

**(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 10    Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March\_2018.**

**Human condition: struggle and joy.**

**Background text: Hebrews 12: 1 – 11 esp. verse 2 “For the joy set before him Jesus endured the Cross”. Genesis 3: 14 - 24. (READ both).**

**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. The Biblical argument is that true humans are those made in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis 1: 26, 27*) – not a physical likeness because God is Spirit.**

**(PP2) “DEATH” – including both physical and spiritual mortality has become a part of our human condition (*Genesis 2: 16, 17*). No one is naturally immortal – immortality is a gift of God (*Romans 6: 23. Read Genesis 3: 22*). 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. (“Memento mori”)**

**We have been asking: what does this consequence of “death” mean? Humanity – men and women did not drop dead immediately – they “began” to die, in their soul and spirit and also **become physically mortal.** The Bible is not a scientific text book, but it does deal with TRUTH. The book of Genesis lays out and we read of the consequences of human choices and sin as **changed relationship: - (PP3)****

- Initially it meant the rupture 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?*). Some obvious consequences are the entry of both **lies, and loneliness into the human experience.**
- The internal relationship within ourselves is changed. **Shame and guilt** enter into the human consciousness.
- Men and women (people) no longer live in harmony – power struggles v16 begin. We also see **blame and lying and fake truth take over.**
- Harmony with the physical creation is lost and struggle and labour is increased, intensified. The Spirit in Genesis describes rather than prescribes the consequences of the Fall ; laboring with the earth and the environment to produce a harvest and laboring in child birth to produce fruit from the womb. (Mothering Sunday!)
- Enmity between the Serpent (symbol of all that is opposed to God) and humanity through the generations. (Maybe what we have lost is the power Jesus showed to control and combat Nature? *Ernest Lucas, “Can we believe in Genesis today?”*)

So, the clear teaching of both OT and NT is that the Messiah – the Anointed One will come and put to rights, make possible not just the gift of Resurrection Immortality but also a reconciliation and peacemaking in all the above damaged relationships. **This is the abundant Life that Jesus came to enable (*John 10: 10*).**

**(PP4) Within the teachings of the Scriptures Struggle and Labour is seen as a reality – but not necessarily as a negative or an evil in itself but as a means of growth and a pathway to fruition.** (*All things work together for good for those who love God and are the called according to his purposes. Romans 8: 28.* Paul's arguments on the groaning, struggling creation). This is the clear teaching of Scripture through thousands of years and in the lives of countless people – struggle and even pain can be a means of growth and fruition or harvest. **This is supremely illustrated in the struggle of Jesus against evil in many forms and also against personal temptation.** We see his successful struggle to remain obedient to the Father God. For the great joy and harvest set before him he “endured the Cross”.

Even in **Genesis 3: 15** there is an indicator of hope in the promise of action and redemption. One will come from woman who though attacked by Evil will turn and crush Evil's power. Even though the snake will fatally bite his heel.

**Hebrews 12: 1 – 11 we are reminded of the struggle that we face and urged to keep on.** Human life and the battle to become truly human in God is likened by the Writer to the Hebrews as a RACE with a finishing point. The finishing tape is death and we will need to resist evil and sin until that day when we pass through death into the presence of God.

Struggle had a purpose and a goal for Jesus and it can for us too even though like Jesus we may be unsure of what this purpose is when we are in the midst of the struggle.

Men and women who were excluded from the Garden as a means of stopping them eating of the “tree of life” and gaining immortality by taking by false means God's gift. Death was a penalty for humans but also a mercy and a limitation of human power. BUT through Jesus' death on the tree of life and resurrection those who believe in and receive Jesus can now receive the free gift of eternal life and one day resurrection bodies.

We have talked of the **effects of the Fall in terms of changed relationships but in terms of detail we are unclear** (*Ernest Lucas, was a tutor at Bristol BC and before that a Research Biochemist at Oxford. He held doctorates in Biochemistry but also Theology*). Paul in *Romans 8: 18 – 23* says that the effect of the entry of Sin into the world was not limited to physical death. He speaks of the whole “*Creation groaning as in the pain of child birth*” And *we the Believers are also groaning as we wait for our full adoption as sons of God and the redemption of our bodies.* I agree with Paul we are indeed groaning and creaking in pain even as Believers as well as a species. There is JOY ahead of us and FREEDOM.

Jesus looked for the JOY ahead of obedience to the Father and their plan: the release of humans to freedom and the restoration of the Fallen.

**How do we measure success?** (*World: The winner takes it all. 79 million hits!* Surely we are focused on the being and living what God has called us to do, the race we are called to run! (Ability Gym Bow – compare yourself with no one else). Focus on Jesus and how he ran – he is the *author and finisher of our faith.* Eyes on him. Running in his wake. Running towards him. (As it says in “The Shack” – about walking on water – “its better when we do it together”!)

**Remembering** that “**tribulation works patience**” see Romans 5: 3 – 5.

**Remember also** we are not doing this just by human effort and struggle. The *Holy Spirit is at work in those who have received to conform us into God's image as it is seen in Jesus*

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*Christ. (Romans 8: 28 – 30).* The Spirit, our human personality and nature and the events of life itself can **“work together for good”**. Isolated events are rarely understood in separation from the rest of our lives and the working of the Spirit. All can work together – for the greater glory of God.