

The Meaning of Life

Deuteronomy 5:17

Let us turn to Deuteronomy 5:17, probably the shortest verse I may ever preach from. We continue on in our series in Deuteronomy that we left off from last spring. If you are new to the church, or if the summer has been so long you can't remember, you can find all of those sermons, of course, on the Briarwood app and on our YouTube page. So go check those out. We are now in the middle of the Ten Commandments, and really at the beginning, part of what is sometimes referred to as the second tablet of the law. The first tablet, commandments one through four dealing with our relationship with God, the vertical relationship and the second tablet, particularly five through ten. But I've mentioned before, five is kind of an in-between commandment. It's sort of referencing our relationship with God as it references our relationship with others. And we continue on now with those in the sixth Commandment. This is Deuteronomy 5:17.

"You shall not murder."

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated.

Well, this past week, we honored a twenty fifth anniversary of a terrible event in this nation's history. And it brought back a lot of memories for me, as I'm sure it did for many of you. It's one of those events in life where you know exactly where you were when you found out. You can remember the cascade of emotions as you started with just, oh, some kind of strange accident, to then turning on the TV and seeing the pictures and realizing, oh no, this is a, this is a terrible building fire. And then slowly realizing that this was so much more than that. It's etched in our memories, isn't it? I'd like to ask this morning, why is that etched in our memories? Why is there a feeling that attends to memories like that? I think about even three years later. I was in Malta and I was teaching a group of Muslim background believers from North Africa and from the Middle East, and the first day of class was the day of the tsunami. And around Indonesia and in the Indian Ocean, in the South Pacific and the whole rest of the class, which was dedicated to systematic theology, ended up becoming systematic theology in suffering. That was the whole discussion of that rest of the week. We couldn't talk about anything else. Why is that? Why is the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives in a terrible event? Why is that something that arrests our attention so much? Is it merely, as some might tell us, just solidarity within the species. We have this invested selfish interest in humanity surviving. So when we see humans dying, we feel a deep feeling that kind of affects our sense of species solidarity, because we fear that maybe, perhaps a humanity won't make it. Is that the fear? Is it some self-interest that I see others die and I know I wouldn't like to die. So when I see others die, that makes me grieve their death because of some kind of refracted fear about losing my own life. Or is it something more? Is there something about life that is deeply meaningful?

This commandment do not Murder is a commandment about the meaning of life. What does life mean? Now, the word that Moses uses in the commandment is not the word for general

killing. It's important to remember that even though in many of our early English translations, we translate this as kill, it is actually a more specific word. It has to do with unauthorized wrongful killing. We use the word murder in English, and that's a good way to put it. ***That thou shalt not murder.*** The word is Raza. It's not Harag. Harag is the general word for killing. Now, of course, like in English, you can use the word to kill, to talk about murder. And yet, remember that not all killing is unlawful killing or unauthorized killing. Yes, this commandment includes the taking of human life in the commissioning of a crime, the negligent taking of human life -- we see this elsewhere in the laws on Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy, if someone's life is taken because you were negligent there's a notion of negligent homicide. This would include that. This would include the taking of human life, even in a difficult situation, but not a situation in which someone's life is threatened. This involves the taking of lives of those who have no voice, who have no way to defend themselves. The ability of the person to defend themselves or have a voice against the murder does not mitigate in any way the taking of their life. So this would include abortion. This would include euthanasia. This would include suicide. This would include negligent homicide. This includes the ethics of warfare. We'll come back to that later.

There's one place where we can say Christian theology has clearly affected international policy, not just in the United States but around the world. And that's in *just war* theory. That is a Christian doctrine. It affects the way we think about warfare, and it affects the principles and the parameters that we place on capital punishment. But as Jesus points out in the Sermon on the Mount, this commandment is about more than just what we do. It actually addresses the matters of the heart. It extends beyond how we treat those, to how we think and feel about those who are around us. It goes beyond behavior to talk about our actual disposition towards other people. We even see this broader application in in the Old Testament. We should be reminded of this -- Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, isn't the first to say this actually has a bearing on how you think about others. As a matter of fact, if we turn to Leviticus 19:17-18 Jesus tells the people, *you shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your brother, lest you incur sin because of him.* Notice he's just talking about hatred in your heart. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Can you see how this commandment lays the groundwork for our ethical behavior with others.

