

Who Are You?

Together in Truth

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Tonight we return to our series that we've titled "Together in Truth." It's really a brief survey of systematic theology from the authority of the Bible to the matter of end times in the course of maybe 11 or 12 messages, but tonight we've come to a little bit of a pivot point. We have been looking at what you could say the invisible spiritual realm, who is God, what is the Trinity, last time we considered who is Satan, considering these invisible things that we cannot see but that we know by nature of revelation, tonight we're going to step out of the invisible realm and into the visible realm, you could say, and answer the question that you could phrase two different ways, who are you, by which we mean what is man? What role does man play? What is the position of man in the created order of God? That's a pretty lofty question to ask and to consider and I want to introduce it and approach it from this angle. When we ask the question who are you, we're asking the question where did you come from, why do you exist, ultimate questions like that. There is a Bible teacher named Laird Harris several years ago who said this and I quote, "If man is what the Bible says he is, then he cannot know himself meaningfully apart from God." If man has been created by God as Scripture says that he is, then we cannot understand ourselves at all, we cannot understand the purpose of the human race until we know who God is and what his purpose for mankind is, and why he made man and what he made man to be. That's thinking about it in the broadest perspective, what is the role of man in the universe, that's a pretty high question, isn't it, but we can also particularize it and this is kind of the angle that I want to approach it just by way of introduction here, kind of approaching it from a pastoral level, if we could. I realize that as we gather together, that there are many of you that struggle with different aspects of discouragement, of despair, of questioning even your self-worth, "Why am I here?" If you have been rejected in life, you know, maybe gone through a divorce or two, if you have suffered broken relationships and you feel the sting of rejection from someone, you might well ask the question, "What's the point? What am I worth? Why do I exist if the person I loved has turned away from me and spurned me?" That's one aspect of the question. Advancing age, declining health causes people to ask the question, "Why am I still here? Why does God still leave me here?" If you've been on the receiving end of physical abuse or other kinds of abuse and people have used you for their own ends, well, that leaves you feeling in a pretty bad place and what I want to tell you is this, is that answering this question who are you, what is man from a biblical perspective, is the answer to those woes of your soul. It's very important for you to understand this, to

realize that God assigns the value to his creation and God assigns the value to each life that he has given.

It's a matter of significant worth in the sight of God that you and I exist, and if you want to turn to Matthew 10, I just want to point out a couple of brief introductory passages to you by way of encouragement for those of you that are maybe scraping the bottom of the barrel in discouragement right now in this time and season of your life, in Matthew 10 beginning in verse 29 it says this, Jesus said,

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

Jesus speaking to this group of people that was following his teaching told them, "You're more valuable than many sparrows." This is an authoritative word from Jesus Christ about the value of the life of a man and it's of a particular significance in the created order. Sparrows were sold in those days for a small price but Jesus said, "You're of far greater value than that," and so Christ himself places value on the life of man, and certainly on the life of his disciples, if you think about it from this perspective in 1 Corinthians 6:20 it says,

20 ... you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Christian, at what price were you redeemed? At what price did Christ purchase you? You know, we assess the value of something by what we're willing to pay for it, Christ placed a cost, ascertained a value for you as a believer in Christ, so critical were you to him that he laid down his life for you. At the infinite worth of his blood, he redeemed us from our sins, he paid the price to redeem us from iniquity so that we could be with him forever. Now, you see my friend, we need to think about it from those kinds of perspectives, that Christ assigns value to mankind, ascribes value to individual men, he ascribes such value to his disciples that he laid down his life for them and that doesn't mean that we are so independently significant, it means that Christ regarded us as a people that he wanted to redeem and he did so at the highest cost, the cost of his own wonderful infinitely perfect life, and so we measure the value of life from God's perspective, not from the way that others in the human race have necessarily perceived us.

