

**Becoming human- giving glory x03. Sunday 21 January\_2018.**

***In Our Image: Death enters. Background text: Genesis 3. (READ within the talk).***

**Our AIM for the beginning of this year** will be for each of us individually and all of us together to explore what it means to be truly human.

***V14 The Word (Logos) became a human being and full of grace and truth, lived among us. We have seen his glory...***

**During the first few weeks of 2018 we have looked at John's Gospel chapter one and verse 14** and we saw that John took us not just to the earthly birth but rather to the **ORIGINS or Genesis of Jesus** – the Eternal Logos or Word – before time itself. God is described as becoming human – taking on flesh and blood. The incorporeal God who is Spirit (*John 4: 24*) became Jesus. Jesus was NOT created a human being as he already existed – but God became flesh and blood while remaining God).

We have also referred to the Book of *Genesis in the Bible* where the primeval history of Chapters 1 – 11 causes us to consider and hear the voice of Godhead saying: ***Let US make humanity in our image – they will be like us and resemble us. TEV Genesis 1:26 – 31.*** These chapters are the Judeo-Christian mythic tale of the creation and population of the earth including the creation and Fall of humanity from “perfection”. The OT books tell the stories of the relationship of the so-called “People of God” with God and with other peoples. Broadly speaking the NT introduces Jesus of Nazareth, as the Messiah who challenges us with what it means to be truly human and about what essentially dis-figures human beings.

**The Bible teaches, and Jesus specifically embodies the truth** that a growing understanding of our common humanity will birth a concern and compassion for one another which can lead to change in us and others. (*Jean Varnier, Becoming Human* takes this as his central thesis. DLT 1999).

**What can we say having heard this statement (Genesis 1: 26) and what is developed in the whole of the agreed (Canon) of Christian Scripture?** This is a foundational and central belief of Christians (and other Abrahamic faiths) that men and women are like God and resemble God and therefore God is **not totally other** or totally foreign to human beings. Through thousands of generations Abrahamic faiths have held this as self-evident but also taught that human behaviour and choices have estranged us both from God, one another and the rest of creation. Christians have argued that even after the Fall of human beings into doing evil as well as good that human beings still show something of the image and likeness of God (Genesis 9:6).

In this creation story God's plan, God's ideas come from **community and conversation**. Which tells us something essential about the tri-unity of Godhead. It is from the community and communication within the Godhead that humanity – both men and women are made: ***Let US make humanity in our image – they will be like us and resemble us.*** (In us also therefore is the need for community and conversation).

**“All” INCLUSIVE!**

**James 3: 9** describes all human beings as made in God’s likeness and therefore challenges us to treat all others with dignity and expectation.

But it is the specific teaching of Scripture that **all** – without exception **fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3: 23) having sinned** and not living in full obedience to God.

**DEATH – mortality becomes a part of our human condition (Genesis 2: 16, 17).** No one is immortal – except by gift of God. The fact of our mortality is something which should challenge our human pride and limit us in a way which makes us creaturely rather than thinking we are gods.

*Psalm 82: 6-8 “You are gods,” I said; “all of you are children of the Most High”. But you will die like mortals; your life will end like that of any prince”. Come, O God, and rule the world; all the nations are yours.*

Note: *You are all gods OR you are all princes* (limited rule).

**READ Genesis chapter 3 presents not fairy tale or a scientific explanation but a powerful mythic explanation of human disobedience, the presence of evil in the world and God’s pronouncement of the fallen human state.** Not to be laughed at if properly understood but reflected upon and ruminated over.

The creation story tells us of the responsibility given to human beings by God but also that power is limited by the bodies that we have, the spaces we inhabit and also by our mortality – the presence of death itself. We have always, history shows explored and experimented with what those limits are – some would feel that we have not just overcome many limiting factors but have pushed beyond the limits that kept us safe and sustainable. (All this is part of our asking the question: what is it to be fully human and indeed do we give glory both to our species and God). Illustration “*Death Becomes Her*”, 1992 American black comedy starring Goldie Hawn, Bruce Willis and Meryl Streep. The film focusses on the desire and rivalry of the search for eternal youth through plastic surgery and the choice to drink the potion for eternal youth BUT the dawning realisation to “live for ever” is not necessarily a blessing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFXQQ2uAeHM> (Feature next week).

**What does this consequence of “death” mean?** Initially it meant the interruption of human fellowship with God. That **“walking-talking relationship” was interrupted.** When God comes to walk and talk with Adam (humanity) in the garden in the cool of the evening the man and the woman hide from God. As we see **blame, shame and guilt** enter into the human consciousness **and lying and fake truth take over. Blaming others rather than taking responsibility for choices** is seen: specifically, the man blames the woman and then the woman blames the snake. (A repeated pattern I observe: the man blames the woman and the devil gets blamed for everything. It isn’t long therefore until the woman also learns to blame the man. **Enmity or hostility**

**becomes a part of the human political scene – and includes the “battle of the sexes” for power). One sign of hope, however, is that God continues to ask probing questions to cause us to ponder the reality.** Two obvious consequences are the entry of both **fear and loneliness into the human experience.** Also, as we see **physical struggle, pain and physical death** become an integral part of the human day.

All these and other things are **evidences of what we have called the FALL** – the fall from both God’s grace but also the marring of the glorious image of God in men and women.

### **VITAL QUESTION?**

**What is wrong with the world?** Asked by a newspaper editor. Less than 10 words written answered the question. ***Dear Sir, – I am. Yours sincerely, G. K. Chesterton.*** (Died 1936- critic, writer, poet, philosopher, lay theologian and “notably rotund”). The problem is not him or her or them BUT me and us!