Our worshipful behavior is love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength. Our ethical behavior with those around us is to love our neighbor as ourself. And according to the Old Testament, this is founded in the commandment *thou shalt not murder*. Old Testament scholar Christopher Wright, in his commentary on Deuteronomy, says this. ***This commandment bears on all ethical matters in which human life is at stake. From its beginning in the womb to its waning and old age in terminal illness. Ultimately, this commandment is about honoring the dignity of human life.*** So this morning, I'd like to talk about that in three ways. I want to start from the beginning and work to the end. We're going to talk about the **source of life**, the **value of life**. And then lastly, **the goal of life**. I don't think we can understand the goal until we understand the source. We can't understand the value unless we understand the source and the goal. We have to understand these all together. So we're going to look at those aspects of the meaning of life.

So first **the source of life**. Human life comes from God and possesses a unique dignity, because every human being is created in the image of the personal and relational God. Point number one, the source of life is this human life comes from God and possesses a unique dignity. Because every human being is created in the image of the personal and the relational God. Both of those parts are important. We have to remember this human life is set apart from all other life in creation. From the very beginning, God just creates animals and beasts of the field. He creates animals of the waters, the waters below and the waters is above, but it's only for humans that he sets aside a special creation in Genesis1, and he tells us why it's special because he says, *as I am building my house, that is the house of creation*. As I am building this grand palace, this grand temple, I'm going to put my representative there. They will be my image, male and female. He made them in his image. He made them male and female. It's so grand that there's even a poem about it at the end of Genesis1:27 that the narrator speaks as he watches the Lord make humanity in his image. You see, humans are alone referencing God. We reference God in a unique way and in a powerful way. There's something transcendent about humans. And yes, it goes beyond just solidarity with our species. It goes beyond some kind of chemical reaction to the empathy that we feel when we see other people who look like us. It goes beyond that. There's something about humans that point us, whether we know it or not, to God. It's a particular delusion that some have to elevate animal life to the status of human life. Animal life is of great value. There's teachings in Scripture about how we are meant to gracefully and effectively and lovingly nurture and subdue animal life. It matters how we treat animals. And yet do not let that grain of truth lead to the error that lifts up animal life to the level of human life. There is a special dignity afforded to human life, because it alone is made in the image of God.

Now, what does it mean to be in the image of God? We see right away in Genesis1:27 a few things. It means that our function in the world to form it and to fill it springs out of our image bearingness. This is one thing that humans alone do - we structure and form the earth, filling it with us so that we might reflect God's glory back to him. Okay, the smartest animals. And I'm not saying there's not structures in the animal kingdom. Go see a beehive or go look at the way in which moles dig up your your yard. Okay. There are structures in the animal world. And yet you cannot say that they are forming it and subduing it unto more life. Okay. There's no dolphin highways and colleges and universities. Okay. Gorillas, no matter how much you train them to hit buttons to get food, cannot tell you about the complications of growing up as a gorilla in captivity. We don't have the same kind of structure. By the way, that's not just me. Atheist linguists will tell you this. Okay, that's not language hitting a button for a banana and being angry at your trainer when he doesn't feed you. That's not human language. This is something that humans alone can do. We are unique amongst creation. Notice by the way, this is even reflected. We'll come back to this later in the in the other commandments of the Old Testament. If your animal kills a person, okay, the animal must get slaughtered. There is no capital punishment for a human who kills an animal. Okay, they might get punished, but the animal is property. The human is not property. If you treat a human as property by kidnapping them, guess what? Capital punishment. You see the difference? If you steal an ox, you don't get killed. If you steal a human, you get killed. There's a difference in the way that Scripture perceives humans amongst creation, but we are image bearers in another way. We have to

