

Sunday June 14, 2020

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer (Steve G)

Welcome to church! As most would know we seem to have commenced “the road back” to eventually meeting as a larger group with church services now resuming out of the church building. A praise point for our prayer time! However, for now, we remain separated somewhat. So, whether you are at home or in the church building, welcome to our service!

Today we welcome Jon Brown to morning church. Jon will join us for the next few weeks as part of a swap with Stephen Taylor, who will be preaching at night church. This morning Jon will speak on Gen 1 “what it means to be human”. There is a proverb that begins with “to err is to be human” – I’m sure we can all relate to that! Additionally, these past months and weeks have demonstrated far too many human failings, and that can be discouraging. So, it’s good to pause and reflect again on the true meaning of life. Today Jon will help us focus on why we were made – for God’s glory! And, just what is “the road back” to this again.

Let us pray together,

Father in heaven, at what remains a difficult and challenging time for many of us, with world events seeming to go from bad to worse, we want to focus on you as the God who made us and the God who saves us. We ask for your blessing on our time of worship and fellowship. When we come before you, we are reminded again that we are all sinful people, we all fall short of You and your glory, and we need your forgiveness. In confessing our sins, we remind ourselves that our salvation has been won through the work of Jesus’ death and resurrection. We pray this will be real in our lives; we pray this will impact the way we live; and we pray we will have the opportunity and courage to share this with others. We also ask for the Holy Spirit to work in us, to change us and renew us, so we can become more and more like You. Help us to now remove distractions and focus our eyes on you. And through this, help us to grow in our Christian walk and our witness for You. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

All Creatures of Our God and King <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUZD0hgtSgE>

Almighty Maker <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uFT-Yo31uk>

Who but the Lord set the bound'ries of light
 Hung the stars in the night?
 Who but the Lord drew the face on the moon
 Made the planets to move?
 Who but the Lord tells the clouds when to pour
 Thunder to roar?
 Amazing are Your works

Almighty Maker
 You command heaven and earth
 By the power of Your Word
 Be praised forever
 Almighty Maker
 All creation sings of You
 Glory fills all that You do
 Be praised forever, ever, evermore

Who but the Lord could have dreamed of the plan
 That would save fallen man?
 Who but the Lord washes rebels with blood
 Making mercy a flood?
 Who but the Lord could give life through a cross
 Rescuing us?
 Amazing are Your ways

All things are from You
 All things are through You
 O God, the great I AM
 All things are for You
 All things are to You
 O God, the great I AM

Bible Reading - Genesis 1:26-31 (NIV)

26 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,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
 in the image of God he created them;
 male and female he created them.

28 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 on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Announcements

- **Church in June.** It is great news that services are going to be held each week at Swansea (from last Sunday for up to 24 people), Sunday @ 6 (from TODAY for up to 50 people) and Charlestown AM (from last week for up to 50 people.) For both Swansea & Sunday @ 6 all we ask you to do is to book your intention to come each week. For Charlestown AM we will be inviting 50 people each week to attend with the aim that over the four weeks of June everyone will attend Church ONCE. We will continue to send our services by post or email to all of our regulars leaving the decision to come entirely in your hands. This is one way where the Church can support you no matter what situation you currently find yourself in.
- **Balance.** On Sunday 28th June, Jo and Stephen are holding a ZOOM webinar on Balance. Are you finding it hard to balance work, home & Church? Then why not tune in between 3:30-5pm where we will have a combination of teaching, practical application and group discussion on the issue of balance. More details to follow.
- **Focus for June – Family.** Every month we set aside time and energy to focus on another aspect of the Christian life – this month it is family. Is there someone in your family where the relationship has broken down? It could have been your fault or theirs or a combination. Why not attempt to reconcile? Reconciliation requires people to be successful but it only requires one to make the first move!
- **Prayer.** Don't forget that every Monday and Thursday evenings at 7pm we are meeting to pray via ZOOM. Please join us.

