

# More Human Every Day !

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 29 May 2022

Preacher: Rev David Andrew

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning, all. These are great songs we've been singing. Fix in us, in us, thy humble dwelling.
- Imagine someone asks God his address, and he says, Oh, I live in Margaret Kerr. I live in Jeanette Kerr.
- I live in John Lucas. I live in David Andrew. God fixing his dwelling in us. It's not irreverent to say that.
- The Bible gives us authority to say that we are God's address. That is the most astonishing fact of the Christian faith, that we who are so imperfect, we make promises that we don't keep, we lose our temper when we have no right to, we refuse forgiveness when we ought to give it, we behave as though we've not received any mercy from God because we often don't show it to other people.
- And this God comes to us imperfect people and makes his dwelling with us and in us.
- [ 1 : 2 8 ] It's okay to look amazed. Let's read from Ephesians. We're thinking this morning about something.
- Before I can give you a word of encouragement, I need to give you a word of complete and utter discouragement. I want to tell everybody here this morning that you are utterly immature.
- Okay? And you are less than human. Okay, that's okay. If you want to walk out, that's okay now.
- But I'll try and explain what I mean by that. But you are immature and you are less than human. I include myself in that.
- But let's turn to Ephesians chapter 4 at verse 11. I never get up to read Ephesians without wishing we could just read the whole thing.
- [ 2 : 2 7 ] It's such an amazing letter. But let's begin at verse 11 of chapter 4. And we'll read into the first two verses of the fifth chapter.
- And by the way, I'm reading. If you might want to follow it in your Bible, you might want to follow it later as we're working through. But it's on the screen in the New Living Translation, which is what I'm reading from here.
- I just found it really refreshingly clear and helpful. Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church. The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers.
- Now let's just stop there for a minute. Because I've been in plenty of churches where people go home and have roast preacher for Sunday dinner. Okay? And this here is saying that the pastor is God's gift to the church.
- These are God's gifts to the church. The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers. Now why did he give this? And here's the answer in verse 12.

[ 3 : 38 ] Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and to build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever that they sound like the truth.

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly as each part does its own special work.

It helps the other parts to grow so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. With the Lord's authority, I say this.

Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they're hopelessly confused. Their minds are full of darkness. They wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.

[ 5 : 03 ] They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity. But that is not what you learned about Christ.

Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.

Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God, truly righteous and holy. So stop telling lies.

Let us all tell our neighbors the truth, for we're all parts of the same body, and don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

If you're a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work and then give generously to others in need. Don't use foul or abusive language.

[ 6 : 07 ] Let everything you say be good and helpful so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.

Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Imitate God.

Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

May God be praised for his word, and may we hear from him, rather than from anyone else this morning. So, just give me a second until I pull up these notes.

[ 7 : 35 ] That's us. Okay. Now, I don't know how you felt reading about this, but what Paul is talking about here is he's talking about the unity of the church and the maturity of the church.

And you see, we tend to, we work, I think, too often with worldly values. We take our lead from society around about us, which has its own very strong convictions and opinions about what maturity looks like.

But in the church, there is only one standard of maturity, and that's Jesus. Don't judge yourselves by other people.

Don't judge yourselves by each other. Don't compare ourselves with each other. The standard standard is too great. He's the standard.

And to the effect that he is the perfect human being. Now, hold on, let's just grasp of this, because this is central to everything we need to understand this morning.

[ 8 : 51 ] What you're looking at when you look at Jesus of Nazareth, you're looking at the perfect man. You're looking at unfallen man.

You see, we use categories that we got from the world that are not actually really accurate. I mean, have you thought for a moment that nature isn't natural?

Nature is not natural. If nature was the way God intended it, it wouldn't be red tooth and claw. Animals wouldn't be tearing each other apart. there wouldn't be tornadoes and tsunamis and earthquakes.

Nature is not natural. Nature has fallen. Nature has suffered because man fell. And so we talk about human nature. And human nature is not natural.

If our nature was natural, it would be like it was in Adam before the fall. Nothing has been natural since the fall.

[ 10 : 01 ] It's not natural for a man to blame his wife in order to try and get off scot-free. And that's the first thing Adam did when he fell. It's not natural for couples to be at each other's throats.

So don't let's talk about human nature. Let's talk about fallen nature. We don't have human nature. We have fallen nature. Human nature is something that's being given to us because of salvation.

Human nature is something that God gives to us. Actually what God is doing is not so much giving to us as restoring to us what we lost in the fall. Human nature is the nature of Jesus.

And he's perfect. You can't find fault with Jesus. So unless you are an exact replica of Jesus Christ the Son of God right now you're less than human.

And instead of that depressing as that should fill us with excitement and with a thrill because God's plan is nothing less than that we should be conformed to the likeness of his Son.

