else He created. Chimps, dolphins and crows and very intelligent creatures—yet God never asked them, "How's it goin?"

For those of you who think Adam & Eve were chimps—see me after class ;-)

2) Animals and the planet are to be appreciated, valued, treated well—but not ELEVATED. What do I mean "not elevated?"

Don't treat or value animals like humans. Don't value nature on a plane higher than us, don't consider nature itself, a holy thing.

I'm NOT saying don't love animals. We just had to put down on wonderful greyhound Cleo—and it ripped our ever-lovin-guts out. I cried more over that dog than most funerals.

I'm NOT saying trash the environment because it's ours to "reign over."

When God put us over animals and creation—He gave us the responsibility of stewarding those things---taking care of those things. But not ELEVATING those things. Not WORSHIPING those things.

I loved my dog. And I love being out on a scenic winding road in nature on my motorcycle—and I attribute the goodness of those things to God—I give God the glory & the credit for what those things mean to me.

(PP5) God loved us so much---He trusted us to take care of everything else He created.

((((SELAH)))

What's the Latin for "In God's image?" (Imago Dei!) Let's dig deeper into Imago Dei.

One of the GREAT fathers of our faith was a man named (PP6) John Calvin (1509-1564).

He was a theologian and pastor. He and Martin Luther were the two prominent theologians driving the Protestant Reformation or simply "The Reformation."

The Reformation is so important in the history of Christ followers. John Calvin and Martin Luther—in the 1500s broke away from the Catholic Church and began what we know as Protestantism.

We are protestants. Most non-Catholic churches in Kokomo would be protestant.

Protestant church are in essence characterized by these 3 doctrines: (PP7)

- 1) We're saved by GRACE ALONE and not by what we do to earn it.
"Sola Fide" (soul-uh fee' day)
- 2) The priesthood of ALL believers. (We ALL have direct access to God...)
- 3) The Bible is ultimate authority of faith and order (not man).

(That was your BONUS doctrine today on Protestantism ;-)

Ok, so—John Calvin—one heavy dude, spiritually speaking—He and Martin Luther were used by God to SHAPE the faith we're living out today.

Here's an excerpt of what John Calvin wrote about Imago Dei:

(PP8)

"We are renewed after (in) the image of God...that we may be made like God, and that His glory may shine forth in us...that man reflects, like a mirror, the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God...this is our highest perfection and blessedness to bear (reflect) the image of God." John Calvin

Calvin is saying that to Imago Dei—is to MIRROR or REFLECT the invisible attributes of our Father God, to the world.

God loved us so much that He has bestowed upon us—the amazing ability and incredible responsibility to be His MIRRORS on this earth—reflecting His goodness and glory—to EVERYONE—for God's glory—and our JOY.

God loved us so much He created us in His image. Imago Dei.

But then there was the Fall of Man.

In the Garden--*SIN came CRASHING into the world.*

The Fall changed everything. When sin entered the world, grandkids get hurt and sick when they visit their sweet grandmother. Adults do hideous things to one another and every one of us is TERMINAL.

To read about The Fall—I encourage you to check it out yourself in Genesis ch 3. It's a short chapter that's long on implications as to why life is the way it is. ///

So on this side of The Fall--- instead of perfectly reflecting God---we reflect God to varying degrees.

Meaning that every person –even people who don't believe in God, reflect God's image in a basic sense.

For example, everyone can love, show compassion, have empathy and hate injustice. Whether they know God or not, those human traits are Imago Dei.

Christ followers reflect God more so than non-Christians (hopefully), and mature Christ followers reflect God's image even more so.

Sin has broken our mirror—has affected our ability to make a totally clear reflection of our Father God. The first step in repairing that mirror is grace—salvation—coming into a relationship with Christ---Sola Fide (faith alone).

Then we start down the road of sanctification—fancy word for repairing the mirror so we can better Imago Dei—reflect God.

We often hear of Christ followers referred to as “empty cups” that need to be filled up by God. But based on Calvin's imagery, we are more appropriately BROKEN MIRRORS that need to be put back together—not cups that need to be filled.

We do not exist to be “filled up with God”—to be filled with contentment as we live the life of our choosing with the benefit of a God-inspired smile. THAT'S NOT OUR CALLING! (*repeat*)

What IS our calling? You guys up for some more Latin?

Our calling is to live **Coram Deo.** (**Core 'em Day-O**)

Coram Deo means “before the face of God.” This was a phrase that John Calvin & others used to explain the Christian life. Living “Coram Deo”—before the face of God—means to live ALL OF LIFE:

(PP9)

In the PRESENCE of God
Under the AUTHORITY of God
By the WORD of God
To the GLORY of God

We're created Imago Dei—in the image of God.
We're saved Sola Fide – by faith alone
So that we can live Coram Deo. Coram Deo is to live 100% of our lives
 In the PRESENCE of God
 Under the AUTHORITY of God
 By the WORD of God
 To the GLORY of God

So often in American Christianity we have parts of our life-- that are secular and parts of our life that are spiritual.

We have one set of behaviors at the golf course, online, work or wherever—and another set of behaviors at church, small group or wherever...

But God loves us so much that He wants us to live a life that's not SEGMENTED into secular & spiritual—but a Coram Deo life—where we live 100% of our life before the face of God!

God says to us through his Word:

I love you so much
 that I have made you in MY IMAGE!

I love you so much
 that I have saved you with my ONE and ONLY SON!

I love you so much
 That I have made a way for you to reflect ME into EVERY PART of your life!

((((SELAH))))

You and I are broken mirrors. It is only GRACE—it is only the GOSPEL that collects the pieces of our broken mirror and restores us.

And even after we come into a life with Christ—our eternal destination secured. We still need daily grace. Because we do sin—we do chase things that are not of God—some days it's as if we break our mirror even while God is repairing it.

1) God loved us so much, He created us **Imago Dei**.

2) God loved us so much that He made a way that we could be saved **Sola Fide** –by faith alone.

3) God loved us so much He calls us to live **Coram Deo**—100% of life:
 In the PRESENCE of God
 Under the AUTHORITY of God
 By the WORD of God
 To the GLORY of God

And it all starts with this... (talk at the cross...)

((((SALVATION)))
(PP11—Roman's Road)

((((song: *Jesus paid it all*)))