- **Pastoral Care.** Are you in need of pastoral care? Or have awaiting a COVID-19 test or been diagnosed with COVID-19? Please let us know so that we can pray and provide any physical or spiritual help that you need.
 - Stephen is trying to work out **who is accessing our interactive services** and facebook sermons and who isn't as well as which weeks they are doing that. This information allows us to see if what we are doing is working or whether we should try something else. To help us with this please each week can you either like the sermon or share it with someone if you are going onto facebook to hear it. Or alternatively can you fill in the one minute survey monkey form whose reference address you will find at the end of this service each week that you complete the interactive service. Thanks.
- **Facebook.** Not part of our Church's facebook group at the moment? Then why not join us at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/563984673762656/>
- **Elevanto.** And while you are online please check out and update your Elevanto profile at the Church Elevanto page. This will help us greatly as a Church. And if you haven't signed up for Elevanto as yet, please contact Liz Hyslop on (gehyslop@optusnet.com.au) and she will help you sign up.

Prayer points – Sunday 14th June 2020

Pray for Uzbekistan (Pop 34 million, Christians 300,000). The church in Uzbekistan faces immense pressure from the government. A believer can be fined for having a Christian song on their phone. It is illegal to read or carry the Bible or other Christian materials in public. Citizens with a Muslim background who become Christians face the most severe persecution from all directions to renounce their faith in Jesus. The government therefore regards Christians as a threat that must be controlled and even eradicated. Church raids occur regularly. Those present at raided gatherings may be interrogated, fined and detained for up to 15 days.

COVID - 19. Pray that with the Black Lives matter rallies happening all over the world that new COVID 19 clusters don't appear.

Pray for the Wee Waa Presbyterian Church. Thanks God that their livestream children's message and preaching service have had good uptake, and a number of folks are connecting regularly who have not "crossed the threshold". Pray as they start back services of up to 50 people. Wee Waa is still economically and psychologically tired, the drought is breaking but more rain will be needed for the crops sown recently. Help them to continue to trust in a Sovereign Lord. Pray for the Pastor Steve Bignall as he recovers from a 'staph' infection, and a carcinoma removed and who is run down after a difficult couple of months. .

Pray for our indigenous brothers and sisters. That we would continue to close the gap as a nation. That there would be no racism towards them or migrants in our nation. That we can plot a shared future going forward together.

Pray for our Church family. Pray for those who cannot come back to church at present that they would experience the oneness we have in Christ.

Kids Spot -

This week's Kids' Talk uses stories and puppets to bring to life Acts chapters 6 & 7. We see that it isn't always easy to speak about Jesus. Sometimes, people will do whatever they can to stop us. But even in hard times Jesus' mission will go on because the mission of the Risen King Jesus cannot be stopped.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX7AzqFt_yc&feature=youtu.be

Church Prayer (Joanna Barlow)

Our loving Heavenly Father, we praise You that You are a glorious God – Your glory is evident in every one of Your attributes. We praise You that even though we cannot visibly see that glory now because it is veiled, we can look forward to the day when we will be able to see Your visible glory without being blinded by Your radiance. And thank You that we who were made from the dust will one day come to share Your glory – and even now, we are being changed from one degree of glory to another through the work of Your Holy Spirit in our lives.

We especially thank You that Jesus was willing to leave His glory behind, to not grasp on to it, as was His right, but to be born as a helpless human baby. He was willing to take our sins upon himself and suffer in our place, bearing Your wrath that we so richly deserved, and to be separated from You, abandoned by You, for the first time in eternity. Thank You that He was able to be our representative because He became fully human like we are, yet was without sin.

Father, we thank You that we are starting to be able to meet again in small numbers. Please help to protect us as we do so, and help us never again to take for granted the privilege of meeting together as Your people. We do pray that after the rallies that have taken place last weekend, You would protect our nation from new waves of COVID-19. And Lord, we know that black lives do indeed matter, that every life is precious to You. Lord, show us when there are even hints of unrecognised racism in our own attitudes, so that we can repent, and help us to truly love others in practical ways with the love of Christ.

We pray for our ministers, Stephen and Jon, and our elders, Ross, David, Steve and Rob. Thank You for their willingness to shepherd us through these complex times, and we ask that You would continue to give them wisdom in negotiating the complexities of restarting physical church.

For those of our number who are unwell, we ask Your healing mercies. Thank You that Valmai and Lorraine are coping with their respective treatment, and we ask that You would enable it to be effective. We pray for those who are grieving the loss of loved ones, and especially pray for Karen Logan in the loss of her mother, and for Katherine O'Callaghan in the loss of her uncle. We pray for Katherine's mother as well who had a heart attack after hearing of her brother's death. Please comfort her and our dear sisters and help us to support them during this time.

