

- I. Introduction
  - A. What we've seen so far: Original design, rebellion/shattering of design, Jesus perfection in imaging God, opening the way and showing the way.
  - B. But how do we think and live now in the space between Jesus' work and His return?
    - 1. World around us is still very broken and so are we.
    - 2. Sit it out and wait? Stay out of trouble? Stress--it's on us to fix it?
  - C. Today: do our best to bring it all together, bring it down to what it practically means
    - 1. How do I image God when I'm broken?
    - 2. How do I image God when other broken people bring their mess into my life and harm me?
  - D. Get practical with Jesus' words as our guide: Matthew 5-7. This is Jesus' masterpiece sermon about living as citizens of His Kingdom while surrounded by the kingdom of the upside-down.
  - E. Before we dig in: shine a light on something so obvious that we may not even see it.
    - 1. Easy to feel: "This is one more way I'm failing, one more thing to do better!"
    - 2. But this is a GIFT! It's true hope, peace, purpose, and greatness.
    - 3. That God made us in His image, and when we rebelled, His response is compassion and a cure: Jesus!
    - 3. These are not the actions of a distant, uncaring Being who is detached from your life.
  - F. GOD LOVES YOU AND HE IS FOR YOU!
    - 1. This process of becoming like Jesus doesn't always feel like He is for us because letting go of the only way we've known to survive this world is both painful and scary.
    - 2. ILLUSTRATION: "Watcher in the Woods" movie. "... in the end, pushing her down is what freed her from the branch she was caught on and saved her life."
- II. Now, thru the Sermon on the Mount I want to share with you some themes and connected thoughts that together paint a picture of how we live as imagers NOW.
  - A. The way UP is DOWN.

Matthew 5:2-12

<sup>2</sup>And He opened his mouth and taught them, saying: <sup>3</sup>"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. <sup>4</sup>"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup>"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth. <sup>6</sup>"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. <sup>7</sup>"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. <sup>8</sup>"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup>"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup>"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. <sup>11</sup>"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in Heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- B. Humility is the posture of Imagers of God.
  - 1. Not about being a “doormat”—it’s choosing to love and serve like Jesus did.
  - 2. Jesus said in John 10:18 “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”
  - 3. Imaging God: HAVING rights and not always CLAIMING them. Laying them down willingly for the sake of your calling to give of yourself for the flourishing of others.
- C. The WHY matters

Matthew 5:21-26

<sup>21</sup> You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

- 1. Notice that Jesus doesn’t indicate at all whether the “brother” you are angry at or who is angry at you is in the wrong. Why? Because to someone imaging God, it doesn’t matter.
- 2. In this passage and the following passages, Jesus is lovingly showing us where sin starts—not in our outward ACTIONS, or whether or not our actions are justified. Imaging God (or not) starts with the inner INTENTIONS of our hearts.
- 3. Imaging God well is MODELING the love of God.
  - a. Remember what Matt preached in the “Love Is” series:
    - 1) We are the OBJECT of God’s love, not the REASON for it.
    - 2) Not because we’ve given Him reason to but because it’s WHO He is.
  - b. We image God well when we love others in the same way.
    - 1) That they are the **object** of our love, not the reason for it.
    - 2) That we would lay down our rights and love other human beings NOT because they give us reason to, but because of WHO we are—people who IMAGE the love of God—and because of WHO THEY are—imagers of God, no matter how broken they are.
- 4. We are not merely IMITATING good behavior.
  - a. If it’s only about imitating good behavior: robot or animals could “image” God.
  - b. It is the intent of our hearts, played out through loving action that reflects the nature of God.
  - c. Moralism will never image God accurately because at its core is selfish gain. It will always become warped into a tool for judging and controlling others.

- d. If imaging God means choosing humility and love as our core motivation, we're going to have to make some decisions on what "methods" we employ in life.

D. Choose your "weapons" wisely

Matthew 5:38-47

<sup>38</sup>You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' <sup>39</sup>But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup>And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup>And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup>Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. <sup>43</sup>You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup>But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup>so that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup>For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup>And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

1. In these passages, Jesus envisions a personal war. An imager of Jesus has been attacked, your enemy has launched an assault against you with his weapons of anger, hate, violence, the court system, intimidation and persecution, etc, and it has done you harm. What "weapon" does Jesus envision His imager picking up and firing back with? LOVE.
2. Two reasons:
  - a. Because our homeland is the Kingdom of Jesus, a Kingdom built on love, as defined by God. Kingdom patriotism demands that we use the weapons supplied by our true homeland.
  - b. Because the person who is acting like our enemy isn't actually our enemy.

Ephesians 6:12

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

3. I cannot build the Kingdom of Jesus while holding the weapons of the world in my hands. To image God, you will have to make conscious choices to lay down your rights and not use the upside-down tools at your disposal.
4. We make FAR too many concessions for using the weapons of the upside down
  - a. "They did it to me." "It's my right." "It's normal." Yes, that's the problem. When we act "normal" in the upside-down kingdom, we deny our design as human beings made in the image of God.
    - 1) Illustration: Amer. soldier, using weapon of the enemy, against comrades
    - 2) What would you call him: A traitor. Let that sink in.

