

Whose Is This Image?

by Andrew Murray

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding our identity as image-bearers of God and our destiny to rule creation through prayer.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 21:20, John 15:7, Romans 8:19, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:10, Hebrews 4:16, James 5:16, 1 Peter 2:9

Topics: "Power Of Prayer", "Divine Image"

Description

Andrew Murray explores the profound question posed by Jesus, 'Whose is this image?' to illustrate humanity's divine origin and purpose. He emphasizes that man, created in God's image, is meant to represent God on earth, exercising dominion and maintaining a relationship through prayer. Despite the degradation caused by sin, redemption through Christ restores this original calling, allowing believers to reclaim their role as God's representatives. Murray urges the Church to recognize its high calling and the power of prayer in shaping the destinies of the world. He concludes with a plea for believers to embrace their royal priesthood and actively engage in prayer to fulfill God's purposes.

Transcript

'He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?--Matt. xxi. 20.

'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'--Gen. i. 26.

'WHOSE is this image?' It was by this question that Jesus foiled His enemies, when they thought to take Him, and settled the matter of duty in regard to the tribute. The question and the principle it involves are of universal application. Nowhere more truly than in man himself. The image he bears decides his destiny. Bearing God's image, he belongs to God: prayer to God is what he was created for. Prayer is part of the wondrous likeness he bears to His Divine original; of the deep mystery of the fellowship of love in which the Three-One has His blessedness, prayer is the earthly image and likeness.

The more we meditate on what prayer is, and the wonderful power with God which it has, the more we feel constrained to ask who and what man is, that such a place in God's counsels should have been allotted to him. Sin has so degraded him, that from what he is now we can form no conception of what he was meant to be. We must turn back to God's own record of man's creation to discover there what God's purpose was, and what the capacities with which man was endowed for the fulfilment of that purpose.

Man's destiny appears clearly from God's language at creation. It was to fill, to subdue, to have dominion over the earth and all in it. All the three expressions show us that man was meant, as God's representative, to hold rule here on earth. As God's viceroy he was to fill God's place: himself subject to God, he was to keep all else in subjection to Him. It was the will of God that all that was to be done on earth should be done through him: the history of the earth was to be entirely in his hands.

In accordance with such a destiny was the position he was to occupy, and the power at his disposal. When an earthly sovereign sends a viceroy to a distant province, it is understood that he advises as to the policy to be adopted, and that that advice is acted on: that he is at liberty to apply for troops and the other means needed for carrying out the policy or maintaining the dignity of the empire. If his policy be not approved of, he is recalled to make way for some one who better understands his sovereign's desires' as long as he is trusted, his advice is carried out. As God's representative man was to have ruled; all was to have been done under his will and rule; on his advice and at his request heaven was to have bestowed its blessing on earth. His prayer was to have been the wonderful, though simple and most natural channel, in which the intercourse between the King in heaven and His faithful servant man, as lord of this world, was to have been maintained. The destinies of the world were given into the power of the wishes, the will, the prayer of man.

With sin all this underwent a terrible change--man's fall brought all creation under the curse. With redemption the beginning was seen of a glorious restoration. No sooner had God begun in Abraham to form for Himself a people from whom kings, yea the Great King, should come forth, than we see what power the prayer of God's faithful servant has to decide the destinies of those who come into contact with him. In Abraham we see how prayer is not only, or even chiefly, the means of obtaining blessing for ourselves, but is the exercise of his royal prerogative to influence the destinies of men, and the will of God which rules them. We do not once find Abraham praying for himself. His prayer for Sodom and Lot, for Abimelech, for Ishmael, prove what power a man, who is God's friend, has to make the history of those around him.

