

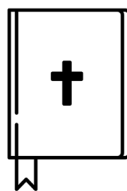
Week 6

Christ as the Center

READ

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Luke 24:25-27





We as humans have a tragic tendency. That tendency is to make everything about us, to think that we are the center of the universe. If you do not believe me, just take five minutes to reflect on the last big argument you had. Did you replay it for yourself in your head after? If so, who won the argument? Who was in the right? Or take another example; if someone holds up a picture of your family who do you look for first to see if it really is ‘your’ family... yourself of course. These are fairly simple and rather seemingly harmless examples, but then think about all the massive ways that harm is done to others. Why does rape, theft, murder, or any other crime take place? Is it not ultimately because the person perpetrating the crime has an underlying belief that he or she deserves something that is more important than what it costs his or her victim? And then let’s think about less extreme examples for a moment... when you verbally attack a spouse, parent, friend, child, or co-worker, is it not because you believe you have some right that has been violated and so retribution must be given? And so, you and I must admit that at the center of human activity is the underlying belief that ‘my world is ultimately about me.’

However, according to the Apostle Paul it is precisely this belief system that is the root problem. In his letter to the Romans, Paul notes,

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse”

Rom 1:18-20

Paul is noting that as humans, we have actively suppressed the truth that God is the creator and we are the creation; that he is at the center and we are in the periphery; that he is the hero and we are the side plot. And even more than that, Paul is showing us that not only have we suppressed this truth, but also that God is rightly justified in his wrath against us. Because in essence, we had tried to de-god God; this is what the Bible calls idolatry: the act of making something (including ourselves), God. As theologian D.A. Carson puts it,

“God finds this deeply, profoundly, personally offensive. It is not merely tragic for us since we are destroying ourselves; it is abominably disgusting to God. It is degrading to God”

D.A. Carson,
Scandalous

It is precisely because this is the state that humanity finds itself in that at the very center of the entire Bible is the cross of Jesus. At times our idolatrous hearts can blind us to the fact that the Bible is ultimately pointing either backward or forward to the work of Jesus on the cross, but it is clear that this is indeed the case. After extensively showing that all humans no matter their religious or cultural credibility, are all utterly and inescapably steeped in this sinful tendency to de-god God, Paul explains that it is God's righteous and just prerogative to pour out his wrath upon us. In fact, for justice to truly be satisfied this must be the case (Rom 2:5-10). God will repay every person for what they have done. The righteous person will be honoured, the unrighteous person punished... but Paul makes it clear that absolutely no one is righteous, every single person is guilty of idolatry (Rom 3:9-20). And this is where the beautiful, central reality of the cross of Jesus comes into play. Paul explains in 3:21 that we are not made right through the law, which only serves to expose our rebellion, but that the law points us forward to

“the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” And then he continues, “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins”

Rom 3:22b-25 ESV

To finalize our understanding of Jesus as the center we need to understand two key words in Paul's statement. The first is redemption. Redemption in Paul's day was tied into the understanding of slavery. If someone was in deep financial need they might choose or be forced to sell themselves and their family into slavery to cover debts. However, a family member or friend could come and buy them back. That was called being redeemed. The Bible describes humans as being 'enslaved' to sin. We are unable to buy ourselves back and only Jesus can do this; he is the hero. But the second word, propitiation, is equally important. This word has to do with providing a sacrifice to appease or make someone (usually a god) favourable towards you. In the context in which Paul is writing, this is indicative of the fact that God has been offended by our rebellion and so he must be satisfied. At the cross all of this is accomplished. Jesus is the sacrifice that appeases God's wrath on our behalf. And this leads to Paul's final point in this section,



“It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus”

Rom 3:26 ESV

This is what the whole Bible points towards; God’s perfect marriage of love and justice on the cross as God the son dies in our place. And only now can we go and ask what is our place in all of this... the answer is our place is to trust, to believe, to put our faith squarely on Jesus’ work. It is an invitation to place him in his rightful place at the center of our lives.

Questions to Ponder:

(If you are doing this as family or with others share your answers)

1. Take some time to think through the last big argument or fight you had with someone. How might this have stemmed from you placing yourself in the position of being the center of the world?
2. Read through Luke 23:26-49. As you read, take time to consider the responses and reactions of the people and environments surrounding the event of Jesus’ death. What does it tell you about him? How does this description show us that Jesus is our redemption and propitiation?

Kids Corner:

Have you ever heard the term MVP? It stands for Most Valuable Player. It’s a title reserved for the most important player on a sports team. With that in mind, imagine that you were playing soccer. You played the best game and not only scored all the goals, but you showed great leadership by encouraging your team, and helping the other players do their best.

Now imagine that at the end of the game the team was going to vote for who was the MVP and they all voted for themselves, when it was clearly meant for you. How would you feel? Do you think that would be fair? No it would not be fair. You are clearly the best, and you deserve the trophy. The Bible explains that God is like the greatest MVP of all time. Even though God is the most awesome, and the one who knows how everything works properly, you and I want to pretend that we know best and that we are more awesome than God. This is offensive to God because it’s not right.

He created us so he knows exactly what is best for us. Unlike the teammates, we didn't just vote for ourselves to be MVP, it's more like we tried to steal the MVP award away from God. Everyone knows that stealing is wrong and that if someone steals they should be punished. God being good, couldn't let stealing slide, he couldn't pretend it didn't exist because then the thief would get away with it and so God had to punish all of us humans. The punishment for trying to steal God's MVP status is death.

