

# CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

March 15, 2009



## Genesis: The Story of God, the Story of Us Made for Glory

*“So God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”....*

Identity is one of the seminal questions of life as we ask “what are we made for?” Genesis 1:26-31 offers a unique answer to this question that is all together different from other cultural propositions. The situation of the Hebrew people who first received the book of Genesis was not too different from our contemporary one. Israel had left the shackles of Egypt behind looking forward to the promised land that lie ahead. The lengthy wilderness journey provided the perfect space for the wandering people to reflect on their identity. In surrounding cultures, particular Egypt, the only person of dignity and worth was the Pharaoh who was consider the ‘son of god’. Thus, the average person in society was deemed worthless. Having grown up in the house of Pharaoh, Moses knew this characterization of personhood well. Thus, a view that God created all men and women in his image was completely

heretical to cultural norms. In one fell swoop Moses deconstructed power at the level of Pharaoh and democratized it to the commoner. What was true in the day of Moses is true today; the worldview established by scripture is unique in that it provides intrinsic worth for everyone ultimately through the person of Christ. Because we are made in the image of God we have the capacity to love, reason, and reshape the creation around us. In other words, these verses provide the bedrock of our identity and as a result morality. If we truly believe that we are made in the image of God then we are compelled to love others and steward the world around us. Naturalism shares similar goals to the biblical worldview but with an inadequate foundation. Naturalism, which holds to an ever-changing view of mankind, must by logically necessity hold to a dynamic view of morality. In a word if our image of man is in flux then how we treat each other is also in flux. Nothing is more illustrative of this relationship than that of Nazi Germany.

Seeing our own identity rooted in the image of God is indeed countercultural. Our culture consistently encourages us to believe that our worth is found in the next profitable deal or the types of relationships we have socioeconomically. As a result we often find ourselves caught in the swinging pendulum between self-denigration and self-deification. An identity in Christ provides us a way out of this lifestyle of extremes. Despite our being made in the image of God, we are living with the effects of the Fall. As such we are part of the problem and thus cannot fix the larger problem. But as we come to grips with the work of Christ in our own life, God graciously gives us both confidence and humility. In Christ we can be confident of our worth as we are restored in His image through the working of His spirit. Additionally, we can have a profound humility as we realize our worth is secured by Christ not ourselves. Such a foundation empowers us towards authentic love and culture-shaping in the here and now.

# Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

## Application Questions: Genesis 1:26-31

1. How would you describe your own worldview and the impact it has on your view of mankind? Are human beings valued, why or why not? What has been your perception of the value of mankind in the church?
2. What did you find meaningful in regards to self-worth and dignity from this text? Consider your own personally story. What positive and negative features have shaped your sense of self-worth? What have you found to be redemptive in this regard?
3. Define the worldview of Naturalism. How does naturalism describe the processes of this world through history? What is the impact if any on morality?
4. How do you find yourself placing your own value and worth in your job, children, socioeconomic status, etc? Why do we return to this process repeatedly and what do we hope it will accomplish? How are we left feeling at the end of the day when give ourselves to these things?
5. The sermon described two extremes regarding self-worth; denigration (we are a waste!) and deification (we are god!). Why is it that we swing back and forth so much? How does the work of Christ liberate us from this vicious cycle? How does Christ define our identity along the lines of confidence and humility?
6. Discuss your service project from this month. How does your service project restore a gospel-centered value in others. How does the gospel enable us to truly love and serve others?

## Lent: A Wilderness Journey

by Jim Dolas

**8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. (Matthew 4:8-11 ESV)**

The temptations to despair of the Father's goodness and to presume upon the Father's power are temptations to forget the reality of being image-bearers of God. When the devil finds that avenue shut with Jesus, he pursues a final frontal assault on the very person of God. "Worship me instead of God," the devil says to Jesus, "and I will give you power over the kingdoms of the world."

This is essentially a temptation to be the messiah that the world wants: an exalted political and military leader whose rule would unite disparate and divided kingdoms. But Jesus rejects this overture, because he knows that to follow that path would be to deny the world what it needs. To rule in such a way would be to unite the world under the devil, and that would leave the world in the same state in which he found it: broken, sinful, hurting, and lacking in that which is most fully satisfying.

So what is that satisfaction the world longs for? We see it in Jesus' response to the devil's temptation: worship God and serve him alone. Though the world suppresses the longing, that is what we were made for, to bear the image of God, to walk with God, to rule all of creation on God's behalf. That is what we lost in the first Adam. That is what the devil sought to keep from us when he tempted Jesus and seeks to keep from us even now. And that is what Jesus, the second Adam, came to restore.

This wilderness temptation is still with us, to be what the world wants us to be instead of what the world needs us to be. As we continue our Lenten journey, we can be encouraged to pursue devotion and peace and beauty for the sake of our God by the good news that we have a Messiah who rejected idolatrous exaltation in order to worship and serve his Father.

"It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare...There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal."

C.S. Lewis  
*The Weight of Glory*



*The Geographer* by Johannes Vermeer  
On Display at the High