

**(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 14      Sunday 08 April\_2018.**

**Human condition: rising or falling?**

Background text READ *Colossians 1: 15 – 23. (p252 TEV)*

**Our AIM for this year is 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. Also, the New Testament argument and the belief of Christians is that Jesus shows us what it means to be fully human and to enables those who believe and receive him to enter into the experience of life in fullness (*John 10: 10*).

**(PP2) “DEATH and Struggle” – 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 and struggle is something which should challenge our human pride and limits us in a way which makes us creaturely rather than thinking we are gods. (“Memento mori”). But our struggle also positively makes us what we are and can be a means of growth and opportunity. (Or the converse)**

**We have been asking (Previous sessions): what are the consequence of the Fall – what does “death” mean?** Humanity – men and women did not drop dead immediately – they “began” to die, in their soul and spirit and also **became physically mortal**. The Bible is not a scientific text book, but it does deal with TRUTH. **(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. (*Gen 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.
- Enmity between the Serpent (symbol of all that is opposed to God) and humanity through the generations.

**(PP4) Today we ask: what are the consequences of the Rising of humanity in the form of Jesus Christ?** During Holy Week as we considered the Passion/ suffering of Jesus I hope I emphasized that we should not leap from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday but focus in on the great struggle of Jesus before he entered into joy.

Jesus himself epitomises and is the human struggle for change **and his struggle and victory over sin and death brings about the Redemption of humanity.**

**As Jesus rises from death he enables others to also rise as we take a hold of him and allow him to take a hold of us ....He is the first born from the dead. The first of many brothers and sisters.**

*Colossians 1: 18. He is the head of his body, the church; he is the source of the body's life. He is the firstborn son, who was raised from death, in order that he might have the first place in all things.*

*Revelation 1: 5, 6. Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first to be raised from death... he loves us and by his sacrificial death he has freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father. To Jesus Christ be the glory and power for ever and ever, Amen!*

**The downwards fall or descent of humanity has been halted and in Christ there is the possibility of redemption. A “falling upwards” is possible. (“falling upwards” - to coin the phrase of **Richard Rohr** and use it of all redeemed people not just those in the second half of life) He is the first born of a Resurrection People.**

John calls Jesus the PROTOKOS – the first ever to be raised from life never to die again. The first of others to be resurrected. The one with the greatest power and honour. Jesus is Lord of the dead and Lord of the living. Paul in Colossians 1: 15 says Jesus is the *First born of all creation*.

When Jesus was raised by the power of the Spirit from death he extended his arm to raise all to life. *We will all be raised on the judgement day. But will we in life take hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of us (to use the idea of Philippians 3: 12).*

**It will inevitably mean living by faith not by sight – a different vision.** It will mean being earth based in our struggle but not earth bound in our vision of the possibility of change. It will mean spending time with Jesus (as we read at the beginning of the service *Acts 1: 1 – 3* listening to him talk about the Kingdom of God). It will mean discarding the grave clothes and letting them fall away and living differently – being clothed in righteous acts of living.

**It will mean not just Jesus taking us by the hand and leading us but Jesus drawing our hearts to himself and pulling us towards his own desires and longings.** This rising will be a reversal of the consequences of the Fall but it will be deeper than the Fall – the rising will not be complete in this life alone. **(PP5)**

- Initially it means the re-establishing of human fellowship with God. That **“walking-talking relationship” is opened again.** Now when God comes to “walk and talk with Adam (humanity) in the garden in the cool of the evening” we do not need to hide from God. Some obvious consequences are the entry of a greater transparency and truth facing, **and loneliness in the human experience is eased.**

- The internal relationship within ourselves is changed. **Shame and guilt** in the human consciousness have the possibility of being eased through the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. There is liberation and joy – *sins forgiven, and conscience cleansed* (as the song writer says) based on passages like *Hebrews 9: 13 fol.*
- People can live in harmony – power struggles are challenged as we engage with what it means to “love God and to love neighbour as we love ourselves”. We also see **blame and lying and fake truth challenged by a concern for truth.**
- Harmony with the physical creation is lost and struggle and labour is still intense. (Christians in this generation seeking to discover what this means for us to seek to restore the balance of creation and live in rhythm with creation and steward its resources).
- Enmity still exists between the Serpent (symbol of all that is opposed to God) and humanity through the generations. Perhaps this battle is even intensified with our choice to actively follow Jesus and pursue righteous living.

**Dying to sin and rising with Christ is enacted in Christian baptism** according to Paul in *Romans 6:4* *By our baptism then we are buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might LIVE A NEW LIFE” READ on verses 5 following...*

Paul wants them to see and live out the great truth that our baptism expressed.

The enormity of this claim is mind boggling.

The truth is that if I am born of God’s Spirit then the power of God within me can respond to the longing of God to live a new life. If it is merely my desire, my longing then it will all too easily expire and I will run out of steam and soon go back to the old way of trying to achieve a new life in my own strength.

This is to be a spiritual work of God’s grace not merely human effort. – Jesus drawing me to rise – to seek God’s glory in the way that I live and struggle to be fully human. Jesus has made this possible.

Jesus is the first born from the dead, but he brings many more with him. Infact he brings the whole of creation with him as his inheritance. In dying with him (my old life) I am raised up with him to a new way of living...