

**Shine Through God-Centeredness**

***“Thine” vs. Mine***

**July 17, 2016**

**PRELUDE – Build Your Kingdom Here**

**Feature – My Life**

**Video – Announcements**

**Worship Songs – Who Is Like Our God? /  
Build Your Kingdom Here**

**Feature – What Do I Know of Holy?**

Let's pray together.

Lord, thank you for this time together. Thank you for all the people who have made it possible for us to experience this time together – the musicians, the tech people, the people taking care of our kids, the greeters. Thank you for the people who

gave and continue to give of their financial resources so we can have such an amazing facility and property.

God, I pray that what we do in this time together would challenge and encourage us to see You a little differently than we do right now and, then, once seeing, we would be empowered to live differently. But not just for our own sake but for the sake of Jesus and this lost and broken world in which He has called us to SHINE.

Amen.

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And that *is* what Jesus has called us to do in this world, if we are Christians. If we believe in and receive Him as the savior

sent from God (who gave his life on the cross and rose from the dead on the third day and who one day will return) and if we accept His teachings and attempt to follow them in our lives, then we are also called to light the way to Him so that others can find Him just as we have.

*“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.*

*In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”* Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

It's no exaggeration to say that now, more

than ever, others *need* to find Him because we live in a culture that is being destroyed from the inside out while individuals, families and entire communities are paying the price. As I said last week, the greatest threat to our survival as a nation isn't ISIS. It's not illegal immigrants. It's not the 1%. It's not the crony capitalism which benefits big corporations while stealing opportunity from the middle class. All of those things are important, yes, but the biggest issue in this culture is *the lack of virtue* among individual citizens.

Freedom – the foundational principle on which our country was built – simply does not work, at least, not for very long – without virtue; that impulse to good, to do right, to do more, to do better ... *just because* ... even when it costs us. (I explained why

that is true in last week's message so, if you missed it, you can check out online in the media section of our app or website). If America is going to be great again (to quote one of the presidential candidates), it will be only because *individual Americans* become great again (and I mean great in the sense of virtue).

But who will proclaim that message and set the example?

- You're not going to hear it or see it from the political class. What we hear from them almost always panders to our self-centered perspectives and selfish desires.
- You're not going to hear it or see it from the entertainment class. What

we hear and see from them almost always plays to our “baser desires” because, as they say, “sex sells” – though more and more it’s not about sex but about deviance in general.

The only real hope ... the only real light in the darkness ... for those who want to escape (as the Apostle Peter once wrote) “the corruption that is in this world caused by evil desires and who want to participate in the life that God offers in Christ”<sup>i</sup> ... is us: you and me, individually and collectively as a church, along with all other sincere believers and followers of Jesus and all other churches that teach and preach the Gospel.

That’s why, over the past few months, we’ve tried to define at some level of detail

what it actually looks like to shine the light that points the way to the Good News of Christ. Way back at the beginning, I told you that I felt an impression (from God, I believe) that there were ...

**... five light-shining-in-the-darkness winsome attitudes and behaviors that would really stand out in our current culture:**

- Generosity
- Graciousness
- God-centeredness
- Goodness
- And being Gospel-driven (which is the motivation to help other people find what we have found in Christ).

We've already completed the first two of those 5 Gs (and if you are new to us, again,

just a reminder that messages from both of those series are available on our app and website). And last Sunday, we began talking about that third G (God-centeredness) but, as you know, last week we also dealt with what had happened in Dallas with the ambush of police.

I'm glad we did that because it vividly illustrated the need for and the value of God-centered people in this culture but, because we focused quite a bit on the events and the emotions and the processing of it all, I wasn't able to be as clear or thorough as I had originally intended. Therefore, what I'm going to do in the time I have for this message today is to recap some of what I said about God-centeredness last week and expand on it a little. Then we'll spend a few minutes



taking it a step further.

So, let's get into it.

## **A Definition**

And let's begin with a definition. Last week, I said that I wasn't sure if we were going to have a definition because the term "God-centered" is fairly self-explanatory: a God-centered person is someone who puts God at the center of everything in their lives.

However, upon further review, I think we can do a little bit better than that, so here's the definition I'm going to use.

**God-centeredness is the humble, accountable, obedient, dependent submission to the Primary Being in the Universe (i.e. God). <repeat>**

And if you're wondering where I got this, I just made it up. And I'll admit that it's a little clunky but I like it that way because each of those words, I think, is critical to understanding what God-centeredness looks like.