remember this. We have a better picture of who God is because of the whole revelation of Scripture, and we learn from Scripture that he is one God who is personal. He's not an ephemeral force. It's not like Star Wars. He's not the nothingness of Buddhism. He is not some kind of mist or smoke that's out there with general inclinations, a good side and a bad side. He is a person with a will and with desires, who does work in the world, who is self-conscious. And guess what? So are we because we're made in his image. We reference the personality of God because we have personality. But we're not just personal. We're also relational. It's a part of the ground of our being. As humans, we are like God in that we all have relationships. Even the greatest introvert, the most hardened introvert, still has relationships and even needs relationships. And guess what? As we learn in Scripture, our God is relational as well. One God, three persons, father, son, and spirit, living together in eternal harmony and love. Remember, Paul tells us God is love. But how can God be love unless there are persons to love in Eternity? There's something about being human that is both personal and relational. And it's not because we evolved that way. It's because we reference a God who is personal and relational. Human love. As a result, even feels different, right? Just go look at all the songs that are out there in the world about love. Even the non-believer, even the person who follows another faith, will talk about love as if it is a transcendent, glorious, beyond themselves kind of thing. you say. Why do you think that is? Why is it that when you feel love for the first time, whether it's from a parent or a sibling, or a good friend, or maybe a spouse, when you feel love for the first time, why is there something about it that seems to go beyond you? Because it is beyond you. It references an aspect to the character of the God in whose image you're made. So it's important as we talk about the meaning of life, what life means, that we start with the source because we can't really understand everything that we're going to say next without understanding the source. Why is it here? It's not because I earned it. It's not because I worked really hard to cultivate it within myself. It's not because a series of natural processes that made it happen for me. It is because God has placed this meaning, this dignity upon every one of us as humans. That leads us to the next point.

The value of life. The value of life because human beings bear the image of God. Every human life must therefore be protected and cherished and honored in our laws, our relationships, our attitudes, and our actions. Because we're made in the image of God, every human life must be honored, cherished, protected in our laws, relationships, attitudes, and actions. It's important that we recognize this. Humans are placed at the pinnacle of creation as the Vice Regents, right? We are the COO's of creation. We're not the CEO. We're not the President. We're not the creator. We're the COOs. We're told, go out there and now do the work of the CEO. Go fill the earth and subdue it. That's what he's been doing. And now he's giving you the power to do it. You go out and do it, too. You're a vice regent. You are the one who is present to operate on behalf of the King. Because you're made in his image. You are therefore at the pinnacle. You're not just a part of the warp and the weft of the random processes of creation. You are at the pinnacle of creation. Notice this shows up right away. Again in Genesis we get to Genesis chapter nine as following the flood. In Genesis nine, Noah comes out. His covenant is now amended and completed, as it were. It begins before the flood. It's completed and amended after the flood, and it's there. We get this very interesting passage, as the Lord is saying now, following the flood, I'm going to stabilize the natural order. You'll never have a flood again that

will destroy you from the face of the earth. I'm stabilizing natural order. So in other words, you'll no longer have just randomness, but you'll have seed time and harvest. Okay, any of you farmers out there or botanists? Okay. You know how important it is to know seed time and harvest. Okay, we need to have it. If we don't have it, that things don't work right. Okay. We need to have cold and heat. We need to have night and day. Okay. It's stabilized in a way. Interestingly, it may not have been stabilized before, but now he's stabilizing it. But notice it's not just in natural, you know, meteorological climate related issues. It's also in the relationship between the animal kingdom and humanity. He even goes so far to say, if a lion kills a human, that's wrong. That's breaking the stable order of society. He goes on in verses five through seven, and for your lifeblood, humans. Oh human, I will require a reckoning from every beast. I will require it. And from man, from his fellow man. I will require a reckoning for the life of man who ever sheds the blood of man. By man shall his blood be shed for God made man in his own image. You see, you see the continuity there. Okay. You start with being made in God's image. That's the reason for this. As a result, human life is to be utmost honored amongst all of life on earth. Therefore, if an animal sheds human life blood, the animal's life shall be taken. Interestingly, we still we still basically honor that today. The way that we treat animals, who attack animals, who do things we usually. What you usually find out after they've actually attacked a human, they were put down. Right. We still honor this today. This is an Old Testament law. Okay. You ever asked yourself why is that? Why do we do it that way? Okay. But not only that, humans who take human life, it is now within the jurisdiction of the governing authorities to take that person's life. Now we'll see. And I would argue elsewhere, that's always up to judicial reasoning and decisions. You got to take other things into consideration. Deuteronomy and Leviticus and Exodus will all affirm that idea. It's not a knee jerk reaction. You have a judge, you have a case. You look at the evidence. However, what is authorized in the taking of human life? Whenever murder happens, the capital punishment is authorized by man. Notice this is outside of the Mosaic covenant. This is the new covenant. This is with all of humanity. But you, he says in verse seven, be fruitful and multiply. Increase greatly on the earth and multiply in it. You see, among all of creation, this is only said of human life. It's to be especially protected. If a beast kills a human, the beast's life must be taken. If a human kills a beast. Okay, he's got to pay it back. Notice. By the way, if you kill a human and you are subject to capital punishment, there is no way in the Old Testament law, And this is unique in the Old Testament law. There is no way that you can buy your way out of the punishment. You can with an animal. You can just pay back the worth of the animal. You can't with a human. You cannot treat humans like property, says the Old Testament. You can't buy them and sell them. You can't kidnap them. That's a capital punishment. That's why the North Atlantic slave trade. It's a remarkable to me, still, that Christians spent periods of. Some Christians spent centuries trying to defend the slave trade on biblical grounds. Just the fact that it's based in kidnapping already makes it a capital offense. You see, you cannot treat humans like property. They are not property. They are image bearers. They are in the image of God. And this is unique entirely unto the law of the Old Testament, ancient Near East. Often other laws that we have in the ancient Near East would often confuse human life with property, but not so in Scripture. It is also important to note that a person cannot use property to escape judgment. As I said, you cannot pay off the judge. You can't pay a fine to save your life if you are subject to capital

