On Being Human Beings

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: 12 December 2010

Preacher: Dr. Phil Hill

[0:00] I'm very pleased to see you all, especially since you have been warned. And I'd like to begin with a word of prayer.

Our gracious Father, as we meet to consider your word and your will and the world of people and ideas around us, we ask that you will guide our thinking, that you will grant that the Holy Spirit may clarify our thoughts and our conclusions.
We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen. I'd like to begin with a question. And in the background to that question is Professor Margaret Somerville, who is the founding director of the Center for the Integration of Medicine, Ethics, and Law at McGill University.
She is involved in studies of euthanasia, reproductive technologies, mental health, human rights in health care, the pharmaceutical industry, AIDS, and abortion.
She's the author of a book called The Ethical Canary, Science, Society, and the Human Spirit, published in 2000. Another book called Death Talk, The Case Against Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide, published in 2001.
[1:34] She presented the 2006 CBC Massey Lectures, which were published as a book under the title, The Ethical Imagination Journeys of the Human Spirit.

That was in 2006 also. Now, it was in an article of hers published last summer that she mentioned that an editor had put to her the following question.
What is the world's most dangerous idea? That seems to me a very important question. And it also seemed to me a question which Learner's Exchange might be interested in thinking about for several reasons, including the fact that we are all deeply interested in what lies behind the current state and the rate of progress of the world of people and ideas around us.
And the second reason is that we have much to contribute to answering that question. As I look around this room, I can picture at least a thousand and maybe approaching two thousand person years of experience of observing the world and the ways of the world.
And wouldn't it be good if we could collectively identify what are the world's really dangerous ideas and also have a look at the exact opposite to those dangerous ideas.
[3:20] Now, I'd like then to open the floor for discussion, but first I would like to do two things. one is to, first of all, give you Margaret Somerville's own preliminary response to the question.

And I say preliminary because I suspect what the editor was doing was provoking her to write another book. And I hope she will. But anyway, I'd like to just mention her first response.
And secondly, I'd like to give you my response to her answer. Now, she didn't ask me to do that. But, but in any case, it'll give you a little time to think about the key question before we open the floor for discussion.
However, as I say, I'm hoping we won't spend all our time on the most dangerous question, the most dangerous idea, but be able to react to what should be that powerful antidote to that dangerous idea.
Now, first of all, then, Margaret's answer to the editor. She said, of all the dangerous ideas in the world, the most dangerous is, and I quote, the idea that there's nothing special about being human.
[4:46] And therefore, humans do not deserve special respect as compared with the other animals or even robots. Why did she bring in robots? I suppose she was thinking way ahead to a time when robots will be so intensively packed with artificial intelligence and with the most brilliant kind of means of sensing and appearance and reactions and everything else that if you met one in, sitting beside one in the bus someday, it would never occur to you that that being had never been a babe in arms.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

So, the time may be coming. But at any rate, her question is, her statement is, the idea, there's nothing special about being human. And knowing, as we do, that she's spending her life, I believe, courageously, striving for truth and justice and some of the most intensively tragic features of human experience, we can be struck by the kind of language she uses.
For instance, the words, nothing special about being human. What, what exactly does that mean? Could it be pointing to one particular idea that has been, you might say, insidiously spreading throughout our society for maybe a century or more, and one which may already have caused untold damage?
If so, we'd like to know exactly what that idea is, where it has come from, why its implications are so destructive, and why, despite all that, it seems to have been perhaps widely accepted.
well, here is one suggestion about how we might understand Margaret's language, nothing special about human beings, about being human.
[6:45] It's the idea, allegedly, though not really, derived from science, that we human beings are, quote, nothing but atoms and molecules.

And of course, if that's true, then indeed, there is nothing special about being human. Now, that idea has a name. It is called naturalism. The word could be defined as the expectation of finding a completely physical explanation for everything, the universe, life, humanity, even our minds.
By physical or natural, we mean an explanation which rejects any defined action. Only physics and chemistry would be required for such an explanation.
And going beyond that, naturalism implies that no other explanation is either justified or even needed.
That's, I think, the core of the idea. Now, if you say, how did that idea arise? Well, it seems to have been founded on the notion that life spontaneously arose from nothing by chance as a result of purely accidental events.
[8:05] In 1903, Bertrand Russell, who was then 31, published a book called A Free Man's Worship in which he wrote, Man is the product of causes which had no provision of the end they were achieving.