And we're going to break it down in detail this morning and in the next two Sundays but, first, I need to clarify exactly what I mean by the phrase "Primary Being in the Universe" because, last week, I said that ...

- A person who believes that nature is (somehow) God could be God-centered depending on how they lived their lives.
- A person who believes that Allah is God could also be described that way.

- And a person who (like more than a few of our nation’s founders) believes in an unidentified “Supreme Being” might also be described as God-centered; a quality which (we learned last week) those founders believed to be completely necessary to the development of virtue.

However, when I talk about The Primary Being in the Universe – God – throughout this series, I am specifically referring to that Being who is revealed to us in the Hebrew Older Testament and in the Christian New Testament.

- I’m talking about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and gave the 10 Commandments to Moses.

- I'm talking about the God who has revealed Himself to be (somehow) Three-in-One: Father, Son and Spirit who created the world, entered the world, died to save the world, rose to redeem the world and will one day restore the world by destroying sin and death.

So, with that in mind, to be God-centered is to submit yourself and your life to that particular Being (The Father Who is In Heaven, the Son who is Risen and the Spirit who is with us and in us if we are believers) ... to be God-centered is to submit to Father, Son and Spirit in a way that is humble, accountable, obedient and dependent.

As we'll see, the presence of those four characteristics in our lives – humble,

accountable, obedient and dependent – their presence is the test of whether God is at the *center* of our lives and not just an *add-on* ... which is, unfortunately, how many people in our culture think of God and relate to God.

Here's what I mean.

**<diagram> Most people look at their lives and they say ...**

“I’ve got my family ... I’ve got my job ... I’ve got my finances and my possessions ... I’ve got my friends ... I’ve got my hobbies and those are all great but, if I’m really going to be happy, I need to have God, too.”

**<diagram> And so we add God as yet another compartment in an already compartmentalized life.**

Now, I'm not saying this to be critical at all. It's just how we tend to think as humans because of our basic default view of the world and life and reality and the universe.

**<diagram> Our basic default view is that we are at the center of everything.**

“Everything that is” – which is all the stuff in the circle – exists for us and our benefit.

And if you don't believe this is true, just ask anyone who has become a parent in the last year or so. They will tell you that the default worldview of their wonderful newborn is pretty simple: “It's all about *me* – what I think, what I like, what I want, what I need. And the sooner you understand and accept that, the happier we'll all be around here!”

That's just reality.

And quite frankly, for a lot of us, that's how it stays throughout all of life. Oh, we might get some coaching here and there as to the benefit of not being so self-centered but, bottom line, that's still the mental model by which we operate. Even when we go out of our way to be benevolent and caring towards others, it's still with ourselves at the center our own little Universe. *Even the way we talk about it* reveals that it's true. It's *our way* that we're going out of. It's all about me. In the immortal words of Billy Joel – it's my life.

So, if the day should come when we hear the Gospel – the good news that God's Kingdom is near and now and we can be part of it by believing in Jesus and what He

has done and receiving him as our savior – when we hear and accept the Gospel, it’s no surprise that we just add God on to the circle.

And, then, in the same way that we sometimes give attention to our family or our job or our hobbies or anything else, sometimes we turn our attention to Him.

Now, that’s how a self-centered person – and, again, I don’t mean that negatively or critically – that’s how a person who sees themselves at the center of everything thinks of and relates to God.

Of course, the downside of that worldview is that there’s a lot of pressure on me to remain in control of everything in my life which, at times, isn’t too challenging. But at



other times, it can be overwhelming to the point of despair. Some of you know what I'm talking about because that's where you are right now. You're at the center of everything and everything is falling apart.

Now, you *are* turning to the God-compartment and you *are* crying out to Him for help. But you have no peace. You have no confidence. You have a lot of fear and worry. You're just like everybody else in this world who doesn't know God. Because God is just an add-on to your life, it still feels like it's all up to you to make it work.

**<diagram> Obviously, one alternative to this view of the world (an alternative to the add-on approach towards God) is to put God at the center of your life.**

This is a move that requires some *humility*. You have to admit that you are not able to control everything. You have to admit that God is more powerful than you are.

I can remember being taught many years ago that there is sort of an imaginary throne room in your life and that the choice you have to make (repeatedly) – if you want to experience everything God has promised for believers in Jesus – the choice you have to make is for you to get off the throne and for Jesus to get on it.