punishment. Now, it's interesting that after a commandment concerning authority, which we find in the fifth Commandment, we now see this commandment preserving life. If another person bears the image of God, you have to see where are they in authority relationship with me? That's one question. But regardless of where they are in their authority relationship with me, their life is to be cherished. Their life is to be protected. It's to be honored. That means I can't exploit them if they are under me in the authority structure, I can't look at them as a transaction for me to work with so that I can gain more for myself. As a matter of fact, it reminds us of something very important. How we treat others tells us how we think about God. How we treat the bearers of the image of God tells us how we think about God. It's interesting, isn't it? Have you ever noticed in the very first murder that we see in the Bible, Cain and Abel, what's actually going on there? Has Abel done something wrong? No, he hasn't done anything wrong. Cain's problem. His vendetta is not with Abel. His vendetta is with God. But he can't kill God. So what does he do? He kills his brother. Think about David. What's David's problem with Uriah? Uriah hasn't done anything wrong. He's actually doing everything. I mean, David should long to have a whole army filled with Uriah's. But what Uriah's life does is it highlights David's sin against the Lord. And so Uriah has to die. On the positive note, New Testament. What is the Good Samaritan recognize about the man on the side of the road? This man's beaten up. He's probably unconscious. He can't say, hey, the Good Samaritan passed me by. He's probably not even paying attention. He seems to be out of it. What can that man do to help the Good Samaritan? Nothing. But he recognizes a value in the man that has nothing to do with human transactions. He recognizes that man is in the image of God. And so he not only goes out of his way to help him and to save his life, he pays sacrificially to go above and beyond to make sure that the man is restored to health and safety. You see, all these remind us that the way we deal with others tells us something about how we think about God.

This view of humanity is a fundamental reorienting, reframing of our understanding of others, as well as a reorientation and reframing of our understanding of ourselves. It reminds us of this. And this truly may be the most subversive thing that we talk about here on Sunday mornings in Briarwood. If you believe what this is saying about human life about how it is to be cherished, it means that your self-interest, your comforts, your preferences are not the highest good in your life. It's not the highest good. Your self-interest, your preferences, your desires are not the most important thing that you serve on a day to day basis, but rather the people who God brings into your life providentially, the neighbor neighbors, the family members, the friends, the people you're standing next to in line, the car in front of you and behind you on two eighty as you're trying to make it in to work. This is the place these people who populate your autobiography. This is the place where the greatest good lies and the greatest glory to God lies your relationship with them. The biblical reorientation around the value of human life is deeply subversive in a modern Western setting, which is framed entirely around self-interest and getting what's mine. See, we're constantly told to turn inward, to believe in ourselves, to follow our dreams, to cast off the shackles of family and religion and all of those things that might hinder our ability, any responsibility to others that might hinder our ability to get what's yours. This has become the greatest virtue. This is the greatest commandment of the modern secular world. It appears in every part of our country, across every socioeconomic group. This is not just amongst the rich. You'll find this at every stage in the socioeconomic levels of this society.

