

# ***PRAISE INTERNATIONAL***

## ***What Kind of Human***

### ***Genesis 1:31***

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#### **Good Morning**

#### **Prayer Needs**

There are a couple of things that have come into why I am choosing to share the message I am sharing this morning:

- First was when Denise asked me – are you developing a series of messages on key words?
- The last two weeks we looked at two key words from we first see in Genesis – Good and Rest
- So I am thinking about this and the wonder that has brought both Neice and I to tears repeatedly this week as we hold these amazing babies in our arms...
- The final verse of Genesis 1:31
  - God saw all that He made, and behold, it was very good...
  - What was very good?
  - What had He just made?...humanity...
  - Gen 1:27 let us make man in our 'image' = 'shadow'
  - This is why the Incarnation is such a powerful reality – it is here in Christ that we see what God the Father looks like – it is here in Christ that we see what humanity looks like.
  - James 1:23-24b The Mirror Translation
    - *The difference between a mere spectator and a participator is that both of them hear the same voice and percieve in its message the face of their own genesis reflected as in a mirror; they realize that they are looking at themselves...*
- On occasion I have found something that is powerful and on point that it does not need to be added to – today I want to share a message from Dr Kenneth Tanner who is an Charsimatic Episcopal Pastor in Rochester Hills Michigan – that he shared on Ascension Sunday– the following is a message he shared concerning humanity – that God called Good! It is written in a kind of prose.

#### ***The Sort of Human who Ascends....***

*Imagine a human life born into the world the way we all are born into the world, coated in serum and blood, vulnerable to all that brings us harm, laid on a mother's breast.*

*Imagine a human life born, like most humans, into a poor family with parents who sweat for their daily bread, a human life threatened from the start by homicidal mania.*

*Imagine a human life lived as a child in exile, in a land where they are strangers, where a different language is spoken, absent a community of trust and care.*

*Imagine that when Jesus comes home as a young boy to the village of his parents, people stare at Him, and whisper "bastard." Schoolboys taunt Him, ask Him if Mary knows his real father.*

*Imagine a mother with arms that console, with a voice that teaches Him to love the Scriptures and to pray the Psalms. Imagine a human life that begins to see itself in the words read and the words prayed; imagine that the Word is so inscribed on this human's body and mind and heart that the greatest teachers of his day hear in his voice the Wisdom that inspires the prophets, that gives harmony to the psalter.*

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***And the secret is simply this Christ in you!***  
***Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.***

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*Imagine a human life that gradually becomes aware that its life is somehow identical with the life that makes suns and galaxies, orchids and sequoias, eagles and panthers, that gives breath to all that flies and swims and crawls, a human who is One with the architect of atoms and cells, the kindler of stars, the molder of mountains.*

*The other humans, including his mom and stepdad are not quite sure what to make of His bewildering humility. He is always putting others first, always waiting on them and everyone in the smallest of ways without caring if anyone notices the kindness or Him. At times they feel as though perhaps they ought to bow in reverence because his words and acts are so full of life and hope and healing.*

*Imagine a human life lived for decades in obscurity, where at the end of most days, muscles tired and achy, He shakes sawdust from his hair and rinses grime from his arms, and sets a table for the widowed vulnerable Woman who brought him into the world, who taught Him so much, and now has Him to protect and provide for her.*

*Then one day this woman asks Him to do for others what He has on occasion done for her—to make wine where there is no wine. And then there is a baptism, and a sojourn in the wilderness, and a transfiguration. The blind see, the lame walk, and the dead live again because his spit and voice and breath are not only human but divine.*

*Imagine a human that does not seek equality with God but is among all humans as servant. Imagine a human life that refuses the sword and tells us to love our enemies. Imagine a life that does human things divinely and divine things humanly.*

*Imagine that living this kind of human life leads the church of His time and the rulers of His moment to plot against him and to snuff out his way of becoming human, to shame anyone in the future from even trying to be human as God is human.*

*Imagine a human that forgives our entire species even as we reject and despise and murder God.*

*Imagine that when this human dies from our violence He does not stay dead but that in death and beyond it He stays human. **He so rearranges the structures of death that they are now instead a portal to the life of God for everyone who dies with Him.***