His origin, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms. In 1971, the Nobel Prize winning biologist Jacques Manol wrote a book called Chance and Necessity.
And in it, while he was reflecting on the randomness of genetic mutations in human evolution, he wrote, quote, We say that these events are accidental due to chance.
And since they constitute the only possible source of modifications in the genetic text, in other words, you might call it the recipe by which our inherited characteristics are transmitted, one who says it necessarily follows that chance alone is the source of all creation.
And so, of course, if life evolved only by chance, as he and others have concluded, no wonder Russell could write in his 1955 book on science and religion, and I quote just a portion of it here, he said, Purposeless, void of meaning, is the world which science presents for our belief.
[9:39] Now, lately, Stephen Barr has collected sayings of other people, and I'll just quickly mention some of them to show you it's not just one peculiar writer.

Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of DNA, said that human life is, quote, no more than the behavior of our nerve cells and their associated molecules.
Marvin Minsky, a pioneer in the field of artificial intelligence, crudely described people as machines made of meat. Neuroscientist Giulio Giarelli announced that, quote, we have a soul, but it's made up of many tiny robots.
And the insect biologist, Charles Zucker, has concluded that, quote, in essence, we are nothing but a big fly. So, there are a bunch of these people who have this view of human beings.
We might just address the question, what are the implications of naturalism? Well, first of all, we can say it provides no answer to Margaret Somerville's longing for defining something special about human beings, whose genes are, we are told, what is it, 99% the same as certain other organisms?
[11:06] Secondly, it provides the basis of what we might call practical atheism. That is, the conclusion that even if God exists, he had nothing to do with how we came to be, and we're the result of pure chance.

There has been no divine designer. Thirdly, it means that there's no absolute basis for morality. It's solely up to us to make up our own moral code, and think how dangerous that is, given our almost

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

infinite capability of justifying ourselves in whatever we do.
Fourthly, it means there is no intrinsic value to human life, no grand goal. Life is pointless. There's no fundamental reason for living, no future but the grave.
And finally, if that is not enough, it means what has been called a deep seated cosmic loneliness. Monod has written, quote, man at last knows he's alone in the unfeeling immensity of the universe, out of which he has emerged only by chance.
Somebody has written that Monod believed we are merely chemical extras in a majestic but impersonal cosmic drama. We are an unintended irrelevant sideshow.
[12:36] It's a dim view. In sum, naturalism tells us that mankind is totally lost and his search for identity, value, meaning, and morality is ultimately pointless.

There's no use struggling for anything except the gratification of appetites. And so, taken seriously, it seems to me, the implications of naturalism are not just bleak, they are black.
But it seems there's yet another implication of naturalism, and that is that our only authority in the world is science. All else is subjective, arbitrary, or mythical.
And here's Bertrand Russell again. You'll be tired of hearing of him. But here he is in 1955 at the age of 83. And this tells you how much he has learned during his time.
Quote, I cannot admit any method of arriving at truth except that of science. His final conclusion is whatever knowledge is attainable must be attained by scientific methods, and what science cannot discover, mankind cannot know.
[13:51] Now, how might we react to this idea? Maybe portrayed it a little starkly and grimly. How should we react?

Well, there are various ways. We might say, for example, it sounds so foolish that we should just ignore it as something so transparently unreasonable that, as someone has said, only an intellectual could believe it.
or we might say, it is a dangerous idea, and some ordinary people might actually believe it, but surely there is still enough Christian residue in our society that it will never actually take hold.
Or another reaction is, we might say, look, this danger has long been recognized, and some outstanding Christian thinkers, and this includes scientists and theologians and philosophers, people of no little brain, who have tackled this question and advanced powerful arguments against it.
But, despite all that, has it actually spread, as it were, behind the scenes, has it actually spread as a foundational assumption?
[15:08] Questions arise when we see what's actually happening in the world around us, questions like, why is it that the press almost never appeals to any authority except science, so-called?

