

When God Became Human
The Uniqueness of Jesus the Anointed One
Colossians 2:9

If you have a Bible this morning, I'd like for you to turn to Colossians, chapter 2.

For those of you who are visiting, I want to welcome you again and let you know that we're in a new series that's going to last for five weeks— through the holidays and through the month of December. Beginning in January we will pick up again with our study in Hebrews.

I have a specific goal for this five week series which I began last Sunday. My job, my task, my calling, is to help all of us know God just a little bit better as He reveals Himself to us in His Word.

The foundational text of this series is from Daniel, chapter 11, where the prophet said, "The people that know their God will be strong and take action." So, if I am successful when this is over, you and I will know God just a little bit better, be stronger and do what is needed when the time comes.

Last week I showed you that the Scripture is quite emphatic about one thing concerning God: God is Spirit and He is *not* gendered.

Now, I know that we use pronouns when we speak of God," Him", "He", and that's because we are limited in our English language. We don't have a pronoun that is gender neutral, but the Scripture in the Gospel of John says, "God is Spirit, He is not a man; He is not a female—He is spirit."

However, God possesses both masculine and feminine attributes. This is why, in the book of Genesis during the creation narrative, the only time the Bible tells us the Spirit Creator ever says, "This is not good," is when He created the man and said, "It is not good."

Then He created the female, and the Spirit Creator said, "It is good," which teaches us that both the male and the female reflect the image of God. In fact, I could say it succinctly like this: It is only *in* the man and the woman— the *male* and the *female*—that the full-orbed image of God is truly seen.

That was the foundation. This morning we're going to continue as we examine the Gospel story, the Christmas message, which is: *God became human*. The Spirit Creator became a person.

When I was a young pastor, I was in my early 20's; I grew up in a culture where I did not have the privilege of having very many African-American friends, but one of my first, close, black friends, was a fellow preacher in a small community where I was pastoring in Oklahoma. He was a very, dear, man.

I grew to love him deeply, but I will never forget the surprise I had when I walked into his church and saw a picture of Jesus on the wall of the church he pastored, an African-American church in the Holdenville community. It was a black Jesus. That caught me off guard, but then as I reflected on the representation of God in human form in this African-American church I understood.

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God came as a human, and for my black friends, humanness is the color black on their skin—there's nothing wrong with that.

If you've ever spent any time on the mission field, for example, you go to China and you tell the story of the Spirit Creator becoming a person you will find that the Chinese—the Chinese Evangelical Christians— will represent Jesus as a Chinese person. Again, there's nothing wrong with that, nothing at all.

In fact, in our third worship service this morning we had a fellow by the name of Hassan in church; he's a Muslim. He's here in Enid being trained to fly F-16s.

Our government sold to the government of Iraq some planes and part of the contract said that the pilots would be trained in Enid America. And it was the first time that he had ever been in an Evangelical church. And I told Hassan that truth be known, Jesus, the anointed one, was probably more like Hassan in looks—a Middle Eastern man—than a Chinese man or an African-American man or even this man, an American Jesus.

Have you ever noticed that the way we Americans portray Jesus? It looks like He could live in Southern Georgia – a square chin, a beard, long flowing locks. Again, there's nothing wrong with this, but let's just get real. Nobody knows how Jesus looked. We don't know the color of his skin, whether it was dark or light. We don't know the color of His hair, the color of His eyes; we don't know how tall He was.

And I think the reason why the inspired and infallible word of God does not describe Jesus for us is because there's only one Jesus for Chinese, Africans, Americans, middle eastern people—there's only one Jesus and the color of His skin, or His hair or His eyes is not important.

The only description we have of Jesus in the Word of God is in our text: Colossians 2, verse 9. Listen to what the Bible says: "In Him, that is, the Anointed One; in Jesus Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form."

Now if the Bible is truthful, and I believe it is, and if I am accurate, and I believe I am, then the fullness of the deity which resides in the body of Jesus Christ reflects both masculine and feminine characteristics because God is neither a man nor a woman. He is spirit and men and women are created to reflect His image.

So if the fullness of the Deity, bodily resides in Christ; there are some things that I think will help you in your understanding of God, of Emmanuel, God with us.