- b. When we use our influence, actions, and words to tear down another image of God for our own benefit, we are building and strengthening the upside-down kingdom, Satan's kingdom. It is treason.
  - 1) Satan's titles: NT- Devil = "Slanderer", OT- Satan = "Adversary"
  - 2) There are most certainly things we should speak up about and be against as followers of Jesus.
  - 3) But when we become characterized by being adversarial, argumentative, and attacking others, we are imaging Satan.
- 5. We must oppose sin and evil. But two questions:
  - a. Have you FIRST shown resolve to oppose sin and evil in your life? (Matthew 7:1-5)
  - b. In opposing evil, are you inadvertently using methods and postures that were designed by the upside-down kingdom of evil?
  - c. For many Christians, the digital age has NOT been your friend in this.
    - 1) Digital courage
    - 2) The First amendment guarantees that, for the most part, what you say will not send you to jail. But it DOESN'T guarantee that what you say will be loving, helpful, wise, or even correct.
    - 3) 90% Rule
      - a) Don't see 90% of what is available. Don't say 90% of what you think.
      - b) Not just talking about pornography. News (both left and right), blogs, social media commentary
      - c) I'm not saying the internet is evil. I'm saying that from a psychological perspective, "You are what you eat."
- 6. Imaging God means we will be different: not "street-corner guy with signs and a bull-horn" different
  - a. When hated, we love. Attacked, we forgive. Opportunity to one-up someone, instead we serve them.
  - b. What we see all around is normal for the upside-down, but it is not "normal" for the design of humanity.
  - c. We have GOT TO stop letting what is "normal" in culture define our imaging of God.
  - d. We have GOT TO stop letting our politics define our Christianity.
  - e. We have GOT TO stop letting our "rights" define what is right.
- E. Choose your rewards and consequences (6:19-24)
  - 1. Imaging God is often not rewarded in the Kingdom of the upside-down.
  - 2. The question is, would I rather have earthly treasure with Kingdom consequences or Kingdom treasure with earthly consequences?
    - a. You must choose your treasure. And when we do, just realize that you are also choosing corresponding consequences.
    - b. Consequences? Yes. Worth it? Absolutely.
- F. Humility Now, Greatness Then (7:24-25)

Matthew 7:24-25

<sup>24</sup>Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup>And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

1. We are trusting a person and His words: Jesus. Here is a picture of what He's telling us: ILLUSTRATION: Toy hammer and nails
  2. The lower you go now in humble love for God and others, the greater you will be then when Jesus turns everything right-side-up.
  3. The more you image God, the lower and more humbly you serve and give of yourself now (LOVE!), the greater you will be when everything is flipped back to right-side up!
  4. Reminder: Jesus is for you. This is all about LOVE (Love graphic on screen)
    - a. He is Kind, He is Honest, He is patient.
    - b. He understands your brokenness and the flinch reactions you've developed because of your experiences. Jesus responds to your failures to image Him well with compassion and tender discipline.
    - c. He's ok with the reality that this is a process. No rush, daily come to Him.
- III. How do I actually do this? How do I image Jesus day to day?
- A. Will what I'm about to think, say or do:
    1. Connect myself and other imagers to Jesus, who is THE image of God?
      - a. Will it fill the Earth with more imagers of God?
      - b. Because no amount of "good" we produce for people has eternal impact for them if they don't know Jesus.
    2. Cause human flourishing?
    3. Take the good God has created and increase it?
  - B. Final Story: Gordon Wilson, IRA bombing, Enniskillen
    1. In the 1980s, Ireland found itself in horrible turmoil: IRA (Irish Republican Army) was using horribly violent tactics to try and force Irish independence from British rule.
    2. Gordon Wilson was a follower of Jesus who owned a drapery store in Enniskillen, Ireland and on Nov. 8, 1987 took his family to a Remembrance Day parade (much like our Memorial Day) in the town square of Enniskillen.
      - a. What no one knew is that the IRA had rigged several buildings in the square with explosives.
      - b. When the explosives went off, Gordon and his daughter Marie were trapped together under the rubble... they were gravely injured and were under the rubble for several hours.
      - c. When they were finally removed from the rubble, they were taken to a hospital where Gordon survived, but his precious daughter Marie died from her injuries.
      - d. A few days later, the BBC interviewed several of the survivors of the bombing, Gordon being one of them. William Ury wrote in his book *The Third Side*:  
"No one who heard Gordon Wilson will ever forget what he said in that interview. His grace towered over the miserable justification of the bombers. Speaking from his hospital bed, Wilson described his last conversation with his daughter (while still trapped under the rubble) (Wilson

said): 'She held my hand tightly, and gripped me as hard as she could. She said, "Daddy, I love you very much." Those were her exact words to me, and those were the last words I ever heard her say.' To the astonishment of listeners, Wilson went on to add, "But I will bear no ill will. I will bear no grudge. Bitter talk is not going to bring her back to life. I will pray tonight and every night for the men who did tis, that God will forgive them." No words in more than twenty-five years of violence in Northern Ireland had such a powerful, emotional impact."

3. One year later, on the anniversary of the bombing, Gordon Wilson hosted a day of remembrance event to remember those who died in the bombing. To this event, he invited leaders and members of the IRA. There, he publicly announced his forgiveness of the men who did this and also bravely implored the IRA to once and for all end the violence it had relied on for so long.
4. Gordon Wilson was no "doormat". This man was an imager of God who knew His King and who stood in the strength of humble LOVE. He understood what it meant to lay down the weapons of the upside-down kingdom and do battle with the weapons of his true homeland, the homeland where Jesus is King.

Never forget: I can only reflect that which I am facing. Beholding, loving, and treasuring Jesus above all things is where imaging Him starts.

That's what we're going to do right now. Through the Lord's Supper, we're going to behold our King and remember how He laid down His life under the rubble of our sin. Dying on the cross to forgive those whose rebellion put Him there.