

The Rule of God and Man

This morning, we're continuing our Nature of God and Nature of Man series – exploring how the Trinity affects our views of being created in God's image. I want to say this on the outset: each sermon is only going to answer certain questions, but I also think each sermon could create their own set of additional questions. You'll hear me say something and you might say, "Ok, but what about this or that thing?" I may not answer that question until another sermon, and so if you don't like that kind of tension, I'm sorry. At the same time, I've had great conversations with many people over this series and I want to welcome more conversations! Your comments help me as I create sermons, too. So, feel free to reach out to me. Finally, come back in the evenings. I get more practical in the evening messages, too. You might benefit greatly there as well.

A man by the name of Lord Acton once wrote, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." Meaning that if someone has no checks or balances in their leadership, they'll be more and more corrupted by it and essentially become like a dictator. In one sense, this statement is true. However, in the Bible, we learn that in another sense, it's incorrect. Power doesn't corrupt us. Instead, it reveals our corruption. From the beginning of the Bible, we learn that we are not only victims of society and circumstances, but we all are born sinners. Because of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden, all humanity (and creation) has fallen into disarray. Instead of imaging forth God as we were created to do, we have warped and distorted everything.

This is true for men *and* women. No one escapes this. What's interesting, though, is that it seems like even in the midst of our society, we tend to consistently want to blame shift. Men want to blame women. Women want to blame men. And while there are injustices and sins that men and women have done throughout the ages, we all must confess our brokenness. And I think our brokenness is oftentimes seen most clearly in how we distort God's command to us to rule. In other words, when humans rule, they often reveal their corruption.

Now, does this mean ruling is bad? Absolutely not. I recall having a conversation with someone once who said he believed that Christianity was against essentially all forms of leadership because leadership always leads to abuse of power. But that person has to deal with God's command to rule and subdue the earth – imaging forth God's rule. Yet, when we see so much corruption, we might become hopeless and wonder how we as male and female really have hope to "rule" as God intended.

Yet, I believe what the Scripture says: **And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.**¹ If you have recognized your own brokenness and turned to Jesus for forgiveness and reconciliation with God, then you are in a process of transformation. By the way, this statement implies that you still have imperfections and brokenness because you're being changed from one degree of glory to another. Yet, there's hope. God promises to grow you.

But this growth doesn't come by taking a pill or just sitting and waiting for God to zap you with change. Instead, we're told that it's through beholding the glory of the Lord. This verse essentially states the purpose of this series that we're in. We're studying the nature of our Triune God and how his nature as Triune affects us as male and female. Today, the idea we're emphasizing is the Rule of God and Man.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 3:18.

The main idea of the sermon today is **Mankind (i.e. – image-bearers of God) is to rule under God’s rule.** Rule and leadership is not sinful. But what is God’s design for our rule? If we are created in his image and he rules, what does that mean for us? Do we rule in the same way? In different ways? What does this mean for us as male and female? These types of questions are what we’ll be answering in this sermon. We’ll do this by first looking at God and how he rules and then we’ll see what the Bible says about how we image forth God’s rule in this world.

With this understanding, let’s pray together [Robirds; Nate Birkholtz @ Lakeshore; Martins in South Africa]

Again, this sermon is not going to stay in one text. This 7-week series is going throughout the whole Scriptures to give us an understanding of how God as Triune affects us as human beings created male and female. So, we will have three main points this morning: 1) Our Triune God rules over all, 2) Mankind is to rule over creation, 3) God will bring about a perfect rule someday. Let’s start off with the first point.

1. Our Triune God rules over all.

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Bible begins with God as the main character. Without God, there’d be nothing. The Bible reveals to us that everything came about by him and he owns all.

Deuteronomy 10:14 says, ¹⁴ **Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.**² Psalm 24:1 states, **“The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. . .”**³ 1 Chronicles 29:12 says, ¹² **Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.**⁴

Years ago, I heard a story about a teacher in Ireland who taught a Bible class to 5 year-olds. This was back in the day when Ireland’s public schools taught Bible. And, in that class, the teacher was talking about creation. She thought of an idea to have all the students make a box with a world in that box. They had clay and they could be as creative as they liked. The kids worked on it for days and they were excited with their results. Then, the teacher said to the students, “What would you do if your clay people came to life and then one of them started destroying your creation?” One of the little children chimed in, “I’d knock it’s block off!” I tell this story because we naturally get this understanding that if we were to create something from scratch, that’s *ours*.