Father, we think of our sister church at Wee Waa; thank You that their livestream preaching and children's message have had a good uptake, and some folks are newly connecting. We pray you would energise them as they restart their in-person services, especially as they are weary from the drought and the economic problems they have faced. We particularly pray for their pastor, Steve Bignall, as he recovers from cancer surgery and a staph infection – please restore him to full health and strength. We continue to beseech You for more rain to water the recently-sown crops.

Lord, we think of Uzbekistan, with only 300 000 believers out of 34 million people. We pray for protection for Your people there as they face threats from the government including church raids. Please give them strength, courage and wisdom as they deal with their difficult circumstances, and protect them from the persecution.

Father, thank You that we can approach Your throne of grace with confidence, knowing that You hear us and answer our prayers in Your sovereign wisdom and according to Your purposes. Help us to trust You to work everything together for good as You have promised. We ask all of these things in Jesus' glorious name and for his sake, Amen.

Before the Throne of God Above - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LULK2nZ6sCc>

Sermon - Dust to Glory (Genesis 1:26-31) by Jon Brown

Sermon link: <https://youtu.be/5SHZbmWIXn8>

What does it mean to be human? When the answer comes back there is often a contradiction. On the one hand we are creatures like all other creatures. We hunger and thirst. We have bodies that suffer pain. We live and we die. But on the other hand, it seems like we have almost unlimited potential doesn't it. William Shakespeare nailed this contradiction in his play Hamlet. At one point Hamlet is lamenting about the tragedy of human existence and he exclaims,

“What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! In form, in moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?”

A human being is a piece of work. As Blaise Pascal put it, “man is neither angel nor beast”. We seem to swing between these two extremes. Scientists say we humans are just organised blobs of mud which only leads to despair.

But then on the other hand you get the Disney answer, “You are god-like! You can do anything and be anyone!” This leads to pride. Christianity on the other hand, holds the contradiction together and makes sense of it. So let’s look at this passage in Genesis 1 together. And we’ll look at it as a journey from dust to glory.

First we see that humans are made from dust.

But we find out we are also made for glory.

And lastly I want to show you the exact image of God.

1. Made from the Dust

The first thing Genesis teaches us about what it means to be human is that we are made from the dust. We are created. We are creatures.

Notice in Genesis 1:26, 26 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,[a] 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.

And in chapter 2:7 we are given more detail, “Then the Lord God formed a man[c] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” The Hebrew for the man is “Adam” which translates to “ground”. We’re made from the same stuff as the other animals. This should bring us down to size shouldn’t it. We are creatures and as creatures we are dependent. We have very real limitations. We are completely dependent on our surroundings. We have finite bodies. Now more than ever we need to hear about our creatureliness. Because as technology develops and takes over our lives there is a push for us to redefine what it means to be human.

Do you remember the TV show The Jetsons? It was about a family living in the future, which was populated with flying cars and robots that do the housework. However, it portrayed humans as basically the same. The Jetsons were a nuclear family. George Jetson would go to work everyday. This isn’t the future we know. Why? Because technology can profoundly change us. Movements like Transhumanism use technology to There are no limitations to our bodies. We define what it means to be human.

But Genesis reminds us we didn’t make ourselves. God made us male and female. And that’s good. Our Creator gave us life, breath and all things and we owe our existence to Him. It means life is not a right but a gift. This part puts us in our place and that’s a good thing. I think it was Albert Einstein who said a fish can never reach its full potential trying to climb trees. A fish is made to be in water not climbing trees. It’s the same with us. True freedom and fulfilment for us is found in being what we were made to be. If you’re a man it’s good to be a man. If you’re a woman it’s good to be woman.

The fact we’re created eliminates pride and absolute autonomy. This is the part that Reformed people like me love to highlight. But often that can be at the expense of the other part: glory. If we only focus on the creature side that can lead to despair and a feeling of worthlessness. The other side of what it means to be human lifts us out of the dust because God made us for glory.

2. Made for Glory

Genesis 1 is like a song that keeps building until we get to Day 6. Look at the first part of verse 26 with me again, “Let us make man in our image.” Notice there is a break in the pattern. A pause. With all the other animals God simply speaks and it happens. But here there’s a silence in heaven and God appears to consult with himself doesn’t he. Who with? With himself. A conversation is happening within the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is about to do something very special. “Let’s do something completely different to what we’ve done so far. Let Us make image bearers. Creatures that reflect us.”