Why is it that there's so many people say, there may be a god, but I don't know him, while showing zero interest in the subject? Why is it that standards of morality seem to be regarded today as mostly social conventions?
abortions? Why is it that assisted suicide is becoming more and more widely advocated? Why is it that euthanasia is gaining acceptance?
We hear horrifying things of what's happening in Holland. Why are there so many abortions? If I'm not mistaken, I think I heard there was a hundred thousand of them in Canada last year, and so little discussion.
Why is it that Parliament of Canada is reluctant even to mention fundamental moral issues?
Another question, what has been the collective influence over time of novelists, playwrights, movie makers, poets, and pundits who wanted to be known that there is no absolute moral code, and humanity has no intrinsic value or dignity, and we're not really responsible for what we do, and that evil can be justified by situational ethics, and that there is no personal God.
[16:50] All of this at least is consistent with the idea that we are in fact nothing but atoms and molecules, cleverly arranged, yes, but, here, entirely by accident.

so, I'll just say, I think there may be a case for, though there's certainly no proof to be offered, but there may be a case for supposing that naturalism is one of the really dangerous ideas in the world. things like that. But now, let's put that aside, and also even Margaret's comments, and let's open the floor for discussion, and rather than focus on the most dangerous idea, let's just talk for a few minutes about, let's get some contributions here on what are some of the really dangerous ideas,

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

and I'm sure you will be coming forward with them, because, as Poirot would put it, you've had some time for those little gray cells to work on the key questions.
So, who'd like to start? Ideas, the world's ideas, which are, if not the most, they are really dangerous.
Who'd like to begin? Or do I have to call upon you by name? Harvey, great. I think this would say, this is really dangerous. God is, and he's on my side.
[18:23] Oh, yes. Yeah. And the danger of that is, Harvey? That that will justify anything as well. And justifies armed intervention, for instance, but, yeah.

Good. Another one? Harry? Harry? This problem I'm looking at is that there are seven billion human beings.
This is a difficult concept. Yeah. It's a difficult concept. And that seven billion human beings will be replaced next generation by seven billion more human beings.
And where do you give meaning to that massive flow of humanity?
Right. So what is the danger in that idea, Harry? Despair, I think. That you've got to ultimately resort to a naturalism.
[19:29] people to be in that world. In other words, the very idea that we have such a large population on the world is itself a cause of despair?

Well, it is pretty hard for us to get our minds around. It's a to say that the elect and the rest of the world is is is is not the solution to the problem.
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Thank you. Well, China is affected by that, but there are only a lantern of one or two children. Right. Right. So the danger then is that large populations require some corrective action?
Is that what you're that's the danger? I think so. Okay. And they're punished. Right. Yes, they do.
Another one. Yeah. Probably a large proportion of the world's population does believe in a god, but I think the danger the dangerous idea is that all roads lead to god.
Yes. Yes. Yes. All the way to them all the same. Yes. Because it's an illusion that they do. And it's a danger. Because people will lose the opportunity for real faith.
[20:59] Is that the you know? Yeah. There's another The real god is so diluted as to be a pantheistic. Yes. Right. And certainly we often hear that idea promoted, don't we?

That there are many ways. Another Sam. I had a friend who came up and said the danger would be that we give more power to one person, for example, the United Nations.
that was in response to how can we keep some rogue leaders under control. And he said, well, then how would you get rid of the person who is in charge of the UN if he became rogue?
So it's a little bit the same as your question, you know, God is and he's on my side. It's an extension of that. The dangerous idea is longing for a leader who will get us out of all our problems.
Right. Thank you. Bill, yes. The dangerous idea that, taken from Darwin, there are superior forms of human being over other forms of human being which was picked up by the Nazis.
[22:22] Yeah. They tried to correct them. Yeah. And this is very much the question Margaret Somerville was worried about. That we can classify human beings as worthwhile or not worthwhile depending on their, perhaps, their physical condition.

Well, that's been less, I mean, that's been a thing universally from the time that human beings began from and so on. We don't know but in terms of civilizations, there's always been a terrible divide between those who have and those who have not.
Right. So the dangerous idea, Bill, is in imposing arbitrary values on human life.
Is it something like that? Yeah. I'm talking about how to call it. Yeah, right. Olaf, you're sitting there pondering. How about telling us? Thinking. Pardon? Thinking.
Thinking, good. Sheila, how about you? Oh, I would agree with her. I think it took us millennia to get to the point of thinking that a human being was special.
[23:38] Human beings were thought of as a resource to be used, as a commodity to be bought and sold. It didn't matter how many people died in a battle as long as the king survived. Yeah.