So to understand something of that is to understand the significance that you and I have in the order of creation as established by God, and let me just say a word to those of you that are not yet disciples of Christ, those of you that are walking in rebellion to him, you can see something of the love of God expressed to you, the free, gracious, full love of God as Christ is offered to you and he calls you out of sin and out of the world in order to come to him to salvation, and in this great act of love, Christ declares himself as the sufficient Savior for anyone in the world who would come to him, and he invites you to come saying, "Come to Me, all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest." So

there is this infinitely valuable call that comes from an infinitely valuable Savior saying that he will welcome you into his arms and into his family if you would but come to him for eternal life, confessing your sins, repenting of them and coming to Christ for eternal life. And so we see this infinite love of Christ for his own people that we might be with him forever and spend an infinitely of time with this infinite Savior, that gives us a sense of the love of Christ for us, and then we see also that for those currently outside his kingdom he extends an offer to share in that also, and so we see that there is this wonderful love of God that is expressed that gives us a sense that man has a valuable place in the order of creation and as individuals we share in that. So that's what we want to look at here today. If you've been particularly discouraged, tonight's message will have a special word of comfort and encouragement for you.

There are four points that we're going to use to answer this question what is man, who are you, we'll look at it this way, point 1 tonight and going back to Psalm 8 is to say this, is that you are a creature. Man is a creature. He is created by the hand of God. He did not evolve from lesser forms of life and over the course of millions and billions of years come to the place that he is now, all of that is a falsehood that's been perpetrated on us since the days of Charles Darwin. No, Scripture tells us a completely different story. Scripture tells us that man is the direct creation of God and that God assigned him a particularly high place in the order of the universe.

So Psalm 8, we're going to turn there and start to dig into this, you see, you cannot look at life as it exists right now and answer the question who are you, what is man; you can't look at it just from the perspective of today. You have to go back to the point of origin and say where did men come from, who put him here, and that gives us a sense of the significance and the place and the role that man has in the order of creation. So in Psalm 8 the psalmist is reflecting on this very question. In the first five verses, let's look at them again as I read them earlier.

1 O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! 2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength Because of Your adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

So then he goes on and he reflects on the glory and majesty of God. Verse 3,

3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?

In light of the majesty of the created order that we see displayed in the skies, in the sun and the moon and the stars and the infinitude of their depth and majesty and the order of their orbits that is so consistently maintained, something so far beyond the thoughts of men, how could man be significant in the role of creation, in the order of creation in light of that which surrounds him and displays the glory of God to him? And yet he goes on in verse 5 and he says,

5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!

The Bible defines man in the context of the knowledge of God and the self-revelation of God and it says that the God who made the heavens and the earth also made man and put him on earth to exist and to live to his glory. It tells us that God cares for us, that we are the object of the plan of God, and that he has a particular role for man to play in his creation, and that as his creatures, we are the objects of his care. Now when we contemplate it from that perspective and we realize that we come from the hand of Almighty God, that we come from the hand of the covenant-keeping God of the Bible, that the God who created the heavens and the earth also created us and that we bear the majesty of that reality even in light of the fact that we can look out at a creation that is so much infinitely bigger and more lasting than we are, well, the response of that is to engender a response of praise in our hearts and you see that from the way that Psalm 8 is structured.

Look at verse 1, it says again, "O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth." He opens up in praise. And in verse 9, the last verse of this Psalm, he ends on that same note, "O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth!" And that beginning and ending functions as a ribbon that goes around the entire Psalm and ties it all together. Everything in the Psalm connects to that great theme of praising God and offering honor and glory to him for the majesty of his name, and so everything in between verses 1 and 9 furthers that goal of praise. So what is the spiritual impact of being created by God? Well, one aspect of that impact is this: because God created us, because the Almighty One in the universe created us, it puts on us a responsibility, a duty and a privilege to praise him in response to that. We who are creatures reflect back to the greater one who created us and we offer him praise and thanks for making us because if it weren't for his creative hand, we would not exist, and the fact that we exist is a cause for us to ascribe praise to him and to give honor to the one from whom we derive our existence and so we praise him.