## **Ultimate Reality**

And I think that's a helpful start to understanding what it means to be God-centered. Furthermore, I think it's a far better way to live than the first worldview

we looked at.

However, the problem with this view is that it's still *all about you*. Yes God is now at the center of the picture but it's still *your picture*. It's *your family, your job, your finances, your concerns, and your life*. You are the one that defines reality.

But your reality is not ultimate reality. Ultimate reality is described in scriptures like these:

*“In Him we live and move and  
have our being.” Acts 17:28  
(NIV)*

That tells us that our picture needs to be turned inside out. It's not *in us* that God lives and moves and has His being. Reality is the other way around.

## **Here's another one:**

*From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.*

*Romans 11:36 (NIV)*

God's life is the foundation upon which everything else rests. God's life is the ultimate reality that holds all realities. It's all about Him.

## **Therefore, if you're going to live with that in reality in mind ...**

*Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)*

Your entire life all the way down to something as basic as eating and drinking

is, in reality, about Him and His glory; not about you and yours.

One more vision of ultimate reality and I think this one will blow you away. And let me explain why before I show it to you.

Most of us, when we hear the Gospel, are told how much God loves us; how much we matter to Him; how valuable we are to Him – so valuable that Jesus would come and put on flesh and die in our place on the cross. And all of that is completely true and we should never forget it. But we should also be careful not to elevate our value to God too highly in the overall scheme of things.

Here's what I mean by that: because our default worldview is that we are at the

center of everything, it almost sounds like God's eternal plan is all about us and our worth and our value. It almost sounds like we are at the center of God's universe and so God has no choice but to do something to save us.

But that's not ultimate reality.

**Here's what God himself said about it through the Prophet Isaiah.**

*For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to destroy you completely. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. Isaiah 48:9,11 (NIV)*

God's love for us is not first and foremost

about us. It's about Him. It's about His glory. It's about His Name being, in the words Jesus' taught us to pray, "hallowed" or honored or held in highest regard. Even God Himself is God-centered and rightfully so!

**<diagram> Ultimate reality is that the God who is Father, Son and Spirit is THE PRIMARY, ESSENTIAL BEING IN THE UNIVERSE. Everything and everyone else is secondary and non-essential.**

Ultimate reality is not that He is in the orbit of our lives, just waiting to be called upon. Ultimate reality is that we are in the orbit of His life.

That's why the song Andrea sang right before the message is so appropriate today. Most of us have made God too small. Most

of us have never really feared (or, better, revered) Him. But reality is He spoke us into motion, not the other way around.

And, in the light of that ultimate reality, where have you and I ever stood but the shore along His ocean?

That means ... and this is important ... that means that the *real* transition to the God-centered life is not when you move God to the center of *your* world. It's when you realize that God is *already* at the center of *everything* – time, space, matter, and eternity (which is outside of time and space and matter) – and you start looking at *your* life from *that* perspective. The move to the God-centered life is when you begin aligning your life to the reality that *is*; to the reality that has always existed from



before you were a gleam in your momma's eyes; from before time even began.

And that move requires a humble submission to the Primary Being in the Universe which is the first characteristic in our definition. It requires those of us who are followers of Jesus to say not once but, again and again, throughout our entire life “it's all about Thee and not about Me.”

We talked a little bit about that last week (it was actually the title of the message, “Thee” vs. Me) and I said that one of the keys not only to reinforcing this view of reality but also of aligning ourselves with it is setting aside one day of the week, every week, for the purpose of going to church and worshipping this Being and learning about Him.

The most God-centered person who ever lived (Jesus) did it. The NT tells us that it was His custom to be at synagogue worshipping and learning every Sabbath Day. If we're Christians, it should be ours as well.

And I understand (as I said last week) that we travel, we have jobs, etc. But to continually and intentionally neglect the weekly assembly of believers is to flip the picture back to where you are at the center and not God. When God is at the center, if you can't be at your church when they have services, you need to figure out some other way to worship that day. Go to another church if you're out of town; watch the livestream or watch the service later or set aside a time for a little private worship

service with just you and the Lord.

## **The Ultimate Owner**

But let's move (quickly, since we don't have much time left!) to the second characteristic of a God-centered person. Remember, we said that God-centeredness is the humble, accountable, obedient, dependent submission to the Primary Being in the Universe (i.e. God).

We've talked about the humble submission that says "it's all about Thee and not about Me."

