

Becoming human- giving glory x04. Sunday 28 January_2018.

In Our Image: Human Loneliness. Background text: Genesis 2: 18-25. (READ).

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. Another eaves-dropping on the Godhead: -

Verse 18: It is not good for the man (Adam) to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.

We have previously 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...So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female ... TEV Genesis 1:26 & 27.

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”. (Myth – a story telling us a greater truth). 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. He is revealed as the only true human being who comes as Saviour of the World.

What can we say having heard this statement (Genesis 1: 26 & 27) 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 Human beings were made like God. 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).*

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! But it is also 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 – as we considered last Sunday 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.

Last week we also asked: 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. (*3: 8 God cries: Where are you?*). Two obvious consequences are the entry of both **fear and loneliness into the human experience.**

We also 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.** 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. Today we consider: -

LONELINESS – humans hiding from God and men and women estranged from one another. What exactly is loneliness? Is loneliness always negative? Can it be used positively? The Bible tells us that as vital as human companionship and consolation is for wholeness it is NOT enough. Loneliness ignored or unchallenged leads to dis-ease in humans.

(It is not just not having friends or company. Are you aware of loneliness in others but also in yourself?)

Wikipedia. (Wiki is not “Gospel” truth). *Loneliness is a complex and usually unpleasant emotional response to isolation. Loneliness typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings, both in the present and extending into the future. As such, loneliness can be felt even when surrounded by other people. The causes of loneliness are varied and include social, mental, emotional and physical factors.*

Research has shown that loneliness is prevalent throughout society, including people in marriages, relationships, families, and those with successful careers. It has been a long-explored theme in the literature of human beings since classical antiquity.

Many people experience loneliness for the first time when they are left alone as [infants](#). It is also a very common, though normally temporary, consequence of a [breakup](#), [divorce](#), or loss of any important [long-term relationship](#). In these cases, it may stem both from the loss of a specific person and from the withdrawal from [social circles](#).

The loss of a significant person in one's life will typically initiate a [grief response](#); in this situation, one might feel lonely, even while in the company of others. Loneliness may also occur after the birth of a [child](#) (often expressed in [postpartum depression](#)), after [marriage](#), or following any other socially disruptive event, such as moving from one's home town into an unfamiliar [community](#), leading to [homesickness](#). Loneliness can occur within unstable [marriages](#) or other close [relationships](#) of a similar nature, in which feelings present may include [anger](#) or [resentment](#), or in which the feeling of [love](#) cannot be given or received. Loneliness may represent a dysfunction of [communication](#), and can also result from lonely places with few people. Loneliness can also be seen as a [social phenomenon](#), capable of **spreading like a disease**. When one person in a group begins to feel lonely, this feeling can spread to others, increasing everybody's risk for feelings of loneliness. People can feel lonely even when they are surrounded by other people.

“The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty -- it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.” [Mother Teresa](#)

Loneliness as a human condition

Existentialists view loneliness as the essence of being [human](#). Each human being comes into the world alone, travels through life as a separate person, and ultimately dies alone. Coping with this, accepting it, and learning how to direct our own lives with some degree of grace and satisfaction is the [human condition](#).

Some [philosophers](#), such as [Sartre](#), believe in an epistemic loneliness in which loneliness is a fundamental part of the human condition because of the paradox between people's consciousness desiring [meaning in life](#) and the isolation and nothingness of the [universe](#).

Conversely, we as: -

Christians may feel the experience of “loneliness” is precisely because we are separated, cut off from friendship with God our creator and others and that Jesus comes to re-establish relationship with God and neighbour. Loneliness can in fact drive us deeper into God and also into meaningful relationship with other humans. Loneliness may never be fully satisfied – the hunger may persist until we experience God “face to face” increasingly in this life and through death itself.

I have suggested that loneliness is part of everyone's human experience as part of our estrangement from God. It is something that we have in common with others and it may be more prevalent at different stages in our lives – especially when we are in transition.

It is something that Jesus experienced and understands – not least as “the cry of dereliction” shows on the Cross of death. Jean Varnier (*Jean Varnier, Becoming Human* takes this as his central thesis. DLT 1999) suggests that we as Christian are on a journey to recognizing this loneliness and learning to love (even our enemies) and so become truly human.

He argues that as we allow ourselves to feel a responsibility for others then we will want to work for the common good – and include and value others. In the world there is a sense of rejection and even loneliness possibly experienced by all but certainly to a great degree by many.

(Varnier’s EXAMPLE of ERIC read pp10 & 11)

I believe loneliness is present in every human being...I have certainly even with my very busy and very social life experienced it. It can in some be negative to the extreme causing mental illness, but it can also be **positive as an emotional experience which can make us more reflective and take us into deeper personal integration and relation with others and also into a deeper union with God.**

The energy of loneliness instead of being depleted by apathy and anger can be used to seek God and positive human relationships too. Strangely this will both quench our thirst and whet our appetite for a deeper encounter with God. (p8 Varnier)

So, I **suggest loneliness can be a force for good.** “*Artists, poets, mystics, prophets, those who do not seem to fit into the world or the ways of society are frequently lonely*”.

When various events happen in our lives whether we are young, middle aged or elderly then disorder can result. In the transition times we can experience loss, loneliness and grief. Examples: neglect as a child for example by leaving it in a buggy for too long, sickness, accidents, loss of work redundancy/contract end, loss of friends – these things disrupt our agendas and plans. At these times we can withdraw from friends and the church and even GOD or we can acknowledge the insecurity and the emotions and seek the presence of GOD who is near and the company and help of others.

Healing and strength flow from healthy relationships. It is not automatic. As humans, following Jesus we are committed to the possibility of change and newness then there is hope. (*Revelation. Jesus: Behold I am making everything new*). _