You see this in another Psalm in Psalm 139, you see this in a parallel sort of passage. Psalm 139, if you would turn there in your Bibles with me, Psalm 139, beginning in verse 13 and here in Psalm 8, you kind of see man considered from the point of humanity, you might say, here in Psalm 139 it's personal, it's an individual response and David says in verse 13, he says,

13 ... You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.
14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.

And so there is a spiritual impact that comes from understanding that God made us and put us here. When you answer the question who are you, what is man, there should be this sense that says, "I am a creature of God." Man is created by God and as a result of that, we give thanks to God, we praise God from a position of realizing our dependence

upon him and that he is the origin of our life, and so we give thanks for God's gift of life and we express dependence upon him because God is the one who made us and sustains us. So who are you? First of all, you're a creature, you're a creature at the hands of the Creator God.

Now that brings us to our second point here for this evening and this is such an important point and especially builds upon the way that I introduced this in terms of those of you that are discouraged and questioning the value of your life, the fact that you are a creature of God has a very significant implication and it's this, point 2, it's that you have dignity. You have dignity. There is a purpose and an honor to the nature of your existence that is derived from the fact that God made you. God created man and distinguished him from all other creatures that he made. Man was the pinnacle of his creation on earth. And as you read Psalm 8, I just want to make this point, is that in Psalm 8 it passes over the fall of man into sin in Genesis 3, it passes over the reality of our sinful natures and our rebellion against God, it passes over those things, it's not that those things are unimportant, it's just not the focus of Psalm 8. Psalm 8 is talking about the original glory that was assigned to man and that although that has been marred by the fall of sin, we're going to see that there is still an enduring significance to the nature of man in the created order. So I hope at some point not too long from now to talk about Adam as the representative head of mankind and the significance of his fall and imputed guilt to mankind, we want to talk about those things in the future but that's not the focus for tonight.

Tonight we're talking about a different aspect of the nature of man and so we're focusing as Psalm 8 does on the dignity of man and there's four subpoints to this, there are four subpoints to the dignity of man that are quite significant. Subpoint A, you could say, in the created order. Man has a significance in the created order of God. He has a distinct place of honor in God's created order. Look at verse 5 with me there in Psalm 8, he says,

5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

God placed man in authority over his creation on earth and therefore man has this position of rule over creation that is assigned to him by God. That gives him a place of high dignity in the created order. In Genesis, the account of creation in Genesis 1, we read about this in Genesis 1:26 and 27. Verses 26 and 27 speaking of the dignity of man in the created order, the Bible says this,

26 ... God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

And so mankind was placed over creation from the very beginning and that position of rule and that position of authority gives us a sense of the place of dignity, the high dignity that man has in the created order, and even after the fall of man into sin, you still see God reflecting and reaffirming man's position in creation.

If you look at Genesis 9:1, 2 and 3, after the flood God said this in chapter 9, verse 1 of Genesis,

1 ... God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. 3 Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant."

And so even after the fall of man into sin, after the judgment of the world in the worldwide flood and God spared Noah and his family, those eight individuals, saved them through the ark as that judgment came down upon humanity at that time, after the judgment had been executed, God speaks to Noah and says, "You stand in this place of preeminence in creation." And so the fact that man was high in the original creation before the fall, some of that glory was lost in the fall in sin but we see that the place in society, the place in the created order was not completely lost. God restored that to man even in the creation.

