

SERMON FOR DISCUSSION: Created to become like Christ

Bible Readings: Genesis 1 v26-31 Mark 9 v30-37

"We were created TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST"

"Yes, I am!" "No, you're not!"
"Yes, I AM!" "No. you're NOT!"
"Am." "Not. I AM!"
"No, you're not" "YES, I AM. AM! AM! AM!"
"Not!"

You can just hear it, can't you? And Jesus said to them, "*What were you arguing about on the road?*"

The disciples knew they were being childish and didn't give Jesus an answer because they had been arguing about who was the greatest. They were embarrassed.

And we have all been in such situations. Caught out by our stupidity and lack of maturity.

My sermon title today is: "We were created to become like Christ"

The Bible begins by stating that men and women, all human beings, **are created IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.** "*Let us make mankind in our own image, in our likeness*" says Genesis 1 v26 and then repeats the statement in the very next verse. "*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.*"

It is a text well-known to us all. **But it is none-the-less VITALLY IMPORTANT for it tells us God's plan FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.**

Right from the start of our existence we are made in the image of God. **It makes us all UNIQUE.**

The animals, the vegetation, the air, the sea, the sky **ARE NOT made** in the image of God. But because we ARE made in the image of God **WE HAVE A UNIQUE DIGNITY.**

(2)

God is spiritual; God is moral; God is creative;

-SO WE are spiritual beings;

-SO WE are moral beings and know the difference between right and wrong;

-SO WE are creative beings and can think and research and create new possibilities for ourselves and our communities.

All this is because WE ARE UNIQUELY CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

And I'm sure we have all heard the Gospel in three words beginning with "M"

MADE We are made in the image of God, as I have just said.

MARRED We have all gone our own way and deliberately chosen on occasions NOT to do what is right but have done what we have selfishly wanted to do. By acting independently of God we have "MARRED" the image of God in us. We have tarnished it.

MADE ANEW Jesus has come TO RESTORE the marred image and make us a new person.

At one level, this restoration is the work of God **in an instant.**

On another level, it is the work of a life-time – our life-time.

Yes, in Christ, I am "a new creation".

Jesus reconciles me with God and there is nothing more that I can do.

All that needed doing was done on the Cross.

It is a gift and all I have to do is receive it.

BUT HAVING RECEIVED IT, I then become a "**Work in Progress**" and I have TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT to become more and more like Christ, like my Saviour.

People sometimes use the phrase, "*Like Father, like Son. Like Mother, like Daughter*" when they recognise something of the parent in the child.

Well, GOD wants US to reflect something of HIS character. He is the Father, we his child.

The Bible teaches us TO BE GODLY.

Meaning people of a godly CHARACTER.

(3)

For the truth is simple: **God is much more interested in WHO WE ARE than in WHAT WE DO.**

For a long time this has not been the case in Britain. For a long time the attitude has been that **"it doesn't matter what you do in private as long as you do your job well."** In other words, "What you do" is more important than "Who you are."

So Tony Blair went to church every Sunday yet stated that as a politician *"We don't do God!"*

So Jimmy Saville's morals were never questioned because he did such a lot of high profile fund-raising and supporting good causes.

BUT TIMES ARE A CHANGING.

And who we are in private **is just as important** as what we do in public, if not more so.

It's our character that's important.

And this, in fact, is FREEING.

Often people agonise over specific issues – What job should I do? Which house should I buy/rent? Which town shall I live in?

The truth is: there are A NUMBER of jobs we *could* do;

There are A NUMBER of houses we *could* buy/rent.

There are A NUMBER of different places we *could* live in. **BUT WHAT**

GOD REALLY CARES ABOUT is that you do what you do

IN A CHRIST-LIKE WAY,

If you are going to agonise, then agonise over your character!

Take as your guide the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 v23

Co-operate with the Spirit so you come a more loving person, a more patient person, a more kind person, a more self-controlled person.

Take as your guide Ephesians 4 and "Take Off" the old clothing, the old ways of living, "Put-Off" thinking the way the world thinks and change your thinking so you "Put On" the new clothing of Godly living.

Our characters are, in essence, the sum total of our habits.

And our habits are what we do habitually, day by day, every day.

(4)

So being "Christ-like" isn't something for a Sunday. Being Christ-like is what we are every ordinary day. Christian values must be at the core of our being and so we live by them regardless of the day of the week.

AND THIS IS WORK **because the pressures of society around us are very great** and there is a battle between the desires of the Spirit and the desires of the flesh.

Rick Warren gives a marvellous **illustration of a boat which is set on auto-pilot** to travel north. So, left to its own devices, that is what it will do. It will keep going north. Now if you want it to go south you can do one of two things. You can take the helm and force the rudder so the boat turns around and goes south. But all the time the auto-pilot is trying to turn the boat back on a northerly course. Force of effort can make the boat go south, but any relapse and its back on a northerly course.

The second option is to re-programme the auto-pilot and give it a different set of instructions. Instruct it to go south, 180 degrees. Then the boat will go south with ease.

Likewise, we as followers of Christ, **need to re-programme our minds, our thinking, our core values** so we are not going the way of the world's auto-pilot.

This is the work of becoming Christ-like. And "because it is work" it is no surprise to find that in the New Testament we are taught "TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT" eight times.

WE are also taught to "**work out our salvation with fear and trembling**" (Philippians 2 v12) so that (v13) GOD will be at work "in you".

There has to be a partnership if there is to be spiritual growth. We have to do our part and God his part. We work "**out**" and God works "**in**". That's the partnership.

Working out our salvation "*with fear and trembling*" means "**take your spiritual growth SERIOUSLY!**" It means, "DON'T BE CASUAL"

And if you are, or have been, casual then this is a call to wake up. Don't be like the first disciples consumed with trivia and arguing about a non-essential. RISE TO THE CHALLENGE and do so with joy for we were all created 'TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST'.

It's the work of the rest of your life!

A sermon preached by the Revd Martin Tanner in St Mary's Church, Market Drayton at 10.30am on Sunday 27th September 2015

The eight occasions the New Testament says, "MAKE EVERY EFFORT"

Luke 13v24 "Make **every effort to enter** through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to."

Romans 14 v19 "Let us therefore **make every effort to do what leads to peace** and to mutual edification."

Ephesians 4 v3 "Make **every effort to keep the unity** of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

2 Timothy 2 v15 "**Make every effort to present yourself to God as one approved**, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."

Hebrews 4 v11 "Let us, therefore, **make every effort to enter that rest**, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience."

Hebrews 12 v14 "**Make every effort to live in peace** with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

2 Peter 1 v5 "For this very reason, **make every effort to add to your faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge"

2 Peter 3 v14 "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, **make every effort to be found spotless**, blameless and at peace with him."