[ 11 : 21 ] That's Romans 8 29. His plan is nothing less than that we should be conformed to the likeness of his Son.

Now that doesn't mean to say that we lose our own identity. When Jesus came back from the dead he was still recognizable as Jesus. He was different but he was the same.

He was still Jesus. When Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead Lazarus had a body that had just been had death driven out of it.

Lazarus was still Lazarus. God delights in the multifaceted aspects of humanity. He delights in our individual personalities and character.

He's not going to steamroll all of that and make us so like Jesus that we're all clones. That's not what the scripture is talking about. It's saying that within your character and your personality and my character and my personality everything will radiate something of Jesus into the community round about.

[ 12 : 39 ] God will be able to look at any one of you or me and see a striking resemblance to his son.

Which is of course exactly what he was able to see when Stephen was dying under a hail of rocks and he dropped to his knees and he cried out Lord do not hold this sin against him.

a man never looked more like Jesus Christ than he did in that moment. Now maybe that's not an encouragement to you. Maybe you don't fancy the idea of looking exactly like Jesus as you die under a hail of rocks or somebody sends you to jail to rot and die.

But my goodness just imagine if the living God can look at you and see his son looking back at him. Is that a hope?

I think that's the greatest hope we can have. But let's look a wee bit more closely at the text here. Look at why God gave these gifts to the church.

[ 13 : 56 ] These gifts were the apostles and the prophets. The apostles and the prophets brought good news about God. God. I don't know about you but every time I meet the people from society from the secular world these days they've got nothing but bad news about God.

They really think either God is irrelevant which is bad news or they think he doesn't exist which is bad news or they don't want anything to do with them because they think he's bad news and he's got it in for them.

people see God as some kind of heavenly policeman who is just waiting to catch them out or they see him only in terms of the judge and they know that they're going to be hard pressed to meet his standards.

So they con themselves they fool themselves into thinking that they can set the standards and God will just say well you've tried your best and it's not like that at all.

there is no way that we can impress God. God's standard is far too high. If we could impress God so that God was just to let us into heaven based on our own standards of good behavior our own standards of morality or ethics.

[ 15 : 20 ] If God was to let us into heaven by our own standards then Jesus was a fool to die on a cross because it was never necessary. But as it is Jesus died on the cross because only he could meet the standard of God's righteousness.

There is no substitute for Jesus. I don't come to church to impress God. I come to church because God impresses me and I just want to gather with folks who are similarly impressed who want to worship him.

And look why God gave these gifts, these people, these ministries to the church. To equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.

And you think to yourself, hold on, surely that's not right. Surely God gave these people to the church so the church would maybe make society a better place.

Maybe we could modify society. Maybe we could make it a bit better than it is and a little bit less violence, a little bit less meanness, less huffiness.

[ 16 : 52 ] Maybe we could improve society. Maybe we could just modify it a bit, make it a wee bit more acceptable to God. Surely that's why God gave these people to the church, to make the church the kind of place that would impress society.

No, no, none of that. That's not what this is about. This is God giving ministries to the church to build up the church, to build up the body of Christ.

Why? Until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature, we will be mature. This is not about modifying society, this is about crucifying Christians.

Let's read on. Because if we come to this unity in faith and knowledge of God's Son, we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

What standard is that? The standard is Calvary. That's the standard. That's the maturity God wants to bring us to.

[ 18 : 10 ] you see, so much of the church today, you can tell by the way, by the pronouncements that church leaders make in the newspapers, they really think the church's job is to modify society.

But a church leader's job is to help crucify the church. so that we become like Jesus in his maturity.

We don't live a crucified life in order to atone for the sins of society. That's not what it's about. The atonement is his. It's a full and final work that he did and nobody else can add to that.

But let me tell you this. If the church doesn't take up its cross, it will never remind the father of the son.

If the church doesn't take up its cross, it will never remind the father of the son. And says, Paul, if we do this, if we allow God to mature us to the point where Jesus becomes visible in us, he says, when we get to that point, we won't be tossed about by every wind of new teaching.

[ 19 : 35 ] We won't be influenced by people whose lies are so clever that they sound like the truth. Listen, do you believe everything that you read in the newspapers these days?

do you believe everything that you're told on the BBC? Do you really think that you've got all the facts about Ukraine and Russia? Do you really think you're well informed about Israel and the Palestinians and the Middle East?

Do you really think you're well informed about anything today? I would have to say the answer to that would be categorically no. It was an ancient philosopher in ancient Greece who said long before the time of Christ, he said the first casualty of war is the truth.

And the whole world's at war with God. Is there any evidence of that needed these days? Actually, we've got a society that's becoming more and more childish.

And so God is looking for a church that is more and more grown up. Growing up into Christ, growing up into his stature, growing up into his character, growing up into his personality, growing up into Jesus' priorities.