In the Old Testament, you'll understand how important human life was. They used populations for personal gain. Yeah. And it really is part of, I would say, enlightenment thinking.
Yeah. That suddenly there were people and it wasn't the tigers and the, you know, the whales and others that thought this up.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

It was human beings that said, we are special, we are different and human beings should have some inalienable rights and so on. And it took off from there into democratic thinking.
And Mr. Bush, in my opinion, set us back 400 years when he said a little bit of torture is okay. It's alright to keep people in Guantanamo. I mean, how long did it take us to get habeas corpus?
[24:37] And he said it's not important that these people have access to legal counsel and that they are charged with something specific. Just incredible.

I don't, and he would not have been able to do it in the continental United States. But, I mean, it took us that long to get to the point of thinking and understanding and honoring that people were special.
And I would sure hate to see that tossed away so I would agree with her. Thank you for that historical perspective. For me, I guess. Yeah. Now, Trav, what do you think?
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. To me, it's, it just, it really boils down to the question, I guess, of our belief in God himself.
Yes. Because if there isn't that belief, You speak a little louder, Trav. If there isn't that belief in God, all hell breaks this. Yeah.
[25:50] And, and we've seen something similar within, within the church in the last, you know, what is it, 60 years since liberalism has come in. And the way they, that has infiltrated the thinking of the, of the, the scholars to a point where they're changing the, the, uh, scripture to meet the cultural needs, all of the other stuff where God is very, very direct about what he says about things.

You know, I mean, it's just, it just invades everything. So the, the human being is in a, is in a really bad state.
The idea that there is no God. The idea that there is no God. Right. Or, or there is a God, but he's, nothing to do that. He's, he's not doing anything.
Right. And you know, the interesting thing is, that we have a Bible that we can hold up like this, and turn it around, and look at it from any direction. And in there is a God who speaks to us today.
Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. About all things. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Thank you, Jeff. Yeah. Shin. I think that the idea that we are progressing is dangerous.
[27:14] That we are better than people before us. Yeah. Can you all hear, Shin? Yeah. It's the dangerous idea that we're getting better and better every day.

Or every generation. Sam, what about you? Well, what Shin said reminds me that C.S.
Lewis thought the same thing, how conceited that we get in our home period of time, we think that we're so much better than previous thinkers, and previous thinkers didn't have much value.
Yeah. But thinking about C.S. Lewis, he became a Christian through his study of morality, and he discovered that morality was transcendent and affected all people.
And I just have this one quote that I would share. Because you'll hear the atheists address morality, and they'll say that they have morality, but they talk differently than us.
[28:23] They're talking about something different. Sure, they have values, but they aren't transcendent values. And when we talk about morality, they have to be transcendent. this guy in history said, then I learned that all moral judgments are value judgments, that all value judgments are subjective, and that none can be proved to be either right or wrong.

I even read somewhere that the chief justice of the United States had written that the American Constitution expressed nothing more than the collective value judgment. Believe it or not, I figured out for myself what apparently the chief justice couldn't figure out for himself, that if the rationality of one value judgment was zero, multiplying it by millions would not make it one of the millions.
Nor is there any reason to obey the law for anyone, like myself, who has the boldness and daring, the strength of character to throw off its shackles.
I discovered that to become truly free, truly unfettered, I had to become truly uninhabited. And I quickly discovered that the greatest obstacle to my freedom, the greatest block and limitation to it, consists in the insupportable value judgment that I was bound to respect the rights of others.
I asked myself, who were these others? How do human beings with human rights? Why is it more wrong to kill a human animal than any other animal, a pig or a sheep or a steer?
[29:49] If your life is your life more than a hog's life to a hog, why should I be willing to sacrifice my pleasure more for one than the other? Surely you would not in this age of scientific enlightenment declare that God or nature has marked some pleasures as immoral or good and others as immoral or bad.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

In any case, let me assure you, my dear young lady, that there is absolutely no comparison between the pleasure that I might have taken eating ham and the pleasure I anticipate in murdering you.
the question I would take is to the person who thinks that there is no morality and that lives as if there is morality, what would you say to that individual?
I think you have to say, yes, you're right, unless you have some sense of a transcendent morality. not just moral danger, but mortal danger, you're wanting to.
So, if we're honest with ourselves, well, we can't live like that. And that's what I think, where C.S. Lewis is the rubber hits the road. Right. Sorry for taking quite that.
[31:04] No, no, it's a huge subject. Who'd like to contribute another thought or two on this? Beth, you're deep in thought back there. I was just thinking that the danger is not thinking that humans are special, then the danger of thinking that we're so special that we can do what we like if we get smart enough.