First, in the incarnation, which means in the coming of God to earth; Jesus came as the perfect person, which is more than the perfect man. In other words, Jesus is perfect humanity. This means men, if you want to know how a man should really be—look at Jesus. This means, ladies, if you want to know how a woman should really be in character and attributes—look to Jesus because in Him all the fullness of the Deity lives.

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Now you say, “Well pastor, I’ve never really thought about that.” I understand. I have, for decades, and I’m not alone.

I’ve learned what I’ve learned about the equality of men and women through reading Scripture, and men like John Calvin and John Gill and their commentaries on the theology of Scripture—that’s where I learned.

So I get a little bit offended when people say to me, “Well, you know pastor, when you speak of the equality of the sexes and you speak of men and women being equal image bearers of God all you’re doing is catering to the culture.” I say, “What? You’ve got to be kidding me!”

No, I get how I live from the Word of God, and the Word of God tells us that there’s an equality in men and women because we *both* bear the image of God and in the man Jesus, the fullness of the Deity lives.

Now, Jesus was a man, as we know men to be. There’s nothing wrong in acknowledging Him as the Son of God, but what I’m trying to show you is this ladies: In Him the Spirit God lives— God’s fullness which includes both masculine and feminine characteristics. Let me prove it to you.

First, New Testament authors refer to Jesus, the Anointed One, as *Anthropos*, meaning mankind, or humankind in general and they do not use the word that is typically used for males.

In fact, in John 1, verse 14, the Scripture says, “the word was made flesh,” emphasizing the humanity of Jesus, the Anointed One; it doesn’t say the word was made *male*.

Second, Jesus Christ never married, but during the days of Jesus, Judaism taught that every Jewish boy when he reached the age of eighteen was obligated; it was his religious duty to marry a woman. Jesus—contrary to His religious training as a Hebrew and to His Hebrew culture—never married.

Now why is that? Well, I believe because the Bible puts the emphasis on the humanity of Jesus; He is the perfect person, and this is the reason why He never married.

Third, in Jesus, masculine and feminine character qualities are harmoniously mingled. Let me show you what I mean.

We all understand the power of Jesus, the Anointed One, there’s nobody like Him. Nobody will ever be like Him. The fullness of the deity lives in Him. He raised the dead; He calmed the storm. They wanted to kill Him. He walked through the people who wished to throw Him off the cliff as if He was parting the Red Sea. Nothing ever died in His presence. He was the Spirit God walking among us. You all understand that.

But have you noticed that Jesus cooked for his disciples; Jesus openly wept at the news that His friend had died? Before He raised Lazarus from the dead the people saw His emotion; He was gentle with children; He taught the so-called feminine virtue of submissiveness to both women and men. He

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was truly a servant of men and women. And He refused to define blessedness in terms of gender. This leads me to a second point ...

When you begin to understand that the Spirit God came as the perfect person and men if you want to know what it means to be a man—look to Jesus. Women if you want to know what it means to be a Christian woman—look to Jesus. When you begin to understand this, men, the more Christ-like you become the more you will begin treating women with respect as equals.

In other words, rather than letting your culture convince you that you should never cry, that you should never dry the dishes, that you should never be in the kitchen to help—rather than let your western American culture define for you what it means to be a man—you look to Jesus and you see the fullness of the image of God in Him and you say to yourself, “You know what, I’m not going to let my culture put me in a stereotypical roll, I’m going to be a servant.”

It’s amazing in Mid-Western America, where it’s farmland, and it’s rough work. We’re on the edge of the frontier where the Native Americans roamed, and it was dangerous territory. Men would bring their wives and their kids and this culture of ours developed this stereotypical idea of what a man is. He is a man who tills the ground and protects his wife and children from the Indians and he never expresses any emotion and the woman serves him and he is the guy that is in charge. He is the leader and everybody else follows him.

In this culture in which we grew up it is very easy for us to take our definition of what it means to be a human being from our surrounding culture rather than from the Word of God.

It reminds me of what I heard one time about that mid-western farmer— that tough Middle American rough man who loved his wife and his kids so much—he almost told them.