It appears across the aisle politically. You'll find this on both sides. It even occurs across religious persuasions. And like most heresies, which it is like most heresies, it has a grain of truth. Every heresy for it to be a powerful and effective heresy has to have a grain of truth. And here's the grain of truth. You're made in the image of God. The Lord loves to give you the desires of your heart. What are we longing for? A peace that passes understanding, joy, wholeness. These are all good things that are within us. And that's a beautiful thing. Is it wrong to desire those things? Absolutely not. That's the grain of truth. The Lord actually does bless you individually. Even oftentimes, I would argue more often than not, when you are giving sacrificially, you'll find more joy than when you are acting selfishly. So it's a good thing to recognize that the Lord is blessing us personally. That's the truth. Here's where the heresy begins. I now lift up God's desire for my pleasure over his desire for me to serve others.

I was just reading Romans fifteen one and two this morning. Go back and read it. Notice what Paul says there. It's in passing. He's segueing from one passage to another, and he says in Romans fifteen one and two, he says this Jesus did not come to please himself, but to please others. It's interesting that he uses that terminology. He came not looking to fill his own pleasure, but for the pleasure of others sacrificially. Unto the glory of God. Now I want to be clear about this. Jesus needs to be our model because we are not being told, go be a doormat. Go be an enabler of other people's sin. Go be naive about human ills and human evil. That's not what we're being told. We're told to be like Jesus. And that means we recognize that actually the greater glory is found in us serving than in us being served. Okay. Now again, what's it for? It's unto the glory of God. It's not unto some kind of selfish. My goal isn't that I get to feel it more. My goal is that God is glorified. But let me tell you this you will find. And I am convinced of this, that as you serve in a God glorifying way, in full knowledge of what he's called you to, and in full knowledge of both the dignity and the terrible sin that you see in the world around you, in full knowledge of all of that. As you serve, you will find your joy increased in ways you could not have imagined. You see, Jesus is our model. At no point is he naive about the human condition, but rather his self-giving for the sake of others is always directed toward salvation and the glory of God. The sixth commandment does forbid the taking of human life in anger and frustration, or to conceal one's involvement in a crime. It includes the abandonment of children, the taking of human life within the mother's womb. It includes the taking of one's own life because of medical or mental suffering. All of this is to dishonor the image of God. But as we mentioned before, it also involves killing indiscriminately just for the sake of attaining some kind of end. Okay, I like it that in our society, we still debate the manner of warfare to make sure that there are as few non-combatants killed as possible. Honestly, honestly, as few combatants killed as possible in order to attain a good and just end. Okay. We are not in ends justifies the means society still. Hopefully that will stay. But you can still walk in to George Washington University's international policy program and take classes on just war. I want to be clear about this. Just war comes from nowhere other than the scriptures, okay? Israel itself is told when dealing with other nations, when they're dealing with other nations, they are always told to sue for peace first and only go to war. If the nation aggresses to such an extent that diplomacy is no longer possible. when going to war. They are told to minimize the deaths of those in the battle. You are not supposed to just kill indiscriminately. You are supposed to always keep it to the, uh, the combatants on the field. And when you capture a

city and that city is now fundamentally under your charge, they have rights. The people who live in the other city have rights. You can't just do whatever you want with them. This is unique to the biblical teachings about warfare. This is not found in the Code of Hammurabi. This is not found in the other law codes of the ancient Near East. You see, when we talk about things like warfare and capital punishment, we have to remember that we are constrained in those things. We can't just say, oh, Genesis nine, we're allowed to do capital punishment. Okay, let's just do it. Let's get after it. You don't get to say that. We have to make sure that it's always just it's taking into consideration other options, taking into consideration the circumstances, making sure that both the evil is removed from the society, but also that justice is done in order to deter, to deter rather evil from happening again. You take all these things into consideration. But as we mentioned before, the sixth commandment is about more than our behavior.

I want to pause for a moment and just read the Westminster Larger Catechism. This is question 135.

