

Who are we?

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: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Chris Lowe

[0 : 00] Thank you, Kate. This morning's question, who are we as human beings? If you would like to find a quiet moment at some point and look at yourself in the mirror, or sit here now and look back at yourself, what do you see?

I guess you see skin and veins and fat and maybe if you could see inside a beating heart and you standing there looking at yourself and you're breathing and thinking and remembering and worrying and evaluating, who are you? What are you? And what are you worth? People give different answers to those questions. Here's a guy called Professor Jode from a number of years ago. Man is nothing but fat enough for seven bars of soap, iron enough for one medium-sized nail, sugar enough for seven cups of tea, lime enough to whitewash a garden shed, phosphorus enough to tip 2,200 matches and sulphur enough to rid one dog of fleas.

Is that who we are? Just our chemical material makeup or are we more than that? And here's Desmond Morris, famously 50 years ago. There are 193 living species of monkeys and apes. 192 of them are covered with hair. The exception is a naked ape, self-named *Homo sapiens*.

Is that what we are? Like are we naked speaking, self-naming monkeys? Or is there more to us than that? Like the thing is, what we believe about ourselves, about who we are, does have the power to shape us in a massive way. Our attitudes to others, our sense of worth and so on. Say that you are nothing more than what we are, does not have the power to shape us, or do not have the power to shape our bodies.

Or say we are nothing more than naked apes. That has the power to shape how we live and what we do. It has the power to shape what we do with our bodies, for example.

[2 : 19] And Bloodhound Gang is an American band. Listen to this lyric, it's a little bit crude. You and me baby ain't nothing but mammals, so let's do it like they do on the Discovery Channel.

Or listen to Raquel Welch, one time American screen goddess and very beautiful. I am just a piece of meat, she says. Who are we as human beings?

What do you see as you look at yourself? Are you worthless dirt and fat and sulphur? Are you an ape? Are you a precious being? What are you? Genesis chapter one, we've said, is God-given and for us. It's here to teach us about our beginnings, and the foundations of our existence and our world. And it's here to shape our view of all of life.

And so far, three weeks, quite slowly, we've come through verses one to 25, and the uncreated eternal God creating the heavens and the earth.

And he spoke words of power and he formed this ordered, teeming, good world here and around us. So everything we see around us and taste and smell, all of it is his creation displaying his glory.

[3 : 38] Through the first 25 verses of Genesis one, we've noticed a safe environment that has appeared just right for us. Edible plants and sun and moon to mark days and years and livestock.

And by the end of verse 25, in the middle of the sixth day, the stage of creation is set and ready and waiting for verse 26.

Where the narrative slows and God reveals his final creative project. Who are we as human beings? And with our Bibles open in front of us, let me read again verse 26 and on.

Then God said, Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves along the ground.

We as humans have very limited significance. See, this is us created like God, relating by God to Rulva, so different from the sense that you're just a nobody, a nothing, an accident.

No wonder so many people today feel worthless, and insignificant, and that life is bleak. If the idea seeps into you that you're just nothing, you're chemicals, you're an evolutionary accident.

But Genesis 1 says it's not like that at all. It's not like that. God has created us in his image. I do want to ask, do you know that about yourself, and about those around you?

You might feel embarrassed to do this. You could look in the mirror later, and speak to yourself on your own in the bathroom. I'm not a naked ape. I'm not a piece of meat.

[18:49] In this vast creation, I stand here in my bathroom, before the mirror as a human being. I've been made in God's image. I'm his offspring. He has made me like him, to know him, to do his bidding in the world, and not just me, every single one of us.

That is who we are. Such a high, and good, and God-given view, of what it is to be a human, isn't it? And, there are all sorts of, and so many, biblical and personal implications, that flow, from being made, in God's image.

Next Sunday, we're going to say much, much more about our creation purpose, to rule for God. But this morning, let me just mention a couple of, so what's. So what, that we are made in the image of God.

Here's the first thing. Recognize the God-given dignity, and worth, of all mankind. That is, those created in the image of God, have a God-given dignity.

[19:58] Human beings are precious, uniquely so. And at one level, in our society, all of us know that. We do know that. We know that there is something, that marks us off, from the animals.

That's why, if you want to bully, or abuse people, you call them animal names. Gypsies, or Jews, or foreigners, they're rats, they're vermin. Or you say, she's a dog, she's a dirty cow.

If you call someone that, you are dehumanizing them, aiming to scrape away, at their worth. The Bible tells us the truth, that we instinctively know.

And a bit later, in Genesis chapter 9, God is talking about humans, and animals, and underlines how human life, is uniquely precious. Quote, Genesis 9, 5 and 6, God says, I will demand an accounting, for the life of another human being.

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans, shall their blood be shed, for in the image of God, has God made mankind. Do you see that? That is, the shedding of human blood, is monstrously wrong, and God will make you pay for it.

