

Made for More  
*A Glimpse of Glory*  
January 16, 2022

Good morning everyone!

It's great to be here with you today – and I'm not kidding when I say that – after not being *able* to be here the past two Sundays because of COVID.

It's great to finally begin this new series *Made for More: becoming the person you were meant to be*.

I love the words to that song we sang a few minutes ago:

Where would I be without You?

Where would I be without Your love?

I'm amazed by all You've done

... because when I stand back and look at the arc of my life from when I was a teenager all the way up until today, it's so obvious to me that ...

- I am not everything I *should* be and *want* to be.
- BUT ... I'm so much more than I *could* have been and *would* have been ...

... had I not met Jesus when I was 15 years old and continued following Him through the years.

We say it all the time around here: knowing Jesus, following Jesus, loving (and being loved by) Jesus will make your life better because He will make you better at life.

And it's true. I'm living proof of it.

And that's part of the reason why I wanted to do this series. I want *other people* to have the

opportunity to experience what *I've* experienced as a Christian ...

## **Our Mission**

... which, by the way, is *also* part of the reason why I became a pastor and gathered a little core group to start this church 27 years ago.

Way back then we asked ourselves ...

**What is it that we really, really, really want to see happen through our efforts – through what we do together collectively? What's our ultimate burden and our (corresponding) ultimate win?**

By the way, our pastors have come back to this same question repeatedly through the years as a way of ensuring we stay focused on our particular calling and mission.

Now, there are lots of ways – really good ways –

to answer that question, which is why there are so many churches in the world.

- For some churches, the ultimate win is to serve the under-resourced in their community. You know of churches like that.
- For some churches, the win is to provide experiences of worship where people feel like Heaven has come down to earth in that space. You know churches like that, too.
- For some, it's to see people grow in their knowledge of the Scripture.
- For some it's to be a family where everyone knows one another and cares for one another.

Of course, that doesn't mean they're concerned only about that one thing. Every good church is

concerned about all of those things (and more) at some level.

But every church pretty much has a core commitment and a core passion in its DNA that defines its ultimate purpose and mission.

So, what is ours?

Well, if you've been around for a while, I'm sure you know the answer.

And if you *haven't* been around for very long but *you've attended the orientation class*, I'm sure *you also* know the answer.

**By the way, our next Orientation Class actually happens today at 12:15.**

And if you're new to North Heartland, the Orientation Class IS your next step. If you haven't attended it yet, you're welcome to come back or stay around for it.

Anyway ... here's what we really, really want to see happen at North Heartland. Here's the ultimate win for us.

**We exist to draw seekers into a *life-changing relationship* with Jesus and His Kingdom.**

That's our ultimate burden and our ultimate win.

We want to see people's lives change because of their relationship with Jesus and their involvement with *the movement* of Jesus (otherwise known as the Kingdom of God).

Through our efforts – what we all do together, collectively – we want to make it possible for people to be able to say:

Where would I be without Jesus?

Where would I be without His love?

I'm amazed by all He's done for me and in

me.

Through our efforts we want to hear people say

...

- “I am not everything I *should* be and *want* to be ...
- But I’m so much more than I *could* have been and *would* have been ...

... had I not met Jesus and begun to follow Him.”

We want to see people get better at life – whatever that looks like (and it looks different for all of us) ...

We want to see people get better at life by helping them to know Jesus, follow Jesus, love (and be loved by) Jesus.

And when that happens, that’s our biggest and

best win.

In fact, if it *stops* happening, then NHCC really doesn't have any reason to exist.

Now, please don't hear what I'm not saying.

I'm not saying that serving and worshipping and learning and caring for one another doesn't matter. In fact, they matter greatly.

It's just that they are subordinate to (at least, in *this* church) the ultimate purpose of *life-change*.

In other words, if we do all of those things (and more) really, really well and people aren't changing ...

If people aren't becoming "more of who they were meant to be" as a result ... it's not a win. It's a loss.



So, that's part of the reason why I'm doing this series. It ties into the very heart of who we are as a church and why we exist.

And we need to be reminded of that from time to time. *I* need to be reminded.

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Now, one more thing about this before we move on; one more thing I need to say about this ...

And I don't want to get too deep in the weeds on it because this really is a separate message.

But I need to say this because people who come to NHCC who have been Christians for a while sometimes get confused about our mission statement.

When we say ...