Men, part of your personality may be such that you grew up in a home where that was the model “man.” But I’m asking you not to get your practice as a Christian, not to *be* the man you are based upon any model, but the model of Jesus Christ. And the truth is, the more Christ-like you become, the more you will treat women with dignity, respect, and equality because you see them as co-image bearers of God.

Listen to what a friend named Dorothy Sayers, a friend of C.S. Lewis said about Jesus:

Perhaps it was no wonder that women were first at the cradle and last at the cross. They’d never known one like this man, a prophet and teacher who never nagged at women, never flattered or coaxed or patronized them and never made sick jokes about them. He rebuked them without quarreling, and He praised them without condescension. He took women’s questions and arguments seriously. He never mapped out this world for women. And never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female. He had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend. He took women as He found them and was completely unselfconscious. Nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything funny or inferior about women.

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That's good.

Let me show you a third thing. The more Christ-like you women become, the more you will see yourselves as *complete* in Christ.

You see Colossians 2:9 says, "For in the Anointed One all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form." We've already seen that the Bible says that God is Spirit and is not gendered so in Jesus Christ you have that beautiful and harmonious mixing of all the full attributes of God which are both masculine and feminine.

And the more Christ-like men become, the more they stop the stereotypical teaching of what a man should be. And the more Christ-like women become; ladies the more you begin to understand you're complete in Christ and you don't need a man. Look at verse 10, the very next verse after Colossians 2, verse 9, "and in Him you have been made complete." You're complete in Christ.

In the early service we had some beautiful girls on the second row and they're not yet married; they're too young. And one of these days, it could be that the Lord calls them into a covenant of marriage, but I reminded them that they do not need to be married in order to be complete.

Now I hope that if that is in their heart and God has called them to marriage that they experience the kind of marriage many of you have and that my wife and I have. Oh my word, she's my best friend. She would say the same thing about me.

Our marriage, I say this reverently, pictures the fellowship and the unity of the Trinity. There is an understanding of equality and a fondness and a relationship that is built upon intimacy because we see each other as equals just like the Father, the Son, and the Spirit relate to one another.

One of these days, she or I will die, and one of us will be left—ladies, those of you who have lost your husband, you haven't lost an ounce of your self-worth. Your dignity, your personhood, who you are, has not changed.

This is why, if you attend Emmanuel, and you are single,—listen: You are as loved and appreciated and desired in our ministry and in our church as married couples because your personhood is defined by your relationship with Christ—not your relationship with anyone from the opposite sex.

Now, how do I know this to be true? Because marriage is a temporary institution; contrary to what our Mormon friends would say, who teach that for eternity you will be married, men to multiple wives.

Contrary to what our Muslim friends would say, what Hassan, who was in the 9:30 a.m. Refuge service would say; they would say that men will have multiple wives for eternity. That is directly opposite to what Jesus, the Anointed One said. He said, "In the Eternal Kingdom, in Heaven, we will not marry nor be given in marriage."

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If you enter into a relationship of marriage on earth, with a person from the opposite sex, all that you're doing is modeling what it means to have fellowship the way the Trinity has fellowship and when you get to heaven you will find your completeness in Christ.

And let me tell you if you ever get in a relationship, a church, an environment where the home, where the equality of men and women is taught, you get a slice of heaven.

Because the truth of the matter is: Why don't we just experience life now, the way we're going to experience it then? Let me show you what this means and I'll close with some practical application.

When you get a glimpse of this; when you understand that the sexes—the genders reflect the full-orbed image of God, and when you understand that we are complete in Christ some things begin to happen. Emphasizing Christ-like equality in males and females corrects much of the dysfunction that we find in churches and in homes.

Let me show you what I mean: When you begin to understand that what I am saying is straight from the word of God, then the emphasis in your family and in your life and in your church will be on the functionality of the individual Christian within the family rather than the form of the family in which the individual Christian resides.

Meaning ... you'll begin to experience a place of grace, like Emmanuel, where people are interested in individuals. Widows we don't define you as someone worth less than a married couple. Singles we don't define you as someone without as much dignity as those who have a nuclear family and let me even go a little bit more radical—a church member told me after the early service that this is happening already within our church. I didn't know this. I conjectured that it could happen one day.