[ 21 : 05 ] I came not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. That's the church that God is looking for.

That's the church God wants to raise up. Wow. To equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, God is seeking to raise up the church to do his work in these days.

We are immature brothers and sisters, and we will begin to grow when we accept that and ask God to deal with it. The more we like the world, the less mature we are.

Jesus said society of his day was immature. He said, they're like children playing in the marketplace. We played funeral music for you, and you wouldn't look sad.

we played wedding music, and you wouldn't dance. I'm in the huff, I'm going home. That's exactly what society was like in Jesus' day.

[ 22 : 15 ] That's exactly what it's like now. The headlines that we get these days about the A-list people, the celebrities, are absolutely disgustingly childish.

who has fallen out with who, who has slept with whose wife. It's just pathetic.

Who's been offended? We live in a generation of snowflakes, of people who are so easily hurt, emotionally fragile, pathetic creatures.

Dear friends, there is no hope for our society that is becoming more and more childish until the church becomes more and more grown up.

We need to let Jesus be seen. We need to let it be seen that we are the people who can be offended to the core of our being and return it with love and with blessing and with kindness.

[ 23 : 27 ] then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. Instead, instead, we will speak the truth in love.

Instead, the church has got to be an instead. instead. The whole of the church is meant to be instead. Something gloriously different, something totally alternate, something for which there is no comparison in society.

We're not meant to be a social work annex. That's not the job of the church. Oh, by all means, do good to all men as it is possible, says Paul.

And especially to those who are of the household of God, says Paul. But social work is not the reason for the church. There is a social work department to do that.

Communists can be good at social work. Atheists can be good at social work. There are many kind people out there who are not Christians. Kindness is not the only thing the church is here for.

[ 24 : 50 ] We're here to give people sight of Jesus, of Nazareth. We're here to let people understand that the news about God is good.

The news about God is the best it could be. I delight everywhere I go in telling people, especially if there are lots of unbelievers in the place, that God is for us.

God is for us. When he says to you, you're not fully human, he's saying that because he's for you, not because he's against you.

When he says you're immature, he's saying it for you, not against you. God's love cannot be exaggerated. Take his love, take his truth, take his purity, take his faithfulness, take everything that's beautiful and good and pure about God and try exaggerating it and you'll still be wrong because we can't exaggerate the goodness of God.

We simply can. growing in every way, more and more like Christ. That's the plan. Now, this was intended from the beginning.

[ 26 : 22 ] Genesis 1, 26, God says, let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea.

And so, God says, let's make this man. Let them be in our likeness. And so, man was made in the likeness of God.

The word in Genesis actually means a shadow. So, God, you know, on the first day, God says, let there be light. And he imparts something of his being because there was no sun or moon or stars, but there was light.

And God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. So, when God said, let there be light, the light wasn't going to come from the sun or the moon or the stars, which he hadn't yet created. When he said, let there be light, the light was from himself.

It was his own being that he was imparting into the creation that he was making. But when he made a man, he created a shadow of himself so that creation could feel God's presence moving across the surface of the planet.

[ 27 : 32 ] The shadow of God in a man. man. How beautiful is that? You see, a shadow is not nothing.

A shadow is evidence of something. A shadow gives a testimony to the substance it represents. So, when you see a man, any man, think of the worst man that you know on this planet, it, and there's still something of the presence of God represented by that man moving across the surface of the planet.

He's still in the image of God, however heavily it's disguised and concealed. So, from the very beginning, God intended that he would become visible to some extent in the people that he made.

that was always the beginning. And if we had gone to the first chapter, if we'd started in the first chapter of Ephesians this morning, we would have read an absolutely amazing thing, that not only did God create us to be like his shadow on the earth, he also chose us before the foundation of the world.

This is what it says in Ephesians 1. Even as God chose us in him before the foundation of the world, why that we should be holy and blameless before him?

[ 29 : 09 ] You know, we need to rescue holiness from misunderstanding. Official churchmanship and all the garbage that goes with that has misrepresented holiness.

holiness. The secular world even has a phrase, talks about someone who's holier than thou. Have you heard that? Has that ever been applied to you?

Holier than thou? That just is based on a total misunderstanding of holiness. Holiness does not mean that we're better than other people. Holiness means that we're not like other people.

people. It means that we're more like God than we have a right to be because he has taken us, called us out, and set us apart to be like himself.

In Luke chapter 6, Jesus says you need to love your enemies and do good to those who hurt you because that will make you like your father in heaven who is kind to the righteous and the unrighteous.

[ 30 : 24 ] He's kind to the evil and the good, said Jesus. Hello? I mean, are we hearing this? God wants to make us like himself.