**We exist to draw seekers into a life-changing relationship with Jesus and His Kingdom.**

... what we mean is that we want to help people who are not Christians but who are ...

- Curious about God ...
- Feeling drawn towards God ...
- And in the process of turning to God ...

... which describes some of you who are in this room or watching online.

We want to be the kind of church that helps *them ... you ... seekers ...* to discover and experience a life-changing relationship with Jesus and His Kingdom.

... which sometimes causes Christians to think, “ohhhhh, so you guys don’t really care about people who are already *Christians*. You’re all

about *reaching seekers*.”

I understand why people might think that, but it's not true. We want the same thing for Christians as we do for seekers.

The reason we phrase our mission statement the way we do is because ...

**... we never want to forget there are people in this world who do not know God and yet are seeking God – being drawn to Him and even turning to Him.**

And some of them are your friends, some of them are my friends and they matter. They matter to God, and they matter to us.

And we made the decision way back at the very beginning that this church would be there for them, too.

But the end goal is the same whether you're a

Christian or a seeker.

**We want *everyone* to experience a life-changing relationship with Jesus and His Kingdom.**

- We're trying to help people become more of the more they were made for.
- We're trying to help people become the person they were meant to be ...

... regardless of where they are on their spiritual journey.

## **The Identity Issue**

... which of course, leads to a very important question:

**Who *are* we meant to be? What *is* the more we were made for?**

Actually, that's two questions. But they're asking the same thing in different ways.

Who are we meant to be? What is the more we were made for?

And this isn't just an intellectual exercise in religious or philosophical navel-gazing.

This is actually the question of *identity*, an issue which is getting so much cultural attention these days.

- For example, there's a growing movement that claims we should be able to identify as whoever and whatever we wish, particularly when it comes to gender and race.

We should be able to think of ourselves (and have others think of us) however we wish to be thought of.

- Then there's the Metaverse.

In the Metaverse, you create a digital avatar to represent yourself however you'd like to be represented. In fact, in the Metaverse, you can even create your own world.

- Then, of course, there are the old performance-based standbys: money and power and position and beauty and what everyone thinks of us – how many “likes” we get.

The world around us is constantly inviting us to find our identity in those things.

And the reason this is such a big deal for us is because the issue of identity – *who are we meant to be? ... what is the more we were made for?* – is a uniquely human issue.

I don't think my dog ever wonders what it means for her to be a dog.

I don't think she ever wonders why she's a dog and not a cat.

It's *human* nature to question our identity. It's human nature to wrestle with the nature of being human.

I think this might be why, after God speaks each element of creation into existence, He lets us know something extremely significant about the creatures known as "human" – something that makes them totally unique.

Let me show you what I mean.

**In the very first sentence of the Bible, Moses writes ...**

*In the beginning God created the*

*heavens and the earth.  
Genesis 1:1 (NIV)*

And then Moses goes on to describe how God spoke and the various features of our world – light and darkness, air and water, plants and animals – were created.

**And then, according to Moses ...**

*God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26 (NIV)*

And that's what God did.

**Moses wrote:**

*God created mankind in his own*



*image. In the image of God, he created them. Male and female he created them.*

*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it." Genesis 1:27-28 (NIV)*

Now, obviously, I'm aware that many people question this account of creation.

And I'm also aware that there are sincere Christian biologists and geologists and astronomers who have spent a great deal of time and energy in trying to prove its accuracy.

And I'm aware that many Jewish and Christian theologians believe it was never intended to be taken literally.

But all of those are beside the point (at least they are today) ...

Because the point today is exactly the same regardless of whether Moses is being literal or symbolic; regardless of whether he is scientifically accurate or inaccurate.

**The point is that it's human nature to wrestle with the nature of being human so, from the very beginning, God makes it clear what that nature is.**

God makes it clear who humans *are* and what they – we – are meant *to be*.

**As humans, we are created in the image of God, and we are meant to reflect *His* glorious nature in our world.**

Let me say that again.

As humans, you and I are created in the image of God and we are meant to reflect *His* glorious nature (his character, his being) in our world.

That's our identity. That's who we are meant to be ... at least, according to the Judeo-Christian tradition.

And I know that not everyone here or watching is a Christian so, obviously, you might not agree with that. And that's OK.

But I would challenge you to compare this particular vision of purpose and meaning and identity to what the world is offering because I believe ...

- *This* vision of who we are meant to be ...
- *This* vision of the more we were made for ...

