

## **A Little Lower Than the Angels**

Hebrews 2:5-9

### Who is this?

That is a question raised by Jesus' disciples about their Master.

You probably remember they were out in a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee.

While they were crossing a storm comes upon them. Mark describes it as a "furious squall."

Waves are crashing over the side of the boat and the disciples quickly become afraid for their lives.

I'm guessing most of them were far from Olympic swimmers and they are in the middle of the lake and they think their boat is about to sink.

They are afraid for the same reason that you and I become afraid, they are struggling to trust in the LORD.

Jesus, is different though. Do you remember what He is doing as the boat is in danger of sinking?

### Jesus is sleeping.

Not knowing what else to do His disciples wake Him up and say, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

Jesus then gets up and commands the wind and the waves saying "Quiet! Be still!"

At His command everything becomes "completely calm" the Bible says.

Now we might expect the disciples to breathe a sigh of relief or be rejoicing over their rescue, but the instead the Bible says they were "terrified".

They went from being afraid because of the storm to even more afraid of Jesus.

They ask each other "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

You see they know their bibles well enough to know that only God commands the wind and waves.

### That is one of the clearest accounts in the gospels that show Jesus' humanity and His divinity side by side.

He gets tired and needs to sleep. God doesn't do that people do that.

At the same time He has final authority over creation, only God has that.

This is, to my mind, the greatest mystery of the Christian faith that Jesus is truly God and truly human in one person.

Because that reality is beyond human understanding many people make the mistake of favouring one aspect of Jesus' person to the exclusion of the other.

There are those who deny Christ's divinity and who say He is merely a created being.

Some focus upon His divinity and reject His humanity.

If we are to believe the Bible, we must accept the reality that the LORD is both God and Man.

[Chapter one of Hebrews is in large part focused upon Jesus' divine nature. In comparing Jesus with angels it clearly shows Jesus to be incomparably great. Jesus is not to be compared with angels He is to be worshipped by them. While that truth needs to be believed without compromise, it is equally important that the humanity of our Lord is also held in high regard. That is the focus of the majority of Hebrews chapter 2. This morning we are going to look together at **verses 5-9**. In these verses we learn some important lessons about what it means to be a human being and what Jesus has accomplished by taking upon Himself genuine humanity. Again the writer quotes from the Old Testament and shows us this about people....]

**Point #1 – Human beings are lowly creatures upon whom God has set His affection (Verse 5-6).**

We probably have a better idea than any other civilization in history as to the vastness of the universe. In the grand scheme of things the whole of planet earth is like a spec of sand and we are a spec within a spec. And yet the One who sustains everything at every moment knows your name, He know everything about you and He cares.

*A couple of weeks ago we were talking about angels and we were reminded that they are impressive and powerful creatures.*

Despite their power though we are told this in **verse 5**.

"...the world to come" is likely the new creation that is hinted at in chapter one verses eleven to fourteen.

For all their power angels are not rulers they are servants.

Which raises the question, "Who is going to rule the world to come?"

He begins answering the question by quoting Psalm 8:4-6 which is a psalm about humanity.

The first thing we see in the quote is a couple of rhetorical questions which do something unexpected.

If we are talking about those who rule and have authority, we would expect to see something about greatness and power, but instead we read this **(verse 6)**.

*Those questions come in a context that suggests the answer to the question "What is man?" is nothing. Man (that is the whole human race) is nothing.*

Listen to the context of what comes before in Psalm 8 (**Psalm 8:3-4**).

Consider for a moment the heavens, the moon and the stars.

Of course there is much more to be considered, but just looking up at the night sky is enough to show us our smallness in the vastness of the universe. Even without a telescope and with all the light pollution around my house, I can still look up on a clear night and be amazed by what I see. According NASA's website scientists believe there are at least 100 billion stars just in the Milky Way Galaxy and they believe there are somewhere between two billion and two trillion galaxies in the universe.

That is astounding. What are we in comparison to that? To compare ourselves to a spec of sand would be generous in light of that reality.

Now the question doesn't end with "What is man?" The answer to that is we are insignificant in the vastness of the universe.

The question is "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"

The question is intended to express the Psalmist's marvelling at the fact that despite how small and insignificant we seem in the universe that the creator and sustainer of the entire universe takes pays attention to us and more than that He cares about us.

[Anyone who has ever done a home renovation has likely used the phrase, "No is going to notice that." I've said that many times and often times it is true. But I have also noticed that the more careful attention I pay to the things that most people miss the better things turn out. You see the ability to pay attention to and care about the details says far more about the goodness of the craftsman than it does about the detail itself.]

God's ability to take notice of even the smallest things in all the universe is unlimited. Even though we are insignificant in comparison to the vastness of the universe our great God takes note of us.