[21:16] And that is because, you are murdering someone, made in God's image, one of his offspring. And this, God-given dignity, and worth of human beings, it must shape, how we treat, every single human being.

At one end of life, think of the elderly, and the infirm, who fall and forget, and get easily, shoved out of sight, in our society. Ignored, and treated as burdens, when they're no longer, useful humans. What matter if they die? In fact, let us assist them, to make it happen. Or, at the other end, think of the unborn.

Think of the tiny, independent, and easily killed. There were 250,000 abortions, in the UK, in 2022. In a society, that's losing sight, of a creator, who grants, inbuilt, intrinsic worth, to us all.

It is no coincidence, that we're left, being increasingly cruel, towards the weak. Think, how dare we, destroy those, who bear his image.

[22:29] And pull back, from those two examples. Well, 90 year old, with dementia, and unborn child. Black women, and white men, able, and disabled, dirt poor, and filthy rich, all have a built in, God given dignity, and worth.

Which is why, moving on a touch, the Bible says, respect all people. I mean, the New Testament, in James 3, verse 9, James slams Christians, he says, with the tongue, we praise our Lord, and Father, and with it, we curse human beings, who have been, made in God's likeness, my brothers and sisters, this should not be.

Being made in the image of God, is a wonderful, wonderful thing, and yet you see, how it bites here, in the Bible. Forces us to ask, how we speak of, and speak to, fellow human beings.

The noisy neighbour, the spouse, the referee. In a sense, there's a weak example, but I remember being, pulled up short, by a friend, I was complaining to him, about someone close to me, not Meg, or my children.

It's strange how, with people who are very close to us, we bad mouth them, the most. And I was being so dismissive, of this person close to me, I've just had enough of them. And my friend said, I wonder if you might have forgotten, that he is made in God's image.

[24 : 00] Every human being you see, God-given worth. In our society, we are tempted to evaluate people, or ourselves, based on our looks, our occupation, our achievement, our sexual attractiveness, our usefulness.

Very poisonous, that, and it destroys people. No, no, we are made in his likeness, all of us. The God-given dignity, and worth, of every human being, you encounter this week. That's one so what, it's very good. Here's one more implication, so very briefly. Know that as human beings, we are made for God.

Genesis 1, is foundational, you know, and says to all of us, all of humanity, atheists, and God-fearers, whoever we are, that to be human, is to be made, for God.

We really are, his offspring, created in our deeper selves, to relate, to him. And so, to live without God, or to turn away from him, if I put it like this, that, in a sense, that is, it is subhuman.

[25 : 22] It's a denial, of who you are, who you've been made to be. Or more positively, in the fourth century, a man called Augustine, wrote this simple prayer to God, you have made us, for yourself, and our hearts, are restless, until they rest in you.

And the whole story of the Bible, and salvation history, and all that God has done, is the Lord God acting, to restore people, to himself, that they might become, human.

See, you, and everyone on your street, are actually created, and wired up, for God, to hear his voice, and pray to him, and obey him.

This morning's question, we're making slow progress, in Genesis 1, but we're asking, who are we, as human beings, who are you, standing there waving?

We're not meat, we're not apes, we've been created, in God's image, with inbuilt dignity, and worth, to know our God.

[26 : 34] So one final thing, ask what does that, what does it really look like? What does it look like, perfectly, to be a human being, and to be all, that we're made to be?

And we won't turn there, but you know, there is someone, who came into the world, as quote, in the New Testament, the image, of the invisible God. There is one person, who was beautifully, and spotlessly human, who was everything, that you and I, were made to be.

Like God, even in the depths, of his character, relating to God, with perfect intimacy, and ruling for God, with faultless, obedience.

And the name of this, perfect member of humanity, and mankind, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. And the Bible says, that today, as you and I, and the people of Cambridge, turn to Jesus, and place our faith in him, not only do we receive, forgiveness for our disobedience, and not only do we discover, the joy of a restored, relationship with God, but the God, who made us, promises, that he will, one day, transform us, into the likeness, of Jesus.

so that you and I, might one day, become as fully, and perfectly human, as it is possible to be. I'm going to, lead us in a prayer.

[28 : 17] Let's pray together. The psalmist writes, when I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind, that you are mindful of them, human beings, that you care for them?

You have made them a little lower than the angels, and crowned them, with glory, and honour.

Thank you, our God, and our creator, for making us, in your image, that today, we might relate to you, as our God, with us, as your offspring.

Thank you, that, though we, in and of ourselves, have fallen away, from doing good, and acting righteously, and perfectly bearing your image.

Thank you, that you have acted, through Jesus, to restore your creatures, to yourself. Please, would you help us, this week, to, know our worth, before you, and the worth, of those around us. Help us, to treat one another, ourselves, and others, with the dignity, that is rightly theirs, and ours. Help us, to live together, we who believe, in Jesus Christ, as your restored humanity.

[30 : 02] And we ask that, in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.