... is by far a better and more fulfilling vision than constantly defining and redefining yourself again and again whether it's in the real world or the metaverse.

It's a far better and more fulfilling vision than money and power and position and beauty and what everyone thinks of us because you can never *have* enough and never *be* enough of those things.

## **A Glorious Nature**

So, let's talk about what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God and what it means to reflect his glorious nature in our world and in our lives.

To do that, you have to go back to the world and the thinking of those who first heard this story of creation – the people of the ancient nation of Israel.

**The primary difference between them and the surrounding nations was that the surrounding nations worshipped idols: “gods” *they had made* (out of wood and**

**stone and metals) instead of a God *who had made them.***

And that wasn't just a minor theological difference of opinion. It had real consequences for what it meant to be human ...

... the main one being that the system of gods and goddesses of the surrounding nations served to keep the ruling class in power over the powerless.<sup>i</sup>

Here's how it worked.

In those systems, only one person was considered to be "made in the image of a god" – the king. He was considered to be a special chosen representative of the gods, ruling and reigning on their behalf ...

... which meant that the fundamental purpose of every other human was to serve *him!*

And what kings would often do in that time and place was to set up statues and images of themselves throughout their empires in order to represent their power and rulership over those people.

So ...

- The king was the image of the gods and representative of their authority.
- And the king's statues were images of him and representative of his authority.
- And everyone was supposed to bow down and do what he said.

Easy peasy, right?

But in the creation story, Israel's God said, "NO, that's not how it really is."

He said, “*every person* is created in My image. *Every person* is to represent Me. *Every person* is to rule and reign on my behalf.”

In some respects, every person is to be a king or a queen.

Every person is meant to be the visible representation of the invisible God.

If one wants to know what God looks like, the idea is simply “look at us, the crowning jewel of creation and the only creature made in God’s image and likeness.”<sup>ii</sup>

That’s who you are meant to be. That’s the more you’re made for.

**... which is why the great Christian author and philosopher, C.S. Lewis once wrote:**

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.

The dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship ...<sup>iii</sup>

Now, I know what some of you are thinking.

You're thinking, "well, OK, Rick. But I don't feel like a king or a queen. I don't feel like 'the crowning jewel of creation' or a creature anyone should be tempted to worship."

I know. I don't either. But that's what God's vision is for us.

Not that people would worship us. But that the glory of who He is would radiate so strongly from who we are that it would take your breath away.

## **Getting Practical**



But practically speaking what does that mean?

There are so many ways to answer that from a biblical perspective, but I really like how the Apostle Paul puts it in a letter he wrote to a group of first-century followers of Jesus.

**He says:**

*We, who reflect the Lord's glory,  
are being transformed into his  
likeness with ever increasing  
glory, which comes from the  
Lord, who is the Spirit.     2  
Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)*

“We, who reflect the Lord’s glory” – that means us – you and me, people created in the image and likeness of God.

We “are being transformed into that likeness,” Paul says, “with ever increasing glory.”

- We're not everything we *should* be and *want* to be.
- BUT we're so much more than we *could* have been and *would* have been without Jesus.

And we're being transformed by the Lord Himself, Paul says, *specifically* ... by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, what Paul is getting at here is that when you come to the place in your life where you invite Jesus to be your savior and decide to follow Him, the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence in your spirit.

And as you say yes and as you cooperate, the Spirit begins to change you so that you look less like you as you are today and more like Jesus ...

... who actually *was* the perfect image of God, the

perfect representation of God, and worthy of worship.

Paul is saying that as you cooperate, the Spirit begins to change you so that you look less like you as you naturally are today and more like Jesus in your thinking and your attitudes and your actions.

For example, if it's natural for you – by personality, by family or by culture – to love only the people who are loving and good to you, what would be unnatural and transformative ...

... would be for you to make a “deliberate effort never to seek anything but the best even for those who seek the worst for you.”

By the way, that's the definition of the word “love” in Greek – Agape - according to William Barclay, an expert on the Greek language.

When that deliberate effort becomes typical of you, that's you being transformed into the image and likeness of God with ever increasing glory.

Here's another example.

If it's natural for you – by personality, by family or by culture, wherever you got it – if it's natural for you to be depressed and unhappy whenever the circumstances in your life are less than perfect ...