God created and then explicitly states that everything is *his*. He rules over all and owns all. So, we read in 1 Corinthians 4:7: **“What do you have that you did not receive?”**⁵ Since God rules over and owns all things, then we see him act accordingly, right? The 19th and 20th century theologian, Abraham Kuyper once wrote, **“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”** Now, this could be a scary reality if God were evil, right? I mean, absolute power corrupts absolutely, right? Not with God. Psalm 115:3 says, “Our God

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Dt 10:14.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 24:1.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ch 29:11–12.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 4:7.

is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”⁶ And what does he please? Well, in Exodus 34:6-7, we’re told what God is like in his rule: **The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.**⁷ God is both merciful and just. He can forgive sins while also punishing sins – which shows us that his rule is perfect. This is a conundrum for us as humans. We cannot imagine a being who is both merciful and just. You either forgive sins or you punish sins. You’re all-powerful or you’re gracious. You can’t be both. Yet, God is.

Now, in all of this, remember that we’re trying to see how our *Triune* God rules. If we see this, then we can also make applications to us as human beings created male and female. So, let me ask you, do you think that God the Father rules over all? What about the Son? What about the Spirit? How do you know that?

Ephesians 4:6 states explicitly about the Father’s rule: **one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**⁸ Then in Romans 9:5, Paul speaks of the Jews and their relationship to Jesus, and Paul says, **“To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”**⁹ Jesus is God over all as well. What about the Holy Spirit? Well, let’s go back to 2 Corinthians 3:18: **“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”**¹⁰ The Lord is the Spirit. The term Lord means “master.” Often in the New Testament, it’s the title given to Jesus. Whereas the term “God” is most often Paul’s shorthand for the Father. Yet, even as we saw in Romans 9, Paul uses the term God for Jesus, and then here in 2 Corinthians, Paul uses the term Lord for the Spirit. The mixing of these terms reveal that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are One – and as the One-in-Three, they rule.

Now, it may be helpful to get the reminder of the basic description of how the Father, Son and Spirit works. If you recall, a couple weeks ago, I said that **The Father plans, the Son executes, the Spirit applies.** This is what we see in the rule of God throughout the Scriptures. In the original creation, we read that the Father’s plan unfolded as he created through the Son, by the Spirit, as the Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters. When we move into Moses’ day, we find God speaking to Moses through a burning bush, and yet we discover that Yahweh is actually *the angel of the Lord*. Then, in implementing the plans, the Spirit comes down upon people. In the New Testament, the Father sent his Son. The son executed the plan and the Spirit applies it to the hearts of people. This pattern is found repeatedly in the Scriptures. Therefore, whether God is ruling over his creation that rebels against him or he’s ruling over his creation that’s turning to him, he’s ruling as the Triune God.

This now leads us to the question. If we are image-bearers of God, and Genesis 1:28 tells us we are to subdue creation – meaning to bring under our control – then what does that look like for us? How do we image forth God’s rule? Do we have absolute power? Well, if we know God owns all, then the answer is clearly no. But we are still left wondering. So, let’s move on to talk about Mankind’s rule over creation.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 115:3.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ex 34:6–7.

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Eph 4:6.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 9:5.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 3:17–18.

2. Mankind is to rule over creation.

Mankind meaning male and female. By the way, a little side note, I know even in our day people can be offended by the term mankind instead of humankind. Or, when you see the title of this sermon being “The Rule of God and Man,” you can say, “No! Man and woman.” A few years ago, I was at a conference where one of the translators for the NIV was speaking. He was talking about how they translate certain words into the English language so that this translation can reach the entire English-speaking world. Well, he said that one word was mankind verses man verses humankind. He said that there were translators who wanted humankind; however, in the broad English-speaking world, mankind was still more prevalent. So, some of the translators reluctantly went with mankind.

While I honestly don’t want to make too much of a deal about this, I would say that Genesis 1 leads us to believe that male and female together are man. In a way that pictures the Trinity. God the Father is God, but Jesus is God and the Spirit is God. Yet, the Scriptures delineate that, too. And, we don’t find the Spirit saying, “Hold on! Why are you saying God there? That’s too generic! Make sure I’m noticed.” Instead, we find both. We find the Scriptures show unity and diversity.

This is the same for male and female. Male and female are *one* as man – meaning, mankind. And, we are distinct as well. Yet, together we rule. Yes, *together* we rule. Let me say on the outset that today I’ll briefly talk about how we rule differently. Then in the weeks to come, the differences are going to be highlighted more. But sometimes I wonder if people highlight the differences too quickly at the expense of our unity. So, let’s again emphasize how we are both commanded to rule.

But I want to again emphasize that I believe the only way we can truly rule as God intends is if we submit to Christ first. Jesus came as the Light of the World, living perfectly in this world – fulfilling the mandate of God to rule under his rule, magnifying him and loving others perfectly. Then, on the cross, Jesus took the justice of God. The death we deserved, which wasn’t simply dying on a cross but experiencing the punishment of God on the cross, Jesus took in the place of sinners. Then, on the third day, he rose from the dead, overruling the curse.