But God has shown that he is still the most valuable player. You see, God knew that no person would be able to make things right once they had stolen his MVP award. And so he decided to do it for us. He came to earth as the baby Jesus and grew up and lived a perfect life. And then, even though Jesus was God; he was the MVP; when he became a human, he never tried to steal it away from his Father. He always made sure everyone knew that God was the MVP. And even though he didn't steal his Father's MVP status, he died on the cross. But he did it for you and for me.

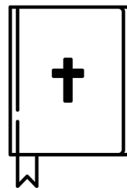
We all deserve to die because we try and steal God's MVP status all the time but instead, because God loved us so much, he sent his son, Jesus, to die instead. Jesus is our MVP. He is the most valuable player, he did what we were not able to do. And now he wants to invite us to trust in him. Whenever we feel tempted to try and be the MVP again, he wants us to remember the cross and remember that he is the true MVP and that he deserves all of our worship and praise! Now discuss with your parents everything that God has done for you and why he deserves our worship.



Week 6

Christ as the Center

DISCUSS | REFLECT



Take a few minutes to read through the following passages of Scripture and then discuss/answer the questions below.

Read:

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

Mark 8:31 (NIV)

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."

Luke 18:31-33 (NIV)

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Revelation 5:11-13 (NIV)

Going Deeper:

1. When you read your Bible, what is your tendency? Do you look for answers or advice for your own life circumstances or do you look to see what God is telling you about himself?
2. What do you feel when you read in the first two passages above that Jesus knew he "must" suffer and die and that the prophets had clearly foretold that Jesus would die? Are you surprised, upset, indifferent, joyful? Why do you think you are responding in that way?

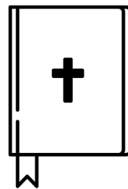


3. When you read the description from Revelation 5, does it give an accurate picture of the way you see Jesus and the way you worship him for what he has done?
4. Do you think that Jesus is the center of your life? What evidence do you have of your view? If not, what would be 1 or 2 tangible things that would need to change in order to start to make him the center?

Week 6

Christ as the Center

PRAY





Take sometime to read through the prayer below and then speak it out loud and allow each word to come from the heart, both in thankfulness for the benefits of Jesus' work and also simply to praise him for his victory over sin, Satan, and death.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ—
truly God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous—
Thank you that you have taken on the role as the mediator who was
given to set us completely free
and to make us right with God.
Thank you that by the power of your divinity,
you bore the weight of God's anger in your humanity,
restoring us to righteousness and life.
Forgive us for failing to worship you as we should,
and for the times we place ourselves at the center of the universe.
We ask you to take your seat in the throne of our lives,
to rule our hearts.
Amen*

*- Adapted from the Heidelberg Catechism,
Q&A's 17-18*

Pray Throughout the Day:

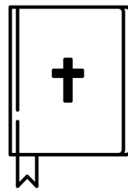
As you go through your day, take time to pray through the following items.

1. Throughout the day, regularly take a minute or two to step back and ask the Spirit to show you if there are any areas of your life (decisions you make, actions you take, attitudes you feel) that are the result of you trying to be the center of your own life. If he reveals anything to you, take time to confess it and ask him to lead you to renewed belief in Jesus' place as the center of your life.
2. Pray and ask the Spirit to reveal to you one person who is living by a false story that puts themselves at the center of their life. If he reveals a person to you pray for an opportunity to sit down with that person and share the better story with Jesus at the center.

Week 6

Christ as the Center

CELEBRATION | GO





This morning you are invited to simply take some space to worship Jesus recognizing that he is our savior; that he is the center; that all we have is due to his grace for us; that he is all we have. As a family or as an individual look up “All I Have Is Christ - Sovereign Grace Music” on YouTube and use the following words below to sing along.

Singing in the Victory

By Aaron Ivey and Brett Land

[Chorus]

Hallelujah! All I have is Christ
Hallelujah! Jesus is my life

[Verse 1]

I once was lost in darkest night
Yet thought I knew the way
The sin that promised joy and life
Had led me to the grave
I had no hope that You would own
A rebel to Your will
And if You had not loved me first
I would refuse You still

[Chorus]

Hallelujah! All I have is Christ
Hallelujah! Jesus is my life

[Verse 2]

But as I ran my hell-bound race
Indifferent to the cost
You looked upon my helpless state
And led me to the cross
And I beheld God’s love displayed
You suffered in my place
You bore the wrath reserved for me
Now all I know is grace

[Verse 3]

Now, Lord, I would be Yours alone
And live so all might see
The strength to follow Your commands
Could never come from me
O Father, use my ransomed life
In any way You choose
And let my song forever be
My only boast is You

Application:

As we have said throughout this week, so often our tendency is to place ourselves instead of Jesus on the throne of our lives. We even have a tendency to do this when we read the Scriptures. If Jesus is who he says, then his words, which we read in Luke 24:25-27 where he explains that all the Scriptures ultimately point to him, are indeed true. That means that the story of the world is ultimately the story of God. It is the story of his work of rescuing and redeeming a broken rebellious people and the best part of this story is, it really is good news to someone living by a different story. Think of someone in your life (ex: a child, friend, spouse, co-worker, relative) who needs to either learn or grow in his/her knowledge of this story. Perhaps that person is even you. Make a plan to intentionally create space this next year to do that by using some of the amazing tools available. Suggestions include using the Story Formed Way, videos from the Bible Project on YouTube, or starting a Bible reading plan.