

- I. Recap of weeks 1 & 2
 - A. God made an incredibly good world. Humans are the apex of creation.
 - 1. Man and woman=image of God
 - 2. Image, not just shared attributes, but a purpose: fill, rule
 - a. Ruling isn't like we see it today but instead = working and serving to increase good and ensure human flourishing.
 - b. Boiled down, filling and ruling = LOVE
 - B. All of this became broken when man rebelled.
 - 1. Take/receive, bad/good, death/life, distrust/trust. Mankind now rules like beasts.
 - 2. But at the very end of this dark chapter, HOPE!

Genesis 3:15

[to the serpent]:¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

- C. The name of this offspring is Jesus
 - 1. But the way that Jesus accomplished this promise is the most unexpected, undeserved, scandalous event in history.
 - 2. And when we see, it, it not only presents us with truth but also presents us with a choice.

Story: Excerpt from *Les Miserables*, Victor Hugo

-Jean Valjean stole bread, 19 yrs prison, stays with & steals from Bishop, Bishop gives grace

-This act of grace sets Jean Valjean free but also becomes a weight on his soul:

"When Jean Valjean left the Bishop's house, he was, as we have seen, quite thrown out of everything that had been his thought hitherto. He could not yield to the evidence of what was going on within him. He hardened himself against the angelic action and the gentle words of the old man. 'You have promised me to become an honest man. I buy your soul. I take it away from the spirit of perversity; I give it to the good God.'"

This recurred to his mind unceasingly. To this celestial kindness he opposed pride, which is the fortress of evil within us. He was indistinctly conscious that the pardon of this priest was the greatest assault and the most formidable attack which had moved him yet; that his obduracy was finally settled if he resisted this clemency; that if he yielded, he should be obliged to renounce that hatred with which the actions of other men had filled his soul through so many years, and which pleased him; that this time it was necessary to conquer or to be conquered; and that a struggle, a colossal and final struggle, had been begun between his viciousness and the goodness of that man"

- a. What a disturbing and beautiful picture of exactly where we find ourselves!

- b. There is a severity in the mercy of God. The grace of Jesus is both gentle and forceful.
- c. At the same moment that He extends forgiveness, He presents a choice—a choice that will overturn all that we’ve known of living and “ruling” in this world.
- d. This choice doesn’t start with a surrendering to new behavior. It starts with surrendering to a person. Jesus.

Colossians 1:15

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

II. Jesus is the UNIQUE imager of God

- A. Jesus completely shared our humanity and still does! But He was UNIQUE. Hebrews 1:3 says “exact imprint of God’s nature.”
- B. In Genesis 1, Moses described for us what it means for humans to be the imagers of God: filling and ruling
- C. Here in Colossians 1, there is no question in my mind that Paul was thinking about Genesis 1 as He describes Jesus as the image of God, but to a degree that’s in a class of its own:

Colossians 1:16-18

¹⁶For by Him all things were created, in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him.

¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

- D. Humans are the image of God in that we are given dominion over the Earth, but Jesus is shown to be the unique image of God by having Universal Dominion.
- E. Jesus images His Father in ways that we could never even attempt because they share one nature:

Colossians 1:19

For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,

- 1. Jesus is the full, unbroken image of God.
- 2. We tend to think of ourselves and the people around us as normal human beings. And we look at Jesus as “abnormal.”
- 3. Twilight Zone: Eye of the Beholder
- 4. Jesus is the most normal human being that ever walked the planet because:

III. Jesus imaged God by living out humanity’s original design

- A. He lived right-side-up while surrounded by the kingdom of the upside-down.
 - 1. It is too simplistic to look at Jesus’ life and say, “He did good things.”
 - 2. There is a clearer description of the good He did. What we’re actually seeing Him do is be the image of God as God intended.
- B. And in His payment for sin, we see Him imaging God in unique ways that we never could.

C. Jesus' message on Earth was that a new "Kingdom" was at hand.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

- D. Do you know what everyone listening in that day heard? They'd seen a new kingdom be "at hand" before, like when the Romans conquered them, and the Assyrians and Babylon, etc. What did they hear? Jesus is a warlord Who believes He's about to conquer Rome the way Rome conquered us: with blood.
- E. From your own experience, what does "regime change" or "invasion" look like? But right after Jesus announces the arrival of His Kingdom, look what He DOES:

Matthew 4:23-24

²³ And He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel (good news!) of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

²⁴ So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and He healed them.