It's clearly what people are saying. This is the other side of the coin. We can clone and we can do all these things because we're so special. Right. Thank you. Michael, yeah.
one of the ideas I have is that we think that we have the ability to find all the answers by ourselves. Yes.
Right. That we got all resources inside. Just have to dig them out. Yeah. That is a really dangerous idea. Olaf?
I tend to think that some of those is right. she's a woman of faith. Not necessarily a member of the North American Alliance, but she is because the movement obviously is very deeply concerned about that is related to faith.
[32:31] It's struck me that we were living in a century where three individuals had been responsible for the death of 120 million souls responsible for the most massive destruction of people.

Which surely is an illustration of how dangerous that position is. People are not special. right. Thank you.
Tracy, yeah. The most dangerous thing, I should say the most dangerous thing, one of the most dangerous thing is when we want to be our own God.
Yes. It's when we as human beings individually want to be my own God, and human beings as a collection want to be our own God. And if we individually want to be my own God, I'm sorry, everyone knows nothing.
And as human beings we want to be our own God, well why do we want to have knowledge of good and evil?
[33:47] And if that is the idea, it doesn't matter if you have one person who has absolute power over all his subjects, or you have a government elected by Democrats, it will, we will have to see the problem.

Thank you. That obsessive demand for autonomy is part of our world today, isn't it? I knew there would be very important insights, and I'm sure we could spend another hour actually collecting more of them, thinking more of them, but I see Katie's been taking some notes.
Maybe, Katie, we could ask you to come forward and just give us a little mention of those ideas and possibly put in some of your own thoughts, you haven't spoken yet, about what is the world's most dangerous idea.
Katie has a vast experience with bad ideas, because he's in the English department. So, Katie, how about coming forward?
Yeah, right. I love taking notes, Dr. Hill, in case you might ask. Yes. Happily, though, I think most of our ideas have been summed up in being our own God, because here we are, we have Harvey starting off by pointing out there is a God and he's on my side, which is probably nothing other than feeling we can control God with our sacrifices and our works, and therefore he owes to us to take over the enemy.
[35:34] We have a variety of ideas tending in the direction that Somerville said. Harry Robinson pointed out that naturalism just is the result when we try to be God and contemplate all those seven billion people and how we're going to take care of those seven billion people, which is something, of course, God is supposed to do, not us.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

We have giving all the power to one person, the conviction that we can fix ourselves, we can fix things, generally resulting from atheism, which was pointed out by a couple of people as the main problem, I think, trash.
Once you remove God, you basically have the options. I was reflecting of being God, trying to legislate morality yourself and fix it, create God in your image, pretend there is one, but generally do his job for him, I think that's your job.
We have Sheila pointing out, this one was interesting, that the enlightenment was when we realized that humans had value. I would love to chat with Sheila more about that, actually.
Well, I already thought of the other side of that argument so I do that. But in any case, yeah, and then we realized that the enlightenment, that experiment, I think Shin was the one who pointed out, had its dark side, which is that this was another iteration of our thinking, that we're the ones moving ourselves forward in some absolute or moral way, that progress in technology is the only kind of progress there is, because again, there's no transcendent standard and we are our own gods.
[37:15] And that's what we've chosen to do to move our civilization forward. So that's the way to move civilization forward. What else? Oh, the interesting comment from Sam about C.S.

Lewis' reflections on eating ham. I don't know if anyone made it, just since I have the floor, to hear Richard Dawkins when he came. Was anyone at UBC to hear him? Fascinating. Nobody disagreed with him.
He was ready to fight. No Christians came up. People came up holding their God delusions like Bibles. And the questions he got most often, he got this question three times, and he got very upset.
Why aren't you a vegetarian? Three times. All these people trying to follow Richard Dawkins realized that there's a fundamental inconsistency in his position, that he's willing to eat meat, exactly what C.S.
Lewis said, but that he wants to say that humans are other animals. Yes? I see it correct. That quote wasn't from C.S. Lewis. Oh, was that not? Who was that? That was you?
[38:17] No, it was C.S. Monday. Oh. I often confuse them. C.S. Lewis, he talked about the conceit of humans, even in his day, about generations past.