... what would be transformative would be for you to have “the cheerfulness of heart that comes from the knowledge that God loves you dearly and the confidence that he is near and involved in your life no matter what.”

By the way, that's the definition of the word “joy” in Greek according to Barclay.

When that unnatural cheerfulness starts to become natural to you, that's the ever-increasing glory of God's image coming out in your life.

For example, if it's natural for you to get uptight and panicky when things don't work out the way you planned, whenever anything goes wrong ...

... then what would be different would be for you to experience the "tranquility of heart that comes from knowing that your life is in God's hands no matter what happens."

By the way, that's the definition of the word "peace" in Greek according to Barclay.

When that tranquility – that peace – becomes more you than, well, you, that's you reflecting more and more of the Lord's glory.

And I think those of you who are familiar with the Bible can see what I'm doing here. Love, joy, and peace – those are part of the fruit of the Spirit that Paul writes about to the Galatian Christians.

*When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

*Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)*

Paul could have just as easily written “you want a glimpse of the glory for which you are intended right now in this life?”

“You want to know what it looks like when your true identity as one created in the image of God begins to break through?”

“You want to know the kind of person you were meant to be? The more you were made for?”

Well, here it is. There will be more love in your life. More joy, more peace.”

But the list goes on.

If it's natural for you to be short-tempered and critical towards people who fail to meet your expectations, the glory of God coming out in you would be for you to be longsuffering and slow to anger ...

... which is what the word translated “patience” means in Greek.

If it's natural for you to be controlling and demanding, it would be transformative for you to be characterized by “an attitude of sweetness or mellowness” ...

... which is what the word translated “kindness” means.

If it’s natural for you to be a people-pleaser, willing to compromise your values or even to become codependent just to keep the peace or to be liked ...

... you can become a person who sets boundaries and enforces consequences ...

.... which is one shade of the meaning of the word translated “goodness” in Paul’s list.

Goodness doesn’t mean just “being good” yourself. It also means expecting goodness of others around us as well.

If it’s natural for you to be comfort-driven and risk-averse even though you know whatever it is in front of you is the right thing to do ...



... for you to reflect the image of God would be to willingly respond whenever God says, “go here, do that, try this” – walk in faith, which is what the word translated “faithfulness” means.

If it's natural for you to do whatever it takes to get your own way even if it means being destructive or running people over, it would be Jesus-like for you to be “gentle” ...

... a word which doesn't mean wimpiness. It means power under control; power that is submitted to a higher authority, meaning God.

Finally, if it's natural for you to be characterized by excess – personal excess, financial excess, however you want to define it ...

... for you to reflect more and more of the image of God would mean you become a master of your desires, which is what the word translated “self-control” means.

Whenever these God-reflecting, God honoring qualities (and there are many others that could have been listed by Paul – like courage, honesty, commitment, generosity, graciousness) ...

... whenever these qualities that are not really you start to become more you than you, then that's a sign that God is working in you, that you're being transformed being into God's likeness "with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

## **Conclusion**

Listen friend, whether you're a Christian or not, you were made to be more than you are right now.

You were meant to be a better man

You were meant to be a better woman.

You were meant to be a better spouse, a better

friend, a better student.

You were made to love more than you do

To give more than you do

To work harder than you do

To laugh more than you do

To worship more than you do

You were made to be more creative, more hopeful, more focused, more courageous, and more patient.

Every good thing you can think of ... every good thing that reflects the completeness and glory of the image of God ... that's what you were made for. That's the person you were meant to be.

Our purpose as a church is to help you get there.

In fact, the way we often say it around here these days is ...

**“You were made for more. We can help.”**

As to how we do that, well, that’s what we’ll be talking about over the next month or so.

And I hope you’ll be here or watching online because this could change your life.

But, as we close this out, I just want to ask you a few questions.

- What is your identity based on? How do you see yourself?
- Are you trying to define yourself according to your feelings or according to what the world says?
- If so, how’s that working? Are you happy with that?

If you are, well, good for you.

But, if you're not, there's a better way. Open yourself to the Lord. Invite the Holy Spirit to transform you.

And that's what we're going to do in the next few minutes.

I've asked the band to lead us in a song that helps us do that.

So, would you stand right now and sing with them.

But, first, let me pray over you.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> See [https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/middleton-imagodei-csr.pdf](https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/middleton-imagodei-csr.pdf) for an amazing explanation of this.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-be-made-in-gods-image/>

<sup>iii</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*