Paul said it later on down here in this in the same chapter, or rather the very start of the next chapter. Imitate God, he said. Now, I'm sorry, I don't know how you feel about this, but that looks like a total impossibility unless it's a possibility.

How do you go to the average human being and say, imitate God? Come on, imitate God, let me see it. But that's what Paul's saying here.

Can we get a hold of this? Can we understand what astonishing possibilities are available to us in Christ? Do we begin to understand what the ministry of the Holy Spirit really is?

Paul wasn't wasting his breath here. This is a man carefully choosing his words. This is a man who's got nothing else to do with his time in prison, by the way.

[ 31 : 41 ] He's in jail when he's writing this. He's got nothing else to do with his time than to think carefully how to craft his words and say exactly the right thing to the church. And he says this astonishing thing to them.

He says, imitate God. Now, that's either total nonsense joy.

Or it's pure joy. I think it's pure joy. Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.

He is kind to the evil and the good. And when you are kind to the evil and the good, then you look exactly like his kids. We're exactly the children of God when we are kind to the evil and the good.

Is that the other way around from this society that's so easily offended, so easily hurt, so quickly runs to court to take somebody for every penny they can get out of them?

[ 32 : 51 ] Isn't that the opposite way around from this society? Isn't a grown-up church and a growing-up church and absolute counterculture to the nonsense that's going on in our sad society right now?

Brothers and sisters, this is not just a challenge to us, this is a possibility, because the Bible never commands the impossible. God's commands come with power built in for us to obey them.

Otherwise, God would be unreasonable. Why would God say, David, I want you to imitate me if that was just totally unreasonable and I couldn't do it?

The very command itself is an encouragement to me that God is saying, you can do this. You can do this. You can live this life.

If you go out the door today and somebody gives you a kicking in the pavement because they see you coming out of a church and they hate everything the church stands for, with all the pain that might be inflicted on you, with all the harm that has come to you, you would still be given the grace of God and the power of God to turn around to your accuser and your victimizer and say, may the Lord not hold this thing against you.

[ 34 : 16 ] Jesus loves you. And that wouldn't be because you're a particularly pious person. That wouldn't be because you're an expert Christian.

You know exactly what to do in those circumstances. It's because the grace of God flows straight into that situation of need and gives you the thing to say at the time.

Words that are not normally part of your vocabulary. An attitude that is not your normal response. God provides the grace at that moment of need to say the thing that needs to be said, to show the love of God in a situation where the person has no right to expect it.

Imitate God because you are his dear children. Imitate God. You see, brothers and sisters, the whole business of discipleship is about becoming more human every day.

That's it. We're becoming more human every day because we're becoming more like Christ every day. Though this earthly tent in which we live is being destroyed, yet inwardly we're being renewed day by day.

[ 35 : 55 ] What does that mean? It means that God is increasing and improving the character and the presence and the likeness of Jesus in your life with every day that passes.

God is so if, like me, your earthly tent pegs are a bit loose and you're really a bit concerned about how much longer the tent will stand up or whether the next puff of wind will blow over, the fact of the matter is that we will not leave this world until Father has completed in us the whole business of making us like his son.

And it will be God's work, it will not be yours, it will not be mine. This is not ever going to be our achievement. There is no boasting possible in the Christian life.

There is no boasting possible because it's God who's begun the good work, it's God who's carrying on the good work, it's God who will finish the good work at the day of Christ Jesus.

the work is his. So, brothers and sisters, I have good news for you. One day you're going to be mature, and one day you're going to be fully human, and the living God might even mistake you for his son.

[ 37 : 27 ] Is that good news? Yeah. Let's pray. God, our Father, we praise and bless you.

Your kindness to us is immeasurable. Your gift of Jesus to us is inexpressible.

We begin to understand that salvation was the beginning of your giving. It wasn't the end. You saved us for a purpose. You rescued us that we might begin on this path.

path that you say through Solomon is the path of the righteous that is like the first gleam of dawn shining ever brighter to the full light of day. This is the path you've placed us on.



This is a path where while our bodies are wearing out inwardly as the people we are inwardly, we are being renewed day by day by the work of the Spirit, by the presence of Jesus. We praise you that Jesus could say to us such astonishing things as be like your Father in heaven.

[ 38 : 35 ] That would never be possible, Father, but for the power of your grace at work in our lives. And yes, indeed it is possible. We can be such people.

We can be such a church. and we can let our poor, confused, deranged, childish, emotionally fragile society see the full beauty of real humanity in Jesus and in us.

And may this be so for your glory and for your grace. And may your name be exalted, O Lord, above the heavens. may the holy name of Jesus be lifted high by the people in this congregation here.

May your holy name, O Lord, be revered throughout the land. May you be feared again, Lord. May the fear of God return to this land.

And begin with us, Lord, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The name of God has taken away our sins.

[ 39 : 56 ] And God said, Thank you.