Question 135

Q. 135. What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?

A. The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild, and courteous speeches and behavior; forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

Why? Because we're made in the image of God. That's biblical justice. If you see an image bearer not being dignified or honored, it is just to lift them up to that dignity. Whether it's because of poverty or oppression or self-inflicted harm or whatever it is that is an act of biblical justice to honor the image bearer in light of the God whose image they bear. So humanity points us to God, and that's where we get the value of human life. That's why he made us. That's why we bear his image. And this realization changes everything.

That leads me to our last point. **The goal of human life.** The goal of human life, is to be restored in Christ as God's image bearing people and to reflect his glory together forever. The goal of human life is to be restored in Christ as God's image bearing people, and to reflect his glory together forever. As we've already seen the glory of our lives, the glory of human life is not that something that we make in ourselves, but rather it is from Christ. God has made us in his image. We have fallen into sin. God has given us the exact impression of the Godhead, the perfect image of God, the invisible God in Jesus Christ. And it's through him that we are now redeemed so that we can live out that thing, that goal that the Lord has called us to. When he made us in his image. These are in two ways the two most important truths for all of humanity. *Genesis 1:27 You're made in the image of God. Matthew 28 therefore go out now and redeem*

other images of God in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the perfect image of the invisible God. Colossians 1:15. Remember that you've got the whole story of the Bible. We could even call the whole of human history since the fall a long and glorious saga of God drawing out from amongst humanity, redeemed images, people rescued from sin and death and directed towards him in spirit filled worship.

Now here's the thing. This is true of you individually. When you hear this, you should be thinking about how I'm an image bearer too. And that changes the way I think about myself. And it changes the way I treat people around me. It changes the way I treat my wife and my friends and the people you know, my family members. It changes all of that because I recognize who they are as individuals. The Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck makes a brilliant observation in his systematic theology, where he's talking about the image of God. As far as I can tell, he's the first to say it this clearly. You can find it elsewhere in church history, but he says it the most clearly. He points out something about Genesis one twenty seven that you can miss, particularly if you're living in an individualistic society like we are, he points out. Do you notice how it says he made them in his image, male and female. He made them in his image. He doesn't say he made them images, male and female. He made them in his image. Male and female. What is the image of God? The image of God is humanity. What does that mean? It is male and female as image of God, not images of God. Image of God. So you individually are image of God and yet you together, Adam and Eve are image of God. It's both individual and it's collective. There's a sense in which you individually are image of God in this room. And yet there's also a sense in which everyone gathered in this room is a more rich picture and glorious revelation of image of God. Bob Inc. takes it one step further. He says, therefore, in this sense, the image of God is not complete until the last human is born. As a matter of fact, we're a part of a large unveiling throughout human history and around the whole world of image of God. That actually makes sense to us too, because we know that God is much richer and deeper than I could ever image. And yet, it also explains why all these people. Because that's how rich and grand and deep the image of God is. We are image both individually and collectively, and yet still in that glory. As we look forward to the age to come, we remember that tragically, not all of those image bearers will be there to reflect his glory. How much more are we called to go out and to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ?

So that image bearers who will always have this yearning within them that they can't understand, those image bearers will always long for God. Let's show them how to find him. Let's show them how to have the answers of the desires of their heart. Actually, the very reason they're made, in many ways, a deeper desire than they'll ever have in this life is the desire for the image bearer to worship the God whose image it bears. But we have to show them the way. God thought this so important that he stepped out. Of the heavenly throne room, not considering fellowship within that throne room. Something to be hoarded, but rather emptied himself, taking on the form of a man. He stepped into human life and he gave his life so that our life might be redeemed to a new life, and that we might be called from around the world to be gathered together and to worship him. That's the gospel message. God is calling his image bearers back through the perfect image of the invisible God, Jesus Christ. Human life is that glorious? Is it not worth nurturing love in your heart? Is it not worth going out of your way to

discover how someone is actually really doing? Is it not worth refusing to walk passively past a neighbor who is in need? Is it worth refusing to brush off someone else's grief as though it was not your problem? Is it not worth sharing with others the gospel of their creator, so that they might put off spiritual death and sin and delusion, and embrace the spiritual life that they were made for as image bearers? It's worth it.

Let's pray.