

Sunday, Oct. 7: World Communion Sunday

Memory Verse: "Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us.'" -Gen. 1:26

Message Title: Join the Rebellion: The Real Star Wars! "It's Not What You Look Like!"

Scripture: Galatians 3:26-29 and Ephesians 2:14-22

Blurb: God loves variety! Have you taken a close look at nature lately? The Bible says it reveals God's glory. And nature reveals splendid variety! Take this lesson to heart. Your individuality is part of God's plan. You do not need to conform and fit in with what everyone else is doing. God calls His people to be different. It's not what you look like that makes you part of God's plan, it's your conviction. This Sunday we'll push beyond outer appearances and seek to place our hearts in God.

Opening Song: *Living Hope* - Sanctify

Welcome: -Pastor David

Memory Verse:

"Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us.'" -Genesis 1:26

Worship Music Set: - Sanctify

He Reigns

Cuando El Pobre (When the Door Opens)

Even So, Come

The Apostles' Creed

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Grow Moment: Churches Around the World - Andrew

Video Clip: Message Bumper

PP#1: Join the Rebellion: The Real Star Wars

It's Not What You Look Like

"The Lord doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart." -1 Samuel 16:7

Join the Rebellion: The Real Star Wars. "It's not what you look like!" 1 Samuel 16:7, "The Lord doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart."

PP#2: *"The most interesting man in the world," flanked by beautiful women.*

The world promotes a vision of success, and calls us to each conform. There are standards of what is beautiful, what is successful, what is desirable, what we should own, what we should do for careers, what we should do in our free time, how we should think, what ought to be important.

Think of beauty pageants. There are certain standards—looks, shape, poise, intellect, eloquence—that contestants must excel at, to be ranked, “the best.” Our teenagers, when we stop to listen, tell us of the merciless expectations of dress, looks, possessions, relationships . . . from peers and from culture. It’s tied to their acceptance, and sense of value.

At work, we call it the rat race; in our neighborhoods, “keeping up with the Jones’.”

It’s a vicious, unforgiving requirement to be something you necessarily aren’t. And the standards come from somewhere else. It’s set by those who are in the “in crowd,” the “haves,” or by us when we value and conform to them almost unconsciously.

But the standards are set somewhere else. Your value, your importance, is linked to these standards. We feel like we are each under the stern, critical eye, observing us through a magnifying glass. Are we acceptable? What else can we do to improve how we are seen? We want to be impressive. We want to be looked up to. We want to be envied. We want to be interesting.

And this seeking of acceptance makes us vulnerable to manipulation.

PP#3: *Image of the front cover of the current Upper Room.*

Do you do a daily devotional? Remember this past spring we talked about how crucial it is that we engage in daily disciplines to tone and condition our spiritual health? Part of that is coming to worship on Sunday. If you’re in town, you’re in worship. Part of that is giving generously to God’s work, giving in time, money, gifts, service. Part of it is in being part of a grow group. They’re starting up again now. Be sure to get into one! Sign ups are in the lobby or on the church web site.

And part of it is having a daily time with God. I use *The Upper Room*: it’s a daily devotional, it only takes about 5 minutes plus my prayer time, and it takes me into God’s Word each day. The booklets are available at the church welcome center. Be sure to take one when you leave. It offers insights from other Christians around the world. It’s published in 33 languages and is available in over 100 countries. This is one way to be a part of Christ’s world church.

PP#4: The Real Star Wars: It’s Not What You Look Like

1. God already made you beautiful on the outside

Anyway, this past Wednesday the devotional was by a Jeff Grogan from Indiana. He writes about all the ways people can weight train, in order to get the bodies they want. You can work for endurance, for large muscles, or muscle density. Which do you value? What do you want to look like? What is important in your peer group? Work at it. Work hard.

He said, however, that as he started to get invested in his physical training, his spiritual faith helped guide his objectives. He writes, “I discovered myself drawing closer to God through daily spiritual practice and found a greater awareness of God’s presence.” “Rather than bulking up or slimming down, I instead found myself becoming more at home in the type of body I already had.”

God already made you beautiful on the outside. You are beautiful not because you measure and conform to some outside standard. You are beautiful because the God who made you thinks you’re beautiful. He has placed His own beauty, His image, within you! That’s why you’re beautiful!

Turn to your neighbor and tell them, “Wow, you are so beautiful.” Go ahead. Don’t be shy. Do it one more time, and say, “God did a good job on you!”

PP#5: The Real Star Wars: It's Not What You Look Like

1. God already made you beautiful on the outside
2. God cares about your conviction on the inside

“The Lord doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart.” -1 Samuel 16:7

I want to invite you to take a Bible from the pew. I know we all usually just read on the screen, but I want you to actually use a pew Bible today. You might notice that they are new! That's right! Thanks to a special gift, we have new Bibles here at church. This is the Common English Bible, which I've been using for a couple of years now, and I think you'll find it accurate and easy to read.