*Imagine a human life that journeys to hell with the dead and preaches as a dead man to those bound in chains; that as He speaks the fetters that held them there are broken by love.*

*Imagine that the human life I've just described in all the ways I have described it appears embodied again after death, freed from death, liberated from any threat that can limit his promises to us and to the world.*

*Now, imagine that this is the sort of human life that ascends to the right hand of God. Imagine that what it means to live this sort of human life and to die this sort of human death is to ascend—to become forever the measure of what it means to be God and what it means to be human, for this Son who is given to us descends to become human and ascends to remain human.*

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*And despite all appearances to the contrary his way of being human, His way of humility, is now the way things are with the world, and now death has no power over his ascended life or ours.*

*His humility causes our humanity to ascend with Him so that right now what is truest about you and me is that our lives are hidden with Christ in God, that we are seated in Christ next to the Father; that we are in Him there, and that He is in us here, and that with Him we are One with the Father by the Spirit.*

*This is but one facet of the great mystery of Ascension, that complex, neglected, beautiful, and consequential reality that Christians trust and that we celebrate.*

*Have patience. In time, God is kind with us and will help us know this reality and to live this reality, right now and forever.*

#### **What Does this mean then about your basic human nature?**

- Unfortunately 40 plus years ago a team of translators highly influenced by reformed tradition took one word in the NT from the original language Sarcos – means Flesh and used this wording instead – Sinful Nature – it appears in millions of NIV translations.
- This has had an unfortunate and tragic result as it has communicated a basic distortion of our identity – namely that of our basic nature.
- I have heard this repeated over and over about our basic nature....it is NOT true!
- What God made...was and is VERY GOOD!

*You do not have a “sin nature,” you have a human nature afflicted by sin, an infection that is at war with your good creation in the divine image.*

*Sin is anything that opposes the love that God forever is and humans are made in the image of that love. So, love is elemental to the human person; sin, though alien and hostile, is like cancer everywhere humans are.*

*Your participations in evil are not who you are; they are tragic denials of your created human goodness, a deep work in clay by the love that is God. All who share human nature have an original good beginning, a divine image that rests within humanity. This is the meaning of “God saw all that he had made—and it was very good!”*

*And there’s something else: Christians confess that God shares our common humanity in Jesus Christ. God is human. What it means to be human and what it means to be God is forever tied to one person. And this human is sinless.*

*The sinlessness of Jesus Christ is greater than the collective sin of humanity and His life story of perfect love is the measure of every human.*

*Sin denies and obscures our true nature. We are made in the image of love, not hate, in the image of humility, not pride, in the image of generosity not greed.*

*While the sin of our ancestor, Adam, has wide-reaching destructive consequences in everyone, everywhere, Christians are the ones who trust that the obedient life of the human God is far, far greater than Adam’s transgression.*

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*The effects of Christ's exemplary humanity will override every evil in us and in creation. This is a basic Christian trust.*

*And this changes the way we look at everyone. Jesus is the lens through which we view every human.*

*That human nature is not inherently evil, but rather participates in an original created goodness that is wounded by sin, is a basic claim of the first Christians and our Judaic heritage. Please, accept no substitutes. Sin does not belong to human nature.*

*What I am about to write is plain but maybe that is why we miss it:*

- **God cannot become what is inherently evil.**
- *When God becomes human he takes on human nature as he finds it, subject to the conditions of the fall—what has not been assumed has not been redeemed—but a good creation remains in every human no matter how many layers of soot mar its incandescent reality.*

**God becomes what God makes and what God makes is always good.**

*Ancestral sin is real, we see its effects everywhere and in all. We are sinners, as we confess every week in the Liturgy. Sin is a power that afflicts us...no doubt about it...but it is important to recall that we are not our sins. They are not our identity. They do not define the human person or any human. The human God does. And that is good news.*

Amen

Closing Prayer and Communion.

Risen and ascended Christ,  
you surround us with witnesses  
and send us the Counselor  
Open our minds to understand the scriptures, O God,  
so that when sin cripples our hope,  
we may discover the freedom of your forgiveness;  
when suffering and death overtake our lives,  
we may know the joy of the risen Christ;  
and when we feel abandoned,  
we may comprehend the power of the promised Spirit,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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***Col 1:27b JB Phillips***

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