

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
12th October 2021

READINGS

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Genesis 1:26-31 (NRSV)

So here's what I want you to do, with God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

Romans 12:1-6 (The Message Translation)

REFLECTION

When I visit my family back in Northern Ireland, there is no mistaking whose son I am, I look just like my mum. We have the same shape, the same eyes, the same facial features. Though my mum is no longer with us, there can be no mistaking that I am Shirley Stewart's son.

That is one of the things we say about babies as well, "Oh he has his mother's eyes!", "She has her father's nose!". Our characteristics help to identify us as part of our family.

As Christians, we are part of the family of God with Jesus Christ as our brother. Do we then bear a family likeness to Jesus?

None of us is the perfect Christian! Let's be honest, even the best of us are prone to getting faith wrong sometimes; even the best of us can lose our temper; even the best of us can step out of God's will and try and enforce our own way of thinking upon others. But that is the journey of faith. We are not the perfect finished article, rather, as Paul says to the Christians in Rome, we are in the process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Every day as we live our lives, as we question and struggle to see how we can serve God, how we can live in a way that pleases God, we are in the process of becoming more faithful, more like Jesus.

A sculptor once created a beautiful statue of a lion out of an ordinary common block of stone. When the amazed folk who viewed his creation asked him how he could create something so magnificent out of something so boring as a lump of rock, he replied, "Oh it's easy, I just chip away everything that doesn't look like a lion."

And I suppose that is the very same as what God does in our lives. Each experience, each trial, each moment of spiritual peace, each challenge, each failure, each success, is all part of the process of God chipping away in our lives all that is not like Christ.

We are in the process of becoming more and more like the family of God. We are in the process of becoming more and more like Jesus. We bear our family likeness with Jesus in our lives. In our words, in our deeds, in our living, God's likeness shines through.

Of course, none of us are perfect, but then God has not finished with us yet. We are in the process of being transformed, becoming more like the Jesus, so that we can live with intimacy of daughters and sons in the family of God. God is changing you into a daughter or son, one in whose face and life God is recognised. Wouldn't it be great to hear people say of us - gosh you look just your father, God?

Amen

PRAYER

God who is always with us,
Thank you for your company in our lives,
Your companionship in all our days.
As we live our lives,
As we experience events both good and bad,
Help us to rely on you, Lord God.
Whether we are sad or happy, broken down or buoyant,
May we be true to you.

And as we live our faith,
May our lives ever more fully reflect the image of Christ,
May we ever more truly live as part of the family of your people,
And may we bear witness to your love and forgiveness as we learn to bear the family
image of God.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