This has some significance for our modern day that was not necessary so much for our brothers from, you know, 50 to 100 years ago to have to emphasize quite as much, that dominion gives man a unique place in the created order and I'm just going to apply this in a specific way, is that we need to understand something really basic: there is a reason that we put animals in a zoo instead of vice versa. We rule over the animals and therefore mankind has the privilege and the prerogative to do exactly that. Now why would I emphasize that and make that application? Well, we're all familiar with the antics and the positions of the group known as PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and how they want to elevate animals to the position of men. If a truck of chickens dies, they want to put a memorial marker in honor of the chickens that died in the collision, and things like that, and it's just a totally distorted nature of reality that is going on that has affected and distorted their thinking. Animal rights activists like that violate the created order when they elevate beasts to our level. That is not the purpose of animals and we are not to view them as somehow coequal regents on the face of the earth. It is not like that. Man rules over the animals and he has the prerogative to deal with them as he wishes. Animals don't put us in a zoo, animals run from us when we come after them. You know, when I'm chasing away the geese that want to mess up my yard and I assert my authority over them, they flee from me, not nearly as often and quickly as I would like but still they do. You get the point, is that man is positioned in dignity in a pinnacle of authority over creation in a way that's not given to other aspects of the created order. Mankind has

dignity that is given to him by God and as individual members of the human race, we all partake in one way or another the nature of that dignity.

To violate that, to deny that is simply a byproduct of evolutionary thinking and what you need to see is that when you remove God from his position as God and Creator, you rob man of that kind of dignity and mankind is simply left with being an equal sharer of the common beasts of the earth, and there should be something in your mind, something in your conscience if you're an unbeliever in Christ, there should be something in your mind that rebels against that. It was mankind that subdued the earth. It's mankind that builds channels for rivers and builds skyscrapers and bridges and things like that. It's the genius of man that has brought those things to pass, not the intelligence of apes or dogs or cats or anything like that, and it should be obvious to any thinking person that there is a different order of majesty and a different order of creation that exists to man that is not true of animals, and I know we're losing sight of that in our society today but it is just so very important for you and I to think biblically and to understand that and to not be sucked into that vortex of evolutionary thinking because the consequences of that go everywhere and ultimately rob man of his dignity and even his purpose in living. So we don't go there. We deny all of that. We oppose all of that with the strength and testimony of the Bible and gladly affirm that we are creatures of God, as creatures of God we have dignity that starts with the position that God gave us in the created order.

Now secondly, we can go further and explore this a little further. Going back to that passage in Genesis 1:26 and 27, God said that, "Let Us make man in Our image," so there is a dignity of man not only in the created order but in the fact that he is created in the image of God, he is created in the image of God and each one of us, each one of us, every man, woman and child, we all bear something of the image of God and reflect something of the nature of God even in our fallen condition. And so when we ask the question who is man and we say he's a creature with dignity, we can take that a step further and say, well, how great is the dignity that man possesses, and biblically we can answer the question from Genesis 1 and other places by understanding this, is that man is created in the image of God. He is created after the highest pattern possible. Now we don't share in the deity of God, we don't share in the perfection and in the incommunicable attributes of God, we understand that, but we somehow reflect something of the nature of God in his communicable attributes, those attributes which can be shared with humanity.

And when the Bible speaks of man being created in the image of God, it means this and I'm just going to touch on this and not give it nearly the treatment that it deserves, but man is created on a divine pattern, a divine pattern which gives man three different capacities. Man is given the capacity to think with reason; secondly, to have personal relationships; and thirdly, he has moral responsibility that makes him distinct from animals. So man has an ability to think with reason, he has the ability to have personal relationships, and he has a moral responsibility that distinguish him from everything else in the animal kingdom, and this is all a reflection of his being made after the pattern of God. God is a God of wisdom, God of omniscience, a God of reason, and man thinks after a pattern like that. God is a God of infinite personal relationships as reflected in the fact that God is a Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and they enjoyed the councils of

the Trinity before time began. God has forever and without beginning been a God of relationship as the three persons of the Trinity existed and communed within the realm of the essence of God in the Godhead. And God is a moral God, God is a holy God, and he tells mankind, he says, "You shall be holy as I am holy," 1 Peter 1:15 and 16. So we see that man is made in the image of God and we see something of the implications of that, that even in our sin-fallen, marred condition, even as man rebels against God and increasingly goes into the degradation of sin, that this image of God is not completely erased from him. Man is still an image-bearer of God even as a fallen man, and once we are restored to God in Christ, then we are better able to reflect that image as God sanctifies us and changes us to grow in the image of Jesus Christ, but we grow in the image of God and therefore we recognize that.