But a God-centered person *also* understands that since God is the Primary Essential Being in the Universe, all things in the Universe belong to Him ... which by

definition *includes everything that I possess*: my money, my stuff, my time, my career, my education, my children, my body, my skills and talents, my intellect, my words, my relationships, my influence, my life experiences – everything that I, in some way or another, possess.

A God-centered person knows that it's all “Thine” not mine. “Thine – not mine – is the Kingdom.”

One of the greatest examples of this mindset is seen in one of the greatest prayers recorded in the Bible. It's near the end of his life and King David of Israel (a man who had been known both as “a man after God's own heart” and as a man who failed morally and miserably) – David has gathered the people of Israel together to

give offerings for the construction of the Temple of the Lord.

The Bible tells us that after he donates an amazing amount of money and supplies and the leaders of the nation also donate amazing amount ...

**David prays this prayer:**

*“Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.*

*Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our*

*God, we give you thanks, and  
praise your glorious name.*

*“But who am I, and who are my  
people, that we should be able to  
give as generously as this?  
Everything comes from you, and  
we have given you only what  
comes from your hand.” 1  
Chronicles 29:11-14 (NIV)*

Four times David says to the Lord “it all comes from you. It all belongs to you.” And because he understood that it all comes from God and all belongs to God, he also understood that it was to be used for whatever purposes God might reveal; in this case, the building of the Temple.

One of the fundamental questions in the mind of a God-centered person is always “what would He want me to do with what

He has put in my hands? How can I leverage what I have – what God has given me – for His Kingdom and His glory?”

They understand that they are just the temporary manager of all that is in their possession – a steward accountable to God for using what He has entrusted to them to bring Him glory.

I know we've all heard the story Jesus told about the guy who goes away on a long trip and gives three of his servants an amount of money to manage while he is gone. When he comes back later, he brings each guy in to find out what he has done with his money. The first two guys have invested wisely and made a profit and so, they receive praise and a promotion to more responsibility.

But the third has been lazy and done nothing with what he was given. When he is called to account, he makes up a lame excuse about not wanting to risk losing the boss' money. But the boss sees right through that and takes away his money, takes away his position and throws him out.

And Jesus says, “This is how it works in the Kingdom of Heaven. If you're my follower, everything you have belongs to God, he's loaned it to you and one day you'll give an account for what you did with it. To whom much is given, much is required. And to whoever manages well, much more will be given.”

## **Conclusion**



Now, the most obvious application of this truth is in the area of generosity: the premediated, calculated, designated emancipation of personal financial assets. And when a person truly is God-centered, you see that kind of approach to giving and generosity. “How can I use my finances to bring glory to God and accomplish His purposes in this world? After all, it’s all Thine, not mine.”

But God-centeredness goes beyond how we handle money. It affects everything that we, in some way or another, possess. So, my question this morning for those here who are Christians is this:

When it comes to what God has given you – not only money and possessions but also

time, career, education, children, body, skills, talents, intellect, words, relationships, influence, life experiences – what would it look like for you to submit those things to Him? For you to say, “Here, Lord, these are yours. I submit all that I am and all that I have to you. I’m only giving you what you’ve already given me.”

What needs to change based on the reality that one day you will give an account to the One who is Primary in the Universe?

What would that feel like? I think it might be a little scary at first because it feels like we’re giving away control. But control – at least when we are in control – is an illusion. We’re not in control of anything.

Or, as Jesus once put it, “who among you by

worrying can add a single hour to your life?” Not me. Not you.

That’s why He once said:

*“Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* Matthew 6:31-33  
(NIV)

Center your life around God and his Kingdom. Live as if it’s all Thine and not mine (because it is!)

And when you do that, Jesus says, you won't have to worry. You won't have to be like everybody else in this world who doesn't know God. Instead, you'll have what everybody wants. You'll have peace and confidence because you know that God is more than just an add-on to your life. God is the center and it's up to Him to make it work. And you will be a light shining in the darkness pointing the way to those who seek it.

Let's pray together.

<prayer>

**Feature – Lift My Life Up**

**CLOSING COMMENTS – Offering**

1. August 7<sup>th</sup> big day ...

- a. Time change to 9:30 and 11:00
  - b. “Back to School Sunday” ...  
blessing those who next  
generation and those who lead  
them.
    - i. Invite teachers/parents/kids  
going off to college
2. Offering@door
  3. Kitti prayer

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> My paraphrase of 2 Peter 1:4