Now, everyone who turns from their sinfulness to Christ are part of a new creation where we are being transformed more into the image of the Lord. We are set free to live out the commands God has given to us to submit to his rule and live as rulers. When you hear this, another word aptly describes this kind of rule: stewardship. Humans are stewards of God’s creation. So, let me modify the Abraham Kuyper quote to relate to humans: **“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of my existence over which I can cry: ‘Mine!’”** Nothing is mine. I mean, in one sense, I can say that the van in the garage is mine. Or, the house next door is my house. But that’s from a human perspective. Ultimately, nothing is mine, in the sense that I have absolute power over it. In 1 Corinthians 4, the apostle Paul wrote, **“What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”**¹¹ Earlier in that same chapter, he writes, **“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”**¹²

All humans are stewards under God, and therefore commanded to submit to his rule because he created and owns all. When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden, God gave them commands and then one

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 4:7.

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 4:1–2.

command to *not* do something. In choosing their own way, they defied God. They committed treason. They were to protect, care for and rule over the creation. One wicked creature comes in to defy God. What should Eve have done? She should have kicked the serpent out. What should Adam have done? He should have kicked the serpent out! God's rule is being tested by a serpent! The creation is defying the Creator and causing humans to be tempted to defy the Creator and submit to the serpent. Yet God said to Adam and Eve to subdue – to cause to come under their control.

Humans, both male and female, are commanded to rule. Think of the example of Jael when she put a tent peg through the enemies temples. That was a strong act, but wasn't she fulfilling a mandate. She's in the land of God's people who are to remove the idolatry. She had the opportunity. She did it. Or, I think of King David with Goliath. I even think of how God shows an example of a godly woman in Proverbs 31 who labors in the house and outside of the home. She speaks with wisdom and she considers and buys a field. She labors for the good of her family and it results in the good of the people around her, too. Or, I'm reminded of Hosea who loved his unfaithful wife, representing God's love for his own people. All of these people, and so many more, are examples of faithfully ruling under God's rule. Or, stewarding what God has given. In essence, obedience to God is ruling under his rule. It's seeing what God has given to you and learning to praise him in the midst of it all.

Yet, we know humans have messed it up. In Genesis 3:16, when God punishes humanity, we read a succinct statement about the future of male-female relationships: **Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.**¹³ The husband was not commanded to rule over the wife. He's commanded to rule with his wife. They together are to subdue the earth. Yet, the woman will be contrary to the man and the man will rule over the woman. Study history. Find how both men and women fail at this. Yet, I don't merely want to talk about how humanity has failed. If we only look at failures, we'll never really know what to do.

So, let's see what it means for men to rule and what it means for women to rule.

Recently, a church member said to me that they had always thought that male leadership was a result of the Fall, yet I stated a couple weeks ago that it wasn't. Man *ruling* over the woman is a result of the fall, but not leadership. That might seem like a semantical difference, but it's an important difference to make. When we look at the creation account, Adam was created first and then Eve was created as the helper fit for him. By the way, this doesn't mean Adam is more valuable. We're only talking about leadership responsibility. Again, I know this hard for us to grasp in our day when those who are in leadership are generally paid more – meaning they have more value and influence – but remember that Jesus teaches us that true leadership is servanthood. Whoever is to be greatest must be the servant of all.

I believe Adam was given the greater responsibility in leading, and we see that as well when God punishes. God spoke to Adam first after the Fall. Not to Eve. Then we're told in 1 Corinthians 15:22 that in Adam all die. We're not told "in Eve" all die. In Adam. Why? Because he was given the leadership responsibility.

Now, after the Fall, God still commands men to be leaders who have the responsibility. This is the idea of the word "headship." In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul writes, ¹³**But I want you to understand that the head**

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:16.

of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.¹⁴ Head refers to a responsibility of leadership. This has nothing to do with value. Christ is God, and yet here we see that Paul is referencing Jesus and the Father. Equal in value, distinct in roles as it relates to salvation! Jesus is the head of man – meaning that we are to lead under his leadership. In marriage we are to represent his love to our wives, and wives should feel supremely loved and valued under this leadership responsibility.

I would say that in general, men are to understand and grow in their masculinity as rulers under God's rule – knowing their responsibility to point to God's glory. This does not mean that all men rule over all women. I can't lead any woman I come into contact with, but I should be seen as a safe person and one who would know his responsibility to point people to the Lord and his ways. Obviously, when it comes to marriage, the leadership enhances, like I've already said, and even within the church, God speaks to the roles of men. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul explains why the men are to be the ones with greater responsibility. He writes this, **"For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor."**¹⁵ Paul uses creation as example one and then the Fall into sin as example two. Now some will say, "Yep, women aren't to lead because they're easily deceived." But that's not the point here. The point is that Adam failed! So, what Paul is essentially saying is that in the Church, we should not follow Adam. We are to follow Christ! We are to recognize our responsibility.