Richard Dawkins, at the end, he finally said, I'm sorry, I'm weak. There aren't any good records. That was all he could say because he realized that if you're going to give the same amount of worth to humans as animals, you either have to be okay with things like slavery or you have to become a vegetarian.
Respect animals as though they're human. Any other? Katie, thank you very much. I think Katie, it would be good if you could talk to Margaret Somerville.
And while you're doing it, how about inviting her to come and join us on Sunday morning? Now, I'm the keeper of the gates is looking at his watch.
But let's go to, what shall we say, the polar opposite to the world's most dangerous idea. And surely we could agree on this.
[39:38] It's the very idea of the Christian human being. The subject is gigantic. We can't possibly approach it in months or even years of a comprehensive look at it.

And then what can we do in five or ten minutes? It seemed to me we might begin just with three very basic questions. Where did this idea begin?
What is its foundation? And over the ages, how did it progress through progressive revelation and understanding? And finally, why should we especially treasure it now?
Shall we take a few minutes just to approach this? And Bill, please have patience. Let's briefly review what it is that constitutes the Christian human being.
And we'll take this first question, what is the foundation of the idea? And we'll go right back to the beginning. Genesis 1, then God said, let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the other creatures.
[40:54] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him. Male and female, he created them. Now, unlike in modern English, the word man here is inclusive in the sense that it includes both male and female.

the intent of Genesis 1 seems to be, and we have to say this, I think in our modern age, what is the intent of the passage? And it is to show that except for their physical complementarity, men and women have the same essence.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

They have the same creator, the same possibility of communion with God, the same need of him, the same potential for good, the same vulnerability to evil, the same freedom, the same intrinsic value, the same kind of stewardly responsibility, and therefore the same kind of accountability.
So that theologically speaking, it is not surprising that in this context, the word man should have inclusive meaning to define it that way. Now, we get more of that stewardship in a later verse in Genesis, God blessed them.
Where do I find it here? God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves on the ground.
[42:28] Just in brief, how do we summarize the main points here? Number one, that God is our creator. Number two, that he has made us in his image. Now, what does that mean? Let's come back to it.

And thirdly, that we've been given stewardly responsibility for the creatures of the earth. What does it mean, made in the image of God?
Henry Blosher's interesting little book on the opening chapters of Genesis called In the Beginning, has a comment about what the word image implies. And he says, quote, and I think this is very relevant to one of the points you were summarizing, Katie, an image is only an image.
Genesis does not mean we've been made into semi-gods. An image exists only by derivation. It's not the original, nor is it anything without the original.
And so, Blosher says, mankind's being in an image of God stresses the radical nature of our dependence on him. Blosher goes on to speak of Genesis wording that man was created of the dust of the earth.
[43:39] And it's interesting here to recall that scientists have found that we physically are composed of the ashes of dying stars.

In other words, all our atoms of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen were actually made in the inner fiery furnaces of dying stars.
So, long after the Genesis statement, dust of the earth, we have scientists concluding that we are indeed made of the dust of the universe. There's reason for humility here, says Blosher, but humility precedes glory.
If the announcement that God created man in his own image does not conceal, but rather underlines creaturely dependence, its principal aim is incontrovertibly to exalt mankind, or rather, it seeks to extol the magnanimity of the creator who has created him to come so close to the divine condition.
And that, of course, is just the briefest mention of the foundation for the idea of the Christian human being. Let's go on now to the question of how the notion evolved through progressive revelation and understanding.
[45:00] There's so much to ponder here, it's not surprising that great thinkers meditated upon it, these few lines of Genesis 1. One of these was King David, whose psalmate, which Katie mentioned here two or three weeks ago, didn't you, Katie, which begins with an outpouring of praise, inspired not only by his own observations of the nighttime sky, but particularly by these words from Genesis.

Here's King David saying, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You've set your glory above the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars, which you've set in place, what is man?
That you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him. You made him and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands.
You put everything under his feet on all flocks and herds and beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.
God's eyes. We could classify David's reactions in four ways. First of all, praise for the majesty of God displayed in the seeming infinity of astronomical creation.
[46:29] Secondly, amazement that he, the mighty God, should even think about tiny man. Third reaction, again, amazement, that he should wish not only to create him and to care for him and to commune with him, but even, to use David's words, to crown him with glory and honor.