So, in celebration of our new Bibles, please turn to page 1420. It's Galatians 3:26. Page 1420.

Paul is talking to the Galatians about how your outward appearances don't matter to God. Some of the Jewish people were telling them that they had to follow certain standards of laws, customs, and rituals, in order to be accepted by God. But Paul will have none of it! Remember what God said back in 1 Samuel, when God was going to choose the next king. He had Samuel pick over the tall, the handsome, the strong, the ones people thought look just as king ought. But God tells Samuel, “The Lord doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

God cares about the conviction that people have on the inside. The outside, and our conformity to worldly standards, don't matter. In fact, God actually values variety and diversity! He created a beautifully diverse world.

PP#6: Galatians 3:26-29 (CEB)

26 You are all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 Now if you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.

So, when Paul talks to the Galatians, he tells them that outward differences don't matter to God. It is your inner conviction, your heart for God, your desire to follow Jesus, this is what makes you part of God's people. Since we all have our Bibles open, lets read this passage together. We start at verse 26 and end at 29. Listen for what makes us part of the “in” crowd to God. Verse 26, **“You are all God's children through faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Now if you belong to Christ, then indeed you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.”**

Okay, so, how do we become God's children? Look at verse 26. [Through faith in Jesus.] When you have the inner commitment, then you have the outer look...clothed in Christ through baptism. Your ethnicity doesn't matter—Jew or Greek, your liberty, your gender. These don't determine your value, your acceptance by God. What matters is Jesus. If you belong to Him, then you're a part of the “in crowd.” You are part of God's chosen people, and inherit full and abundant life.

PP#7: *Image of at least a few Star Wars Storm Troopers, all looking alike, fairly closeup.*

This fall, we're using Star Wars to see examples of biblical truths: relatable examples, ones that remind us how we need to shape our own spiritual maturity, and that we can use as conversation starters with other to talk about our faith.

And one of the ways Star Wars illustrates biblical truths is in the subtle contrast between the uniformity and conformity of the Evil Empire, and the eclectic compilation of the Rebellion.

The Dark Side, manifest in the Evil Empire, doesn't value variety, or independent thinking, or individual talents. It wants conformity. Power is in numbers, all brainlessly following orders. Look like the official standards. Do what you're told. Then you are valuable.

Do you see a correlation to the standards that we feel come from our culture?

The infamous Star Wars storm trooper was unabashedly modeled after the German Stormtrooper, first introduced during WWI, but then made infamous under Hitler's Nazi Germany.

There's a classic line in the first movie, when Luke Skywalker is disguised as stormtrooper in order to free the captive Princess Leia. When he walks into her room, she looks at him and says, "Aren't you a little short for a stormtrooper?" It may be a reference to his age, but it also conjures up the Nazi standards of Arian perfection. There is one standard of best, and you had to conform.

PP#8: *Image in Star Wars Episode II of the legion of clones at The Kaminoan Cloners.*

From the beginning, during the prequel trilogy of Star Wars, we see the evil side using this uniformity. The evil Darth Sidious and Count Dooku manipulate armies of lookalike robot droids and identical cloned soldiers, called shock troopers (a name referencing German soldiers in WWI).

The good Republic, however, put their hope and trust in Jedi knights. Now, the Jedi did not look alike. It was their inner conviction that mattered. They were called to embrace their outward differences, the bodies that they had, and use their uniqueness as strength.

Take a look at this clip from Episode II, *The Clone Wars*. The Jedi come to free Anakin, Padme and Obi Wan. Notice the wide diversity of the Jedi, and how they all look so different.

Video Clip: Ep II: The Jedi Arrive (to save Anakin, Padme, and Obi Wan from the clones)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WpNCxqjKN4> (1:19 minutes)

In the original trilogy, which chronologically comes *after* the war with droids and clones, the stormtrooper is now the standard evil Empire soldier. Most of the Jedi have been eliminated, but the rebel force continues as a hodgepodge of diverse people, from many races and worlds. Against the uniform and standardized Empire, we see a motley rebel alliance. It is their common trust in the Force, the good, the same conviction of what is right and true, that binds them. Take a look, for example, at the planning of the climactic battle of Endor at the end of *The Return of the Jedi*. Notice again the wide variety of characters that make up the rebel leadership.

Video Clip: EP VI: Meeting-plan before the battle of Endor.mpg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWXVUJfSvDs> (4:02 minutes) (Starting 1:20, end 3:04)

This same contrast between the uniformity of the Evil Empire and the diversity of the good Rebellion continues into the recent Star Wars movies as well. The First Order, which is what the evil side is now called, continues to use identical stormtroopers and uniform leadership, while the Resistance continues to accept all kinds of individuals, regardless of what they look like.