Now just to make one kind of balancing point, a clarifying point there, when we speak about the dignity of man it's important to understand this, is that man does not have an independent dignity apart from God. Man does not have a value to himself that is independent of God and therefore brings about a particular glory to man himself. I like to illustrate it this way, when you look up at the night sky and see a full moon, you see a heavenly body that has a certain aspect of glory to itself but its glory is derivative, it is a dependent glory; the moon has a glory only because it is reflecting the light of the sun. Without the sun, the moon would simply be a large ugly rock in space but because it is reflecting the glory of the sun down to us, it has a glory of its own. In a similar way, mankind does not have an independent glory apart from God but there is a conferred dignity that God has given to him that by the sovereign will of God man reflects something of the image of God and that is what gives dignity to the human race and makes them distinct from every other aspect of creation. So the dignity of man is reflected in the fact that he has the image of God and that he is a created being from God.

Now there's a third implication of this dignity of man of which we speak and we can put it this way, that it has implications in our human relationships. In our human relationships. Scripture ties the sin of man as being something not simply a sin of man against man but it's a sin against God as well because mankind is in the image of God.

Look at Genesis 9:6, I think our Bibles are still open to that chapter. In chapter 9:6 after the fall of man God said this, he says,

6 Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

Murder is wrong because it is an attack on the image of God. It is not simply a human on human crime, it is a human on God crime because God created man in the image of God and therefore to kill a man, to murder a man is to make an assault on the image of God which is a reflection on the way that man views God himself. So that's why murder properly deserves capital punishment is because to take a life of a man is to assault the image of God and that has consequences that go beyond the human realm.

In James 3:9 we see a different aspect of it going from a physical act to a mere verbal one. In James 3:9 we read this, and we'll start in verse 8, it says that,

8 ... no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; 10 from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

And so when we curse men, when we insult them, when we mock them and we do other things to tear them down with our tongues, what James is saying, what the word of God is saying is that that is a sin against the image of God. There is a vertical dimension even to those verbal sins that we commit against others, and so this has far-reaching consequences in the nature of the order of society and the way that we think about our personal relationships.

Our failure to honor the dignity of man has untold consequences and think with me here, I want to pause for just a moment to give your thoughts time to catch up with me here, so let me just do a brief moment of review of where we've been here. We're answering the question who is man and we see that man is a creature of dignity and this dignity is reflected in the fact that he is created in the image of God, and that this is reflected even in the nature of human relationships so that murder and cursing are sins against God because as we attack man, we're attacking the image of God. Those two things are inseparable. Here's what we need think now about and maybe flesh this out a little bit with some examples. You can see why abortion is such a great sin because it is a sin against the image of God in the mother's womb. It's really unthinkable that our society accepts the fact that a mother can make her womb her baby's tomb. This is a sin against God of untold consequences and the fact that this is common and even legalized by our Supreme Court does not change the sinful nature of it.

Let's think further about it. Let's think about men degrading themselves, men and women degrading themselves in immorality and in great promiscuity and just giving their bodies to one another in just thoughtless random acts of fornication and what have you. You see how this is a violation of the dignity that God has given? We are to possess our bodies in sanctification and in honor, 1 Thessalonians 4 says. This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you know how to possess your body in honor. Well, to violate that and for people to go out and to be so promiscuous in their lifestyle, men with men, men with women, women with women, and all of the other variations that we have fallen into, all of this is a degradation of the dignity that God has given to us. This is not how men are to live. This is not what God has given to us. It is in part to protect the image of God and the dignity of God that the 10 Commandments say you shall not commit adultery. It's a sin against man and it's a sin against God and is a violation of the image that he has given to us to carry with dignity, with honor and with respect.

