

HUMAN! Hebrews 5:7-9

3/21/21 Pastor Bill Mosley

Loren Eiseley tells this story: One morning, after the moon and the wind had been just right, and many shellfish had been tossed up on the beach, a man was picking up starfish one by one and throwing them back into the sea.

Curious about what he was doing with the starfish while so many other people were busy collecting the shellfish someone asked him if he collected things on the beach.

"Only like this. I collect only for the living." And he threw another starfish back into the sea. he said -"See, I can help them..." The other person asked, "What difference can it possibly make in the world if you keep throwing starfish back into the ocean one at a time? There are so many."

The star thrower picked up yet another starfish & threw it into the water. He said, "It makes a difference to this one."

Today might be called "Humanity Sunday." It asks what it means to know the Lord, even in human weakness. As Jesus was human, with troubles in his soul which he took to God, so the believer can know God. This is where God & man meet: In Js, the source of salvation, forgiveness, eternal life.

The Letter to the Hebrews is a kind of misfit in the NT — it sits among the letters, but it's written in the style of an essay, and a lot like a sermon. It does more than any other book to link the New Covenant with the Old, and is full of Old Testament references, even some obscure

ones.

But it's closely reasoned and a fine example of good Greek writing. The anonymous writer states that Xy does not deny but fulfills the Old Testament, better than Judaism. Christ is better and greater than any other of the workings of God with man. He says perfect humanity is salvation.

But here are these verses stressing the human side of Jesus: He cries real tears, he asks to be saved from death, he suffers, he fears God, he obeys, AND HE IS MADE PERFECT IN ALL HIS WEAKNESS. It's the humanity of Jesus that makes the Christ our great High Priest. Jesus is what God meant by 'man' & what man means by God.

Newspaperman Sidney Harris wrote: "A person who is going to commit an inhuman act invariably excuses himself by saying, 'I'm only human, after all.'"

We say, "Oh, well, I'm only human," when we make a mistake. This is to signify that we are frail, and maybe we intend to do better, or know better, but what we end up with is an excuse to do it anyway, disregarding what ought to be.

Have you ever wondered what it means to be human? I suppose most of us just accept our humanity as a given fact, nothing we can do anything about, and it really doesn't make much difference anyway.

We have made of humanness something bad, and to say we are human is to admit that we are bad and so being bad is alright. This fuels today's civil religion, the

seed of humanism.

It's like we're remembering that Jesus said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" without remembering that he said it to his disciples as they slept in the Garden of Gethsemane while he prayed. He was not excusing their humanity, but calling them to a higher humanity, the humanity that he expressed before God that night in the garden.

Thus the writer of the Letter comments on Jesus's prayer -- true humanity begins in the fear of God. In Psalm 8, the psalmist asks of the creator, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" And the answer he comes to is that we are only a little less than God, for God has given us dominion over creation.

Does this sound bad? No! This is the true role of humanity as created in the Garden of Eden -- to walk with God, love him, serve him, and rule the earth.

The Garden of Gethsemane and the Garden of Eden. Two gardens, the wine-press and paradise. At opposite ends of the time-line of God's plan for mankind, but both examples of what God intended true humanity to be. Both child-like and Christ-like, humanity begins in the fear of God.

In the Garden of Eden, the man and the woman knew nothing apart from fellowship with God. They knew him as creator, as pure, as the one who brings order to life.

It's when they try to be more than God intended that the order is disturbed, the fellowship interrupted. When they try to get more than God intended them to have they lose what they did have -- a nobility and purity akin to that of God himself. Recognizing that nobility and purity is the fear of God.

It's not being afraid of God because of his power to judge, or power to punish, or even that he might be indifferent to such insignificant creatures as we. Although, that is scary.

What's really scary is realizing God's purity next our impurity. God's purity fills us with a sense of our own unworthiness. This fear should be a permanent part of our relationship to God. God has this effect on our anxiety, uneasy conscience, divided loyalties.

Realizing God's purity transforms a person's anxiety about himself & the world, changes all the little worries into truly little worries, & leaves him with one fear. a trembling adoration for the Lord, the Holy One.

True humanity begins in the fear of God. In the Garden, it meant paradise. In instead of out. It still does.

Hebrews says, being made perfect, Jesus became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. Would we see Jesus? What did he say when the Greeks asked that question? To see Jesus we must follow him to the cross. That is how he is made perfect, by the lifting up. The first man had life in perfection. Jesus out of his perfection gives us life. He is the wheat that died that we may eat bread today.

We find ourselves washed up on the beach, tossed on the seas of being "only human." And Jesus the starthrower, lifts each of us up and gives us his humanity, and says, "it makes a difference to this one." And he makes us truly human.

LORD make us truly human, saying no to everything that makes it more difficult to say yes to you. 1099 words