1. This is such an odd "invasion." It doesn't look like one kingdom being toppled by another. Where's the powering up? Where's the armies? Where's the blood?
 2. Jesus isn't playing by the rules of the upside-down kingdom. He's "waging war" using the tactics of Heaven.
 3. At every turn, we see Jesus rejecting beastly rule and embracing what it means to rule as humans were intended to.
 - a. Producing life and human flourishing, not death and human suffering
 - b. Increasing good, not evil
 - c. Kneeling to serve, not grasping at power
 4. Jesus' invasion gets even stranger. Back to Colossians 1:19
- F. But first let me ask you a question:
1. Imagine you have more power and authority than anyone else. You can do anything you want, no one can stop you, and you want to prove it. You want to prove you are the most powerful being in the universe. What's your next move?
 2. Amassing huge wealth, houses, cars, boats, huge entourage? Getting a huge army, invading territories you don't yet rule, and forcing its people serve you?
 3. That would be the normal next move for someone wanting to assert their enormous power. It's been repeated countless in human history.
- G. After Paul describes how all-powerful Jesus is, look at how he describes Jesus' next move, the apex of Jesus' invasion of this broken upside-down kingdom. This is Jesus going for the jugular:

Colossians 1:19-20

¹⁹For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on Earth or in Heaven, making peace **by the blood of His cross**.

IV. Jesus imaged God fully by dying sacrificially.

- A. Don't miss the weirdness in this. This is NOT NORMAL.
- B. Jesus is before all things, all things are made by Him and for Him. He has all power and dominion over all things. He proves it by being stripped naked, beaten, whipped, spit on, mocked, impaled, and murdered on a Roman execution device called a cross.
- C. This should shock us because all we ever see of power is how it becomes corrupt and benefits itself by crushing others.
- D. But Jesus, being the EXACT image of God, refused to play by the rules of the Upside down Kingdom. The rules everyone else played by did not change Who He was or where He was from. He lived like a citizen of Heaven even though He was surrounded by hell.
 - 1. Jesus has a completely different view of ruling and what power is for:
 - 2. Look at Jesus' trial before the Jewish religious leaders, hours before His execution:

Matthew 26:63b-65a

And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on [something you are about to witness] you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven." ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy."

- E. This answer is what ultimately got Jesus killed. Why? Because the High Priest knew EXACTLY what Jesus meant.
 - 1. Jesus was quoting from Daniel 7 where one who is called the Son of Man rides a cloud up to a throne and is given power over all Kingdoms.
 - 2. Jesus was saying, I AM that same Son of Man and I'm about to be enthroned!
- F. But I don't want you to miss a very subtle yet mind-bending thing Jesus did here.
 - 1. At the same moment that He is looking back to the picture of His being lifted up and being enthroned that is portrayed in the book of Daniel, He is also VERY aware of and envisioning what will happen in the next few hours: His crucifixion.
 - 2. In one fell swoop, Jesus weaves two pictures together: Daniel's picture of Him being lifted up and enthroned and His being lifted up on a cross and dying.
 - 3. The cross WAS and IS Jesus' enthronement.
- G. When you're imaging God in the Kingdom of the upside down, thrones look like crosses.
- H. On the cross, Jesus took into Himself the consequences of our beastly rebellion and rule, our sin.
 - 1. And in the same moment, He took the throne as the King of the Kingdom that will one day completely defeat and destroy the works of this broken kingdom we've created in our own image.
 - 2. God is no longer invisible. He is no longer an elusive idea, lost by the blindness of our rebellion.

3. He is perfectly seen in Jesus.
 4. And seeing and treasuring Jesus is the beginning our imaging of God.
- V. Our imaging of God doesn't start with behaving, it starts with beholding.
- A. We are images of God, whether we like it or not. It is our design and God NEVER revoked it.
 1. But we ARE broken images, mirrors that have been cracked and shattered.
 2. We cannot boil down imaging God to imitating good behavior.
 3. We are reflectors of God's character, not the creators of it.
 - B. TURN OFF LIGHTS: Mirror demonstration
 1. The most basic reality of reflection of light is that first there must be a source of light.
 2. Second: the reflector must be facing that which it wishes to reflect.
 - a. A mirror can only reflect that which it is FACING.
 - b. We would be foolish and lost to try to image God without facing Jesus, beholding Jesus, treasuring Jesus, trusting Jesus and being WITH Jesus.
 3. If we want to truly image God, and reflect Him as we were designed, it must start with loving Him and treasuring Him and beholding Him above all other things, EVERY DAY.

GROUPS:

I don't have a list of questions for your groups this week. Instead, here's what I would suggest you do. Together, in your community, talk about Jesus, not as an idea, not as an abstract subject. Talk about Him as a person: Who He is, What He did on the Cross, what He has done for you. Hear each other's stories of adoption and friendship with Jesus. Face Him, behold Him and prepare your hearts to come next week as we start getting down to the brass tacks of HOW we image Him in this crazy, broken world we live in.