

Becoming human- giving glory. 29 April_2018.

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 23 Sunday 17 June_2018.

Background text READ **PSALM 8. *More or less human?***

V4 *What is humanity? Asks the Psalmist.*

This year we are exploring what it means to be truly, fully human. Also, I believe that as we seek individually and together in community to be more human we will bring greater glory to God by the way we live our lives in relationship to others and with God. This is the purpose for which we have been made. In recent weeks we have been using the *Book of Romans* to think about **Transformation through relating in Community.**

The clear message of Jesus in the letter of Paul to the Romans is that we need one another. Paul wrote to them from Corinth (AD 57/58) and called them **God's Beloved – called to be God's own people (Romans 1: 7).**

A church congregation is - **A MOVING MOSAIC OF PEOPLE. *Out of the many, one.***
Motto of the United States of America — ***E pulribus unum.***

We are called to be part of a people...*the people of God.* We are called into community---this is the life Jesus wants for his people. The Godhead is community, humans are community – body, soul and spirit- and we need to be in community with others to thrive and grow and express our humanity in relation to the rest of Creation. The Psalmist starts to answer his question: *what is humanity?* By referring to both God and humans' relationship with creation.

All humans both male and female made in God's image (we have spoken about this earlier in the year and referred to *Genesis 1: 26, 27*). We have also referred to *Genesis and Romans* about the altered state of human beings – our Fallenness – from the dignity and glory we were creation with. The further we go from God, the more we retreat the less distinctive the image of God is in us. It becomes harder to distinguish humankind from other life forms.

The image of God in humans – is NOT seen in a physical form likeness (as God is spirit) but in terms of knowledge and moral awareness and the possibility of relating in friendship to God. Seen also in the Trinitarian constitution of human beings – social nature and human experience of community reflecting the divine being-in-community of the Godhead. *Barth* included the man-woman relationship in this.

Without exception humans have Fallen – *Romans 3: 23* All of us fall short of the glorious purpose for which we were created – *which is to know God and enjoy God forever* (Presbyterians).

Christian belief (with others) is in a purposeful Creation by the will of an intelligent and loving Creator. Also, those who follow Jesus believe that God puts people right with himself through their faith in Jesus Christ (*Romans 3: 22*)

This belief speaks against the very popular fallacy that if we try hard enough God will accept us. Jewish – Christian Bible teaches that we all fail to achieve the glorious purpose for which we were created – even the most selfless and generous of people. Something is wrong in the heart/ the inner being of everyone of us that only encounter with God in Jesus can put right. **Thus “following of Jesus” is about becoming “fully human” and giving glory/ bringing praise to God.**

Do you want to be more or less human? Hopefully we would say “more”.

Do we want to see the image of God to be seen more fully in your life? (It is seen fully in Jesus who is *the image of the invisible God – Colossians 1: 15*).

Romans 3 tells the story of the “human tragedy becoming the human triumph”, *Leon Morris*. Jesus lifts us up as we understand our fallen state and ask for help. *V24 By God’s free gift of GRACE we are put right with God. (The light shining in our hearts – the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2C 4: 6; 2C 3:18; John 17:22)*

Calvin: “Humanity never achieves a clear knowledge of itself, unless it has first looked upon God’s face, and then descends from contemplating him to scrutinize itself”. We can understand ourselves only in the light of God and his purpose for human kind. Need Divine revelation...as well as openness).

There are different answers to the Question are we becoming more or less human. *Psalm 8: 5 God invested humankind with dignity (glory and honour).* Under God’s authority humans have the responsibility to govern and care for the planet.

There is little doubt that there are progressive advances made in technology, medicine and the like. Nor is there doubt that the world’s wealth is not equitably shared and that conflicts continue and are perpetuated . We seem to perhaps have become more egotistical and selfish than ever.

Becoming more human rather than less? Followers of Jesus believe that humankind was created in the “image of God” but **2 Corinthians 4: 4** “*The god of this age has blinded the mind of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD and v6 God who said, Let light shine out of the darkness...the glory of God in the face of Christ*”.

True and loyal followers of Jesus are destined to share the Divine image , through their union with Christ. (NB *Romans 8:29 and 1 Corinthians 15: 49 and Colossians 3: 10.*) The Scripture is also clear that just because we say we are followers of Jesus doesn’t mean anything unless we work with God to see our behaviours become more human – more Jesus like.

So how optimistic are you about the future?

As the line between technology and humanity becomes blurrier, we wonder, are we becoming *more or less human*? Interesting to search the web and see what comes up.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kp1paRWGYPY> Less than Human (The Animation Workshop published 15 Feb, 2017). In the aftermath of a zombie outbreak, zombies are cured and exiled to secluded camps. There has been talk about rehabilitating post-zombies back into society. Steve, the journalist reporting on the case, thinks the zombies still pose a threat to society. He ventures into one of these camps to prove to the world that rehabilitation is out the question. (6.09 minutes)

Through the Fall the image of God is not totally lost in any human being and also I believe God restrains some of the worst effects of evil because of his grace linked to our prayers. (*2 Thess 2: 6, 7. Dutch Reformed Theologian A. Kuyper. Common or universal grace of God*). But I am only optimistic about the future of humanity if it is linked to the restoring of the image and full personhood through faith in Jesus and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit.

If we have experienced anything of Jesus and the life-giving work of the Spirit, then we are morally bound in love to share this Good News story with other human beings.

- What I have seen in Jesus – the unmarred image of God
- What this has spoken to me of myself
- The call back home to God and
- The new birth and remaking work of the Spirit in me to restore the image and make me more human. The fruits of this work will be seen in greater compassion, mercy, forgiveness, hospitality, seeking after justice and so on.

The truth or falsity of this claim will be bolstered or undermined by our lives life in relationship to God and others. Nevertheless, we will always have to admit that it is Jesus we want to draw peoples' attention to – not our selves. I have a story to tell and you have a story to tell of God's kindness, love and patience and persistence with human beings.