None of this takes away the value of women. So, let's go to the rule of women. She was created to be the helper fit for man. Think about how God commanded humans to fill the earth. How in the world could the earth be filled without women? There would be *no* human race without women. The creation mandate is carried along by them. And, don't think this is a small thing. Adam names his wife Eve, meaning the mother of all living. God has created the female body to be able to bring life into this world. But that's not everything. She's created to be the helper fit for man.

I've said this many times and I'll probably say it many times in the future. Help implies that there's a need. And, by the way, the word "help" does not mean lesser in value. I said this a couple Sunday nights ago in my sermon on gender, but I think it'll be helpful here, too. We read over-and-over again that God helps us and the Spirit is our helper. Never do we think less of God because he helps. Instead, we praise him that he helps us! Help is significant! And, when men recognize that leadership responsibility does not mean totalitarian authority, then they will praise the Lord for women in their lives. Women, stewarding the resources in your life looks like helping – and even helping men in ruling and leading.

Now, again, this doesn't mean you submit to every man. That's a dangerous position for you. Instead, we see in the home and in the church, an attitude of help in the pursuit of godliness. In society at large, in the home and the church, there's an attitude of a quiet and peaceable spirit (which Devon will talk about next week).

So, it seems as though God reveals that **men rule in such ways to show forth Jesus' loving leadership and women rule in such ways to show the loving nurture and help of God.** You could immediately think, "No, that's not right. Men show Christ. Women, the church." Well, I know every example breaks down. But I'm trying to highlight men and women in general. Marriage points to Christ and the church. But what if you're not married? Are you still a man or woman created in God's image? Are you to rule

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 11:3.

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 2:13–14.

under his rule? Yes! Jesus was single and perfect! The apostle Paul was unmarried. Mary Magdalene was unmarried as far as we know. So, I think in general, and at a basic level, this statement is true. And, if we think of ourselves as ruling together, then by God's grace, we would not abuse one another. But again, the only way this can happen is through Christ. And this leads me to the final point.

3. God is bringing about a perfect rule.

When we look at Jesus' ministry, he had at least 70 disciples, and we're told that he had female disciples. That was unheard of in the first century. Rabbis would only have men. Even in Judaism, women weren't allowed to worship with the men. Yet, in the book of Acts, we're told that men and women gathered in Solomon's Porch and worshipped together. When we read of Paul's ministry and his co-laborers, he mentions men and women who are laboring with him in the gospel in various ways.

Interestingly, in the Scriptures we have a mandate of God for male and female with the original creation: subdue the earth and be fruitful and multiply. Then in the new creation, which is God's work of saving and bringing a New Heaven and New Earth, God doesn't command having children. Instead, he commands to make disciples. Go out in the world, preach the gospel and watch the Holy Spirit bring new life. In that new life, people will grow to be transformed more into the image of the Lord. And, in local churches, we learn together as we pursue Jesus together on the basis of the Word.

As those who have been rescued by Jesus, men and women serve our Ruler Jesus, seeking to submit to him in all ways by the strength of the Spirit, to the praise of the Father. Therefore, in this life, we live out the principles of the Kingdom of God. Seeking not to live as Adam or Eve, but seeking to follow Jesus. Men taking the responsibility God has given to them in the church. Women helping. All making disciples.

This is very important to bring out because I think sometimes Christians can forget that God's mandate isn't only the creation mandate. Some Christians highlight having kids and strong families to the exclusion of the church. Others can highlight the church to the exclusion of their families. Both are wrong! God has given us, as stewards, a mandate to rule under his rule in creation with our families and also with our new family with God as our Father!

As we grow in making disciples and reaching out to others, the Bible then tells us that there's a day we look forward to. In 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, Paul writes this, ²⁴ **Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.**¹⁶ Jesus reigns today. And someday, he will deliver all of his work through the church to the Father! Death will be no more. Sorrow will cease. The curse will end. What happens when all of this goes away?

In Revelation 22:5, we read, ⁵ **And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.**¹⁷ They will reign. All of us who have trusted in the Lord throughout all the ages will reign forever and ever in perfection. No more sin. Only perfect glorying in God and loving one another! I believe this means that men and women.

Until that day, let's live this out here. **Let's rely on our Triune God who reigns, trusting him for the grace and mercy to honor him as male and female. Let's rule under his rule, praying we would rejoice**

¹⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 15:24–26.

¹⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Re 22:5.

in the privileges and responsibilities he has given to us – knowing he is the Creator and owner and that he is good.