We've got a young man who walks into our church who's living at home, and his mom and his dad are homosexuals, the same gender.

Now, obviously, because we believe in the inspired and infallible word of God, we believe one of the benefits of marriage and the reason it is defined in Scripture as between a man and a woman is because of the biological differences between men and women.

We come together in the covenant of marriage for the purpose of procreation and if everyone lived in same-sex covenant marriages the world would eventually die off. One of the reasons there is no marriage in Heaven is because there is no more procreation.

However, my peers, preachers, get in the pulpit and they rant and rave against homosexuals and rant and rave against families that don't look like our families and so on. And by the way, we would desire folks to understand families the way Scripture outlines them. We would desire that. But why rant and rave against people who don't know Christ? When you've got a young boy walking into Emmanuel who's living with homosexuals, what are we saying to that kid? You're not worth as much as a boy that's in a home with a male and a female serving his mom and dad. No, we're not going to say that.

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Do you know what we're going to do? We're going to put our arm around that little boy, we're going to tell him about the love of Jesus and we're going to show him that he has dignity and he is not defined by the form of his family and that within his life he can find functionality and completeness in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, the emphasis within a church and a home becomes the giftedness and the Spirit anointing of the individual believer rather than the gender and societal assignment of that individual.

In other words, when you ever get a sense of what the Scripture teaches about the genders then you begin to live in the equality of men and women serving together. Any church that de-emphasizes women and places only men in leadership only represent half of the image of God and vice versa. Any church that has only women in leadership and excludes men only presents half of the character of God.

When you have a healthy church, you get men and women who relate to one another in equality – this leads me to my final statement. When we begin to understand this, the emphasis becomes the spiritual enjoyment of members who form the body of Christ rather than the sexualized enticement of members of the opposite sex.

Have you ever wondered why preachers get caught up in sexual sins? Have you ever asked yourself the question: Why is it that men, particularly in Evangelical churches, pastors, leaders- why do they continually involve themselves sexually with women who are not their wives?

Let me propose to you something: It is happening in the Middle East now. A reporter, a female reporter, who was giving a news story in the plaza of Cairo, Egypt was attacked by Egyptian men, sexually, publicly—how in the world does that happen? The same way a preacher takes a woman in his church and has sex with her and she's not his wife.

We have lost the sense of God's image in women, we have viewed them as helpers to men, objects that fulfill our sexual desires and the truth of the matter is we have lost sight of the fact that when we gather as Christians and we sit across from women we don't look at women sexually. We look at them as an image bearer of our God and we treat them with dignity and respect. We could even be like Jesus and sit beside a prostitute and not think like a natural man, who is full of his sin, thinks. We could think like Jesus and give her a cup of water and bring refreshment to her soul.

Wow, it's my opinion that the reason we are not strong and we don't take action when we see the abuse of women is because we don't know our God. The people who know their God will be strong and take action.

One of these days, I believe we will come to a place where there will be an environment in our midst where men and women don't seek to push one another aside based upon gender, but we relate to one another as equal image bearers of God and we see that when there is giftedness in a woman, we follow.

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When there's giftedness in a man, we'll follow and when there is a call to serve given to us by the Spirit we will serve. Men, we will serve. Women, we will serve because it's no longer a matter of gender, it's a matter of knowing God.

Now, I know you've probably never heard something like this going to church. I understand all of that. I know this is tough for some of you. I know you're having to wrestle through it.

In the early service, 8:30 a.m., here in the auditorium, we had a woman who came from a very strong tradition where she had to wear her hair up in a bun, always wore a dress, always kept quiet around the table; the men were served by the women.

And so this was very new to her, I told her just be patient, if I am not revealing to you the Word of God—you reject it, but if I am telling you what Scripture says then you accept it and recognize that if it's different than what you've heard all of your life.

Maybe what has happened is you've been caught up in culture and stereotypical roles of women rather than understanding the full-orbed revelation of God—from Genesis through Revelation—Emmanuel. The Spirit God came to earth as the perfect person; receive it; follow it, and find your healing in Him.