Think about it further. I had a distant relative many years ago who had a problem with drunkenness and he was walking along a railroad trestle, fell off that railroad trestle and

died and laid there for days until somebody found him. Such a sad outcome to his life. It breaks my heart to remember that, but what I want you to see and the reason that I mention it here is to see a man in a drunken stupor going from light post to light post not able to hold himself up, stumbling in the dark and coming to a death like that, do you see what a violation that is of the dignity of God and being an image-bearer of God, for your life to end choking on your own vomit? I don't mean to be so severe here but we need to realize and we need to understand these things from a biblical perspective, that these things are tragic because they are such a violation of the high dignity that God has given to man. It's more than just a personal tragedy when these things happen, it is a perversion of the image of God. This is not what God created man to be. God created man to carry out a position of dignity and honor in the created order and to reflect with glory and respect the image of the one who created him.

Well, here we are with these kinds of examples that I've mentioned, you look at the foolishness and the stupidity of things that are available on social media or on commercial television, and all of the things that supposedly pass for comedy just as men are degrading themselves and mocking one another. These things are not funny. They're not humorous. We look at those and we see the image of God being degraded before our eyes and the fact that people watch this and glory in it and find their entertainment in it should just cause us to bow our head in shame and sorrow and say, "God, have mercy on our race! We are such miserable sinners in rejecting the position that You have given to us in the created order." That's how we should think about these things. It's sobers us up. It literally sobers us up and turns us away from sousing our minds in alcohol but it also causes us to look at life with a seriousness and a nobility and a sobriety that says, "I have higher aspirations that are placed before me. God has given me higher purposes to live for than just the foolishness of this world." And part of the way that you can identify a man who is truly repentant is that he can look on these things of the world and look on them with a mixture of sorrow and disgust saying, "This is not what I have been created for. God has created me for other purposes." And then he starts to live in accordance with that.

You know, let me just build out that thought just a little bit more if you'll turn to Ephesians 4. We left off in the book of James, Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul makes this point when he says in verses 17 through 24, this is a more extended passage than I had originally planned to go to but that's okay. The Apostle Paul speaking to believers says this, he says,

17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart [and watch this, follow the thought in light of what we've been talking about here]; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference

to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

In righteousness and holiness you've been created for this purpose. The image of God is shown in righteousness and holiness and these sins that we've catalogued so briefly here tonight are simply an indication of how far man has fallen from that image of God, and to the extent that you're still in those sins, my friend, this is a call and a warning to you to repent and to come to Christ because you are degrading not only your own self, you are degrading the image of God, you are defacing it. The depth of that kind of sin cannot be calculated. You measure the guilt of your sin by the infinite majesty of the one whose image you're defacing and misappropriating for your own purposes. So these things have consequences that go everywhere in our thinking and in our understanding of the nature of man in the created order.

So we've said who are you, we've said that you are a creature, we've said that you have dignity in the created order, in the image of God, in human relationships, and finally we see the dignity of man reflected in this and this may be something that you haven't thought of or not thought of in a long time, we see the dignity of man in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Lord Jesus Christ. God became a man. Jesus Christ took on human flesh. He appropriated humanity to his deity and nothing could assign a higher dignity to the order of man than the fact that Christ Jesus himself became a man. He did not become an angel. He did not become another animal of some kind. He became a man and so Christ conferred his dignity on the nature of humanity by becoming one of us. And Psalm 8, we won't look at these passages but you can look them up later, the New Testament applies Psalm 8 to the Lord Jesus Christ in at least three different passages. In 1 Corinthians 15, in Ephesians 1, and in Hebrews 2, we see Psalm 8 speaking about the dignity of man, we see that text being applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, that's 1 Corinthians 15, Ephesians 1, and Hebrews 2.

So the dignity of man finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ who came in the flesh to redeem men from their sin and further in a time still future to us, the dignity will be even further realized when Jesus Christ returns to earth and rules over the nations as a man; as he rules from the throne of David from Jerusalem, the dignity of man will find its ultimate climax as Jesus Christ rules over the earth in human flesh. So by the fact that Christ has shared in our human nature, we find the dignity of man finding its highest magnitude. It's found in Christ himself.