A good example is in the character of Finn, who starts as a stormtrooper, but then develops a conscience. He starts thinking for himself, and sees how evil the First Order is. He turns and eventually joins the Resistance. Meanwhile, evil General Hux leads a rousing speech to the army of lookalike stormtroopers about how the First Order will gloriously extinguish the villainy of the annoyingly independent, and non-orderly, Republic. Have a look.

Video Clip: EP VII: Star Wars: The Force Awakens-General Hux's speech-Destruction Of Republic <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPhH12DpD4E> (2:37 minutes) (Start at 0:07, end 1:18)

Ooh, you can just feel the evil, with the Nazi overlays. Evil: Conform to the standards set somewhere else. Blindly obey. Cover up, remove, or take off what makes you different. Your outward appearance must conform to standards set outside of you. Your individuality doesn't matter.

PP#9: The Real Star Wars: It's Not What You Look Like

1. God already made you beautiful on the outside
2. God cares about your conviction on the inside
3. Your allegiance to Jesus brings abundant and eternal life

God: I look upon the heart. What is your faith there, your conviction? Your outward appearance doesn't determine your value. In fact, I have made you unique! I have created the way you look. Yes, you must resist certain wants and say "no" to the selfishness in you; you can't validate the ways you are fallen. But you must *become more at home with the body type* you have, the kind of person God created you to be. Accept yourself—the way God created you—as beautiful...as it is.

PP#10: "Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us.'" -Genesis 1:26

Don't conform to the standards set somewhere "out there." Conform to the standards that God has created within you! Remember, we are created in God's image! That is already in us. Embrace the image of God that you are!

With these great new Bibles, I just can't help myself. Let's look at one more passage! Turn to page 1424. Page 1424. It's Ephesians 2.

PP#11: Ephesians 2:14-22 (CEB)

14 Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With His body, He broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. 15 He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that He could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. 16 He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.

Verse 14. "Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. [Both are part of His Kingdom!] With His body, He broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. [Freed us from those judgements of trying to be good enough and fit in.] 15 He canceled the detailed rules of the Law [those oppressive external standards] so that He could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. [Restoring our value founded on Jesus.] 16 He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God."

PP#12: Ephesians 2:14-22 (CEB)

17 When He came, He announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God and to those who were near. 18 We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit. 19 So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household.

Verse 17, "When [Jesus] came, He announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God and to those who were near. [You are valued, you are loved, you are included.] 18 We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit. 19 So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. [You're not on the outside trying to figure out how to get accepted in.] Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household." You don't have to conform to be accepted. You already are, because of Jesus!

PP#13: Ephesians 2:14-22 (CEB)

20 As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 The whole building is joined together in Him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. 22 Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

Verse 20, "As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. [You are included, built up, because of Jesus.] 21 The whole building is joined together in Him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. 22 Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit."

PP#14: The Real Star Wars: It's Not What You Look Like

1. God already made you beautiful on the outside
2. God cares about your conviction on the inside
3. Your allegiance to Jesus brings abundant and eternal life

You are included not by your outward appearance, or good works, or some external standard. You are included by what is in your heart, by your conviction, by your faith in Jesus.

This is the good news, the joy of what is called Christian liberty. We are free from all those measures, rules, expectations and standards. We are already chosen, accepted, love. And we are included when we let Jesus into our hearts.

Prayers:

PP#15: 1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I'm going to stop and give you a moment to intentionally invite Jesus into your heart. Take your Bibles again, and turn to page [1 John 1:9]. Read 1 John 1:9, and perhaps the verses around it, and then pray it, asking Jesus into your heart, to cleanse you, and make you acceptable.

Let's pray.

[Pause for prayer.]

The Duke of Wellington was famous for defeating the great Napoleon at the historic battle of Waterloo. Afterwards, Wellington returned home, and in the quiet of his home village, often attended worship. There it was the custom to come up and kneel down to receive Holy Communion. Although people would come from the three different aisles and kneel together, out of respect for the honored general, when he went up to receive, everyone else stayed back.

Well, one day, when Wellington knelt for Communion, a poorly dressed, older man came from a side aisle and, without realizing, knelt next to him. The person behind him placed a hand on the old man's shoulder and whispered for him to move to give more room for the Duke. But Wellington caught what was happening, and immediately grabbed the old man's hand, leaned over to him and said, "Don't move; we're all equal here."

Today, we come to Christ's Table, all equal before God: not distinguished by appearance, or wealth, or possessions, or worldly importance. We all belong. We all are equal. Christ in our hearts is all that matters.

Holy Communion

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Receiving the Elements

Offering

Song: *How Beautiful*

Closing Song: *Be Thou My Vision* - Sanctify

Memory Verse:

"Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us.'" -Genesis 1:26

Announcements:

-Wednesday evening

-Small Groups

Benediction: -Pastor David