This had been man's destiny from the first. Scripture not only tells us this, but also teaches us how it was that God could entrust man with such a high calling. It was because He had created him in His own image and likeness. The external rule was not committed to him without the inner fitness: the bearing God's image in having dominion, in being lord of all, had its root in the inner likeness, in his nature. There was an inner agreement and harmony between God and man, and incipient Godlikeness, which gave man a real fitness for being the mediator between God and His world, for he was to be prophet, priest, and king, to interpret God's will, to represent nature's needs, to receive and dispense God's bounty. It was in bearing God's image that he could bear God's rule; he was indeed so like God, so capable of entering into God's purposes, and carrying out His plans, that God could trust him with the wonderful privilege of asking and obtaining what the world might need. And although sin has for a time frustrated God's plans, prayer still remains what it would have been if man had never fallen: the proof of man's Godlikeness, the vehicle of his intercourse with the Infinite Unseen One, the power that is allowed to hold the hand that holds the destinies of the universe. Prayer is not merely the cry of the suppliant for mercy; it is the highest forth-putting of his will by man, knowing himself to be of Divine origin, created for and capable of being, in king-like liberty, the executor of the counsels of the Eternal.

What sin destroyed, grace has restored. What the first Adam lost, the second has won back. In Christ man regains his original position, and the Church, abiding in Christ, inherits the promise: 'Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Such a promise does by no means, in the first place, refer to the grace or

blessing we need for ourselves. It has reference to our position as the fruit-bearing branches of the Heavenly Vine, who, like Him, only live for the work and glory of the Father. It is for those who abide in Him, who have forsaken self to take up their abode in Him with His life of obedience and self-sacrifice, who have lost their life and found it in Him, who are now entirely given up to the interests of the Father and His kingdom. These are they who understand how their new creation has brought them back to their original destiny, has restored God's image and likeness, and with it the power to have dominion. Such have indeed the power, each in their own circle, to obtain and dispense the powers of heaven here on earth. With holy boldness they may make known what they will: they live as priests in God's presence; as kings the powers of the world to come begin to be at their disposal. 1 They enter upon the fulfilment of the promise: 'Ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.'

Church of the living God! thy calling is higher and holier than thou knowest. Through thy members, as kings, and priests unto God, would God rule the world; their prayers bestow and withhold the blessing of heaven. In His elect who are not just content to be themselves saved, but yield themselves wholly, that through them, even as through the Son, the Father may fulfil all His glorious counsel, in these His elect, who cry day and night unto Him, God would prove how wonderful man's original destiny was. As the image-bearer of God on earth, the earth was indeed given into his hand. When he fell, all fell with him: the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. But now he is redeemed; the restoration of the original dignity has begun. It is in very deed God's purpose that the fulfilment of His eternal purpose, and the coming of His kingdom, should depend on those of His people who, abiding in Christ, are ready to take up their position in Him their Head, the great Priest-King, and in their prayers are bold enough to say what they will that their God should do. As image-bearer and representative of God on earth, redeemed man has by his prayers to determine the history of this earth. Man was created, and has now again been redeemed, to pray, and by his prayer to have dominion.

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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Lord! what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? for Thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things under his feet. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!

Lord God! how low has sin made man to sink. And how terribly has it darkened his mind, that he does not even know his Divine destiny, to be Thy servant and representative. Alas! that even Thy people, when their eyes are opened, are so little ready to accept their calling and to seek to have power with God, that they may have power with men too to bless them.

Lord Jesus! it is in Thee the Father hath again crowned man with glory and honour, and opened the way for us to be what He would have us. O Lord, have mercy on Thy people, and visit Thine heritage! Work mightily in Thy Church, and teach Thy believing disciples to go forth in their royal priesthood, and in the power of prayer, to which Thou hast given such wonderful promises, to serve Thy kingdom, to have rule over the nations, and make the name of God glorious in the earth. Amen.

'God is seeking priests among the sons of men. A human priesthood is one of the essential parts of His eternal plan. To rule creation by man is His design; to carry on the worship of creation by man is no less part of His design.

'Priesthood is the appointed link between heaven and earth, the channel of intercourse between the sinner and God. Such a priesthood, in so far as expiation is concerned, is in the hands of the Son of God alone; in so far as it is to be the medium of communication between Creator and creature, is also in the hands of redeemed men--of the Church of God.

'God is seeking kings. Not out of the ranks of angels. Fallen man must furnish Him with the rulers of His universe. Human hands must wield the sceptre, human heads must wear the crown.--The Rent Veil, by Dr. H. Bonar.

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