In the ancient world, only the King or the Pharaoh was made in God’s image. But Genesis teaches us the radical equality of every human being. Male and female are together created in God’s image. This doctrine has been foundational in the West for human rights and equality. We could easily spend a sermon on that! But let’s zoom in on this part of being an image bearer in verse 28. 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 on the ground.” That’s pretty glorious isn’t it? God created humans to represent him on earth. We were created for glory. Like kings and queens we were made to rule the earth and create a God-glorifying culture.

Yet there's something amiss isn't there? We were created to be something great and glorious. But if we're honest you and I recognise that we're something tragic. We only have to read a few pages over in Genesis to find out why. The fall happened and sin dragged us back into the dust. We were made to rule the world, yet most of us struggle to rule our own diaries. God gave humans the goal of conquering the world, yet we find it difficult to keep the goals we set for our own lives. We were created for greatness, yet each of us has become something tragic before God. It almost seems like we have unlimited potential, yet we fail to master ourselves. Look at the headlines, actually you won't need to look that far! Look at our own lives. Broken relationships. Broken people. Broken countries. Broken homes. Broken hearts. It wasn't meant to be like this! You and I weren't created for this! God created us for glory. But sin has dragged us down into the dust. The curse from sin means from dust we came and to dust we return. God intended you to go from dust to glory!

In the New Testament, the writer to the Hebrews picks up this exact contradiction. In Hebrews 2:5-9, the writer quotes from Psalm 8 and then says, "we don't see everything subject to humans do we?"

5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. 6 But there is a place where someone has testified:

"What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
 a son of man that you care for him?
 7 You made them a little[a] lower than the angels;
 you crowned them with glory and honor
 8 and put everything under their feet." [b][c]

In putting everything under them, [d] God left nothing that is not subject to them. [e] Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.

That's true isn't it. We don't see humans ruling but we see them being ruled over?

We see tyranny, racism, and riots. We see ourselves being ruled over by our own greed, hatred and lust. We see ourselves being ruled over by the elements of the world, disease, sickness, and death. Sin truly has dragged us back into the dust hasn't it? But there is one man we see. We do see Jesus, as the writer to the Hebrews reminds us.

3. Christ the Image of God

We do see Jesus who plunged from heaven into the dust for you and I. We see this one man Jesus who ruled perfectly over himself. He never gave into temptation and the devil. This one man Jesus ruled perfectly over the natural elements, calming the storm, healing the sick, and raising the dead. Jesus is the image of the God, the exact imprint of God's nature. One of his disciple once asked him, "Lord, show us the Father." And Jesus replied, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father."

This one man Jesus came to rescue all men. He did it by leaving his eternal glory in heaven and plunging down into the dust. He did it by hanging on a Roman cross, covered in blood and dirt. He did it by dying and being buried in a tomb. He did it by conquering death when he rose from the dead. He went from dust to glory. And he is bringing many sons to glory with him.

Do you want to know what it means to be truly human? Look to Jesus. Do you want to know your destiny as a Christian, then look to Jesus! The goal of your salvation is to be conformed into the image of the Son. The Apostle Paul says 1 Corinthians 15,

"The first man was from the earth a man of dust [Adam]
 the second is from heaven [Jesus].
 Just as we have born the image of the man of dust...
 so we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."

The message of the gospel first drags you into the dust. It says you're a sinner. But it doesn't leave you there. If you have put your faith in Jesus and trusted in him, you are lifted up into the heavens with Christ. You are united to him and share in his glory. At the present time you are in your earthly body which reflects the dust. But you are in the process of being changed into the image of God. You are no longer ruled by sin. By the power of Christ in you, you are able to put sin to death. And one day soon you will be completely transformed into the image of the Son. When you see him face to face you will be changed into his image.

But now, set your minds on Jesus. Look at his glory as it is revealed in the Bible. Put off the old man which corrupts and put on Christ. Get ready for that great day when you will stand before the King of Glory and reign with him in the new heavens and earth.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for not leaving us in the dust to die but sending your Son to save us. Thank you that he came as our Redeemer and is leading us to glory. Conform us into his image. Help us to put to death the old man and put on the new man. We ask in Jesus name, amen.

Crown Him With Many Crowns - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=en7pOd9lx-M>

Consider Christ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TH1YlfxgbuQ>

Benediction.

Behold what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3).