And so what is the dignity of man? It's in the created order, it's found in the image of God, it's found in our human relationships, and it's found ultimately in a climax form in the Lord Jesus Christ. So let's step back for a moment. Here you and I are, a man, a woman, we share inhumanity and the fact that we share inhumanity means that we share in something of the nature of this dignity that God has assigned to us. And I come back to those of you that are struggling with the reason that you're existing and so discouraged

about your self-worth and things like that, don't try to find it in connection with human relationships, you need to step back and think higher, loftier thoughts, think theological thoughts and realize that your life has dignity, purpose and value because God has assigned it to you. It is something that God has given to you and the fact that if you are a Christian Christ himself loved you and gave himself up for you, is the place where you find every aspect, everything that would satisfy your longing for significance, it is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not in the job that you have. Not in the things that you do. Not in the friends or the wealth that you have. None of that. We find our significance in the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He made us, he redeemed us and that is what satisfies our hearts' longing for our own place and role in the universe. So take heart from the fact that even as you're struggling with these things, to go to God's word and see the tremendous dignity and value that God places on your eternal soul.

Well, let's go just a little bit further. Who are you? We've talked about the dignity side of it at great length. We've got two more points for this evening that we'll treat rather quickly. We need to understand this, point 3, is that you are mortal by which I mean when I say you are mortal what we mean is that you're going to die. Here in the post-fallen world, you and I are mortal. We are going to die. Hebrews 9:27 says,

27 ... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

And the term "man," one of the terms used for "man" in the Hebrew is a term that suggests the frailty of man, that man is subject to death at any time, and whether you're in your 80s or whether you're in your 20s from the perspective of eternity the reality is this, is that you'll soon enough pass away. You will die. You are not a permanent feature of the earth and your life is temporary. Your days are appointed by God and you will not be here forever. You will not live forever as a man as you currently are. Psalm 103:15 and 16 say this, it says,

15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.

You're made in the image of God and therefore you have dignity but you are still a mortal creature of human flesh subject to death at any time. People die in accidents all the time, don't they? People die of illnesses at young ages all the time. You know, there have been four United States Presidents that have been assassinated: Lincoln, Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy. All of these men at the apex of their power, men of one of the highest positions of authority in all of humanity, among all of the nations, and yet without warning their lives were suddenly shot and they either died instantly or lingered for a while and then died. Their great place of position did not exempt them from mortality, sudden unexpected death. Well, if that's true of Presidents, what's it say about you and me? You know, it seems like 15 years ago but it was only three months ago, Kobe Bryant found his end coming earlier than anyone would have expected. He died before his time just as one illustration among countless ones that we could use. And this has a sobering impact upon us. When we ask the question who are you, we have to realize and factor in

the fact that we're mortal beings subject to death at any time and that creates an urgency to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for us. Knowing that we could die at any time means that today is the day of salvation for your soul; that it is urgent for you to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. If Lincoln could die in a moment, my friend, do you really think that you couldn't? Is there any guarantee of tomorrow to you? Not if you're thinking rightly, not if you're thinking biblically, and if you're not in Christ, what's going to happen to you if death comes on you suddenly as it did upon Kobe Bryant? What's going to happen to you? You see, my friend, you're mortal and for you to understand who you are means that you have to contemplate that, you have to calculate that into your understanding of existence and when you do, it should make you flee to the Lord Jesus Christ who is alone able to give you immortality and eternal life and deliver you from judgment. So you're a mortal creature and that's important to a proper attitude toward life because it can all change so very quickly.