Now, what does this mean? Let's come back to that. And finally, a reaction of sober thoughtfulness, that God has given to us responsibility collectively to care for all creatures.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

We could, in principle, say, David, it's awesome to think that God has charged us to care for the earth, but it's amazing that in your psalm you've used these words about mankind crowned with glory and honor.
What does that mean? What is that glory? You're speaking about, are you just going back here to the Genesis statement about being made in the image of God, or do you have something else in mind?
But here, where the deep problem arises with Psalm 8, because how can it possibly be true that God has created man in his own image and crowned him with glory and honor, when as David well knew, the human world has been infested with hatred and murder?
[47:53] It seems that in his time, David simply didn't have the data to answer that question, though he had trusted God that somehow God would work it out.

Now, to get the answer to that question, we have to turn to other authors, like the author, the writers of the Hebrews, who is explicit about how the words of Psalm 8 were already, had already had prototype fulfillment.
Hebrews 1, shall we just read it together? in the past, God spoke to our forefathers by the prophets, and he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.
The Son is the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation, the express image, as the King James Version puts it, the express image of his person.
So that to understand the glory that God has given to humanity, we have to turn. The writer of Hebrews said we have to turn to Jesus. In his offhand way, the writer of the epistle makes mention of Psalm 8.
[49:16] There is a place, he says. He knows very well that all his readers knew that place. There is a place where someone has said, has testified, what is man, that you are mindful of him, the son of man, that you care for him.

You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet. Going down further, in putting everything under him, God left nothing that's not subject to him.
Yet, great understatement, at present, we do not see everything subject to him, but we see Jesus, who is made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor.
See how he takes up David's words. Because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
And when he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. So, does this mean, then, that Psalm 8 and Hebrews 1 and 4, or 2 or 3 and 4, are only referring to Jesus?
[50:26] Now, we know something about ourselves, and we know it's very likely that to the end of our days we'll be fumbling, if not actually foolish pilgrims. Does that mean that this vision of greatness has nothing to do with us?

Not so, says the writer. Jesus is not only the perfect person, he is the perfecter of our persons. God's and here we have that amazing statement.
Hebrews 2, in bringing many sons, here's that inclusive language again, we should say in bringing many sons and daughters, in our language, to glory.
It was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists would make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering, both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family, so Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.
I'll move on, I think time being pressing here, I'll move on just a little bit here and go to our third basic question, why should we today especially treasure the very idea of the Christian human being?
[51:48] And there's many ways in which we could formulate the answer to that question, I'm sure, and here's only one approximation, but let me give you a thought or two on that closing question.

Here then, we can say in Hebrews, is the great working out of the promise of Genesis 1 and the meditation of Psalm 8, not to mention many other passages, that the Christian human being can actually enjoy a communion with God God, which has several notable features.
Let's take one. First, it gives us proof of our unique intrinsic value in that God so loved the world that he gave his only son that we might ultimately be, to use David's words, crowned with glory and

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

honor.
We have a literally glorious destiny. A second reason for treasuring this very idea is that it offers a present communion with God, which, being voluntary, preserves the freedom, the dignity, and the responsibility that God has given us.
Another thought. It is full of realism about our present failures and offers us daily help and encouragement. fulfillment. A fourth thought.
[53:16] It assures us that we are absolutely valuable. And therefore, it provides the absolute foundation for our duty of care for others in whatever state they are.

Another thought, among the many, many others that could be offered. It is founded fundamentally on what is perhaps the greatest of human needs, and that is the need for companionship.
And not only communion with God, but a rich companionship with other human beings. Just briefly go back to the Hebrews for a moment, just to see the mentions here of relationships.
Sons, shall we say, sons and daughters in our language. Family, brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters again, children, children again, brothers and sisters.
We see here that the text is riddled with relationships. The ideal of the human family gives us a high view of the importance of communion with others.
[54:31] James Houston, in his book Joyful Exiles, writes that, this is what I felt was a very striking phrase in the book. Quote, I believe that the prime action of our lives is the face-to-face encounter with others.

Comma. Bringing God's presence into their lives. End of quote. So we're called on to remember that the purpose of our lives is to live and love, as Jesus commanded, in the community of all mankind.
And particularly in relationship to fellow Christians. Now, just in closing, is there one single major idea which underlines the idea of Christian humanity?
And I want to suggest the wording that I have enjoyed for years, though I couldn't remember where exactly it came from. the central idea of Christian humanity, that he became what we are, that we might become what he is, by which I understand it to mean.
He, the glorious heavenly person, became a humble human being, that we, failing mortals, might ultimately become literally glorious heavenly persons.
[56:04] So, we can treasure this idea. Okay.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host