Well, let's take one final point here for tonight. Point 4 is that you have responsibility. You have responsibility before God and if you think about it, it could be no other way. A holy God, a gracious God, a Creator God has made you. He has put you on this earth and given you life. He sustains you and he has ordained the days in which you are to live. Well, do you understand, my friend, that that places you under responsibility to him, for you to fulfill the purposes for which you were created? As I said earlier in Hebrews 9:27, it's appointed for man to die once and after this comes judgment. You know, you could put your own name into that verse, it is appointed for Steve to die once and after this comes judgment, it's appointed for Paula to die once and after this comes judgment. The fact that your death will be individual and personal indicates and implies that your judgment will be individual and personal as well, and you as a mortal frail creature having received every benefit of gifts from God and life from God and goodness and kindness and grace from God, you're going to give an account to him, you're going to be responsible to him. The height of your accountability is going to be found in how you responded to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that God came to you and offered salvation to you, freely offered forgiveness of sin and eternal life to you, and made known to you that he was willing to save your soul if you would only come to Christ; that there was no barrier in the heart of God to you being saved. Well, what do you think, that God not only created you but loved you enough to bring a message like that and extended himself to you and promised eternal life to you, friend, what do you think is going to happen to you if you reject that? If you turn away? If you harden your heart against that when it's been laid before you that you're mortal? That it's been laid before you that you're guilty in sin and separated from God? When God despite that comes and extends love to you and offers himself to you and you would harden your heart against that, harden yourself not only against your Creator but against your only Savior and walk away and reject him and rebel even further?

My friend, you're responsible for that. What's going to happen to you if you persist in that kind of rebellion? Oh, my friend, hear the word of Christ when he says, "Come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." Come to the bread of life. Come and drink from the living water which is Christ and realize that God in his goodness not only made you but offers you a full and complete salvation in the Lord

Jesus Christ, that one who died for sinners just like you and rose from the dead and now has ascended on high and is Lord over all. He's the one who calls you and I urge you to come to him for salvation if you are still outside of Christ.

But to speak here in closing now to my brothers and sisters in Christ, do you see what a wonderful thing we have in our Lord Jesus Christ? That God not only made us but he appointed us for eternal life, and we know that he appointed us for eternal life because we have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the proof of our election, and that God having made us, set his love on us in a general way, in Christ he has set a special electing love on us, a peculiar love, a unique love, that he loved us and gave himself up for us, that in love he keeps us and will deliver us safely into heaven. When we answer the question who are you as a Christian, oh, the fireworks explode. There is a cacophony of praise that we lift up to God that God is our Creator, made us, Christ is our Redeemer, saved us, and the Spirit of God applied all of that to our hearts. We're on the receiving end of a Triune salvation and Christ has manifested to us in a particular way that says you're more valuable than many sparrows. Christ, he bought us at the cost of his own life. We've been bought with a price and the value of the life that purchased us is a measure of what the answer to the question is: who are you? You are an object of the special care and special love of the Lord Jesus Christ and for that we come back to the words that open and close Psalm 8. We think about these things, we think about what Christ has done for us and we say, "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!"

Let's pray together.

Father, we just thank You that You've given life to us in a physical sense, and we thank You that You've given spiritual life to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we answer that question who are you, what is man, Father, we go to You, it leads us back to the Creator God and it leads us back to the Lord Jesus Christ, and how we honor You and how we praise You here today. Father, we realize that we've sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We're not all that we should be. We've sinned against You in thought, word and deed, but Father, we praise You and we thank You that You loved us in Christ and that You sent Christ to deliver us, and that our lives are measured in response to the saving work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. So we give all of the glory to You and we commit ourselves to You and to Your service. Father, for those that we've spoken to directly who are outside of Christ, Father, we just ask You for a special work of Your Holy Spirit in their hearts. We understand that they're dead in sin. We understand that they are not able to respond unless You intervene for them. Father, we ask You to do that. We ask You to send the fullness of Your Holy Spirit upon unbelieving hearts to convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment, lead them to the glory of Jesus Christ and, Father, bring them to saving faith in Christ that they might be saved from sin and share eternity with us in heaven forever. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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