More than just taking note, He even cares about us.

We are alive this morning because Almighty God is actively at work in the universe giving commands and exercising His power so that we can take our next breath.

[Do you feel small today? Do you feel insignificant? Most people who feel that way also think that no one notices them and that no one cares. The bible's answer is that you are small you are insignificant but even so God knows you and cares about you. Here is a second lesson about humanity...]

**Point #2 – Human beings are lowly creatures who have great purpose (Verse 7-8a).**

Only upon people has God stamped His image and has given us the task to rule and subdue the whole earth for the sake of His glory.

What is quoted here from Psalm 8 takes us back to the beginning of creation (Verse 7-8a).

Again we are reminded of our lowliness with the comparison that is made between angels and people.

If we were to take the tallest, strongest, best looking person on the whole planet.

Let's take that a little farther. Let's say the tallest, strongest, best looking person who ever lived and put that person next to an angel from heaven our instant reaction would be to see the angel as a more impressive being.

But though we are "a little lower than the angels" it also says here that humanity has been "crowned with glory and honour."

What is that glory and honour? It is that human beings have been made in the image of God.

That phrase is said of nothing else in the whole of creation.

It means that as human beings we have the ability to display the communicable attributes of God unlike any other creature.

While there are a number of implications to that statement what is particularly in view in this text is God's putting everything "under the feet of human beings."

That is exactly what God says when He creates people in His image...Genesis 1:26-28.

That puts the biblical worldview completely at odds with the view of many in our day.

More and more people are being viewed as the problem upon planet earth.

People talk like if it were not for people the earth would be a lot better off.

This leads people to all kinds of godless thinking.

Ironically, it also leads to a completely meaningless view of environmentalism.

After all if everything, including people, just lives and dies without any greater purpose what is the point of saving the planet?

Human beings are not the problem with the planet, we are supposed to govern and use the planet in a way that reflects God's goodness to the greatest degree which serves the highest good of humanity.

Christians should care about clean air, clean water, the preservation of animals, and alike because we must see ourselves as caretakers of God's creation.

But we don't accomplish those goals by killing people off. We accomplish those goals through innovation and wise management so that people all over the world can enjoy what God has made.

[On a small scale I like to think of it like watching someone's house. Imagine someone asks you to watch over their house for a whole year. What if a plumbing pipe breaks? Are you just going to leave it? Are you going to cut the grass? Tend the garden? Keep the heat on? What would happen if you just ate all the food, let all the bills go unpaid, and ignored any repair that needed to be done? Things would be pretty bad by the time the owner of the home got back. If your goal is to use all you can and walk away you are not doing your job.]

That is how we should see the Earth. God has asked us to govern it for His glory and the good of all people.

People are not the problem on the planet, people are the solution!

[I think we can all agree that we haven't done a very good job of it. From the moment sin entered the world until today we have been dealing with our own evil desires as well as a creation under a curse. When we try and grow food, we get weeds. There is famine, disease, natural disaster, murder, theft, greed, and on and on we can go. That is why I am thankful that the writer of Hebrews shows us that Psalm 8 is about more than humanity in general, it is about Jesus in particular. We have to know something of humanity so that we can see this third lesson from our text which is this...]

### **Point #3 – God's purpose for people is fulfilled in Christ.**

In His humanity Jesus is what God intends us to be and He makes it possible for us to be restored to that great purpose.

#### *Psalm 8 begins to be applied in the middle part of verse 8.*

When we get to verse 9 we will see that the "him" to whom God subjects "everything" here at the end of verse eight is not humanity generally but Jesus specifically.

That is to say that God is absolutely determined that everything in all of creation whether seen or unseen comes under the authority of Christ.

That is certainly true at this very second.

As we have already learned from Hebrews, in His Divinity Jesus is "sustaining all things by his powerful word."

That means everything ultimately depends on His power to exist, which in turn must mean that He possesses the greatest amount of power, which in turn means that nothing in all of creation can compel Him to do anything, which means that He is sustaining all things because He wants to.

That is important to understand because that means He can stop sustaining anything He wishes whenever He wishes according to His own will.

That means that He has ultimate authority over all of creation right now!

#### *While that is true, we must also consider what it says here at the end of verse 8.*

At the present time we do not see everything subjected to Jesus.

It appears to us like a great deal of creation, humanity in particular, is living in rebellion against the authority of Christ.

So if what we observe at the present time seems at odds with what God is saying about everything coming under the rule of Jesus, how do we know that Jesus' rule is happening and will happen in the future? **(Verse 9).**

There is a lot of truth to chew on in that verse.

Notice the phrase "was made a little lower than the angels".

That is an action that happened in the past (Jesus is conceived in Mary's womb) that is still true in the present (The Lord is still human and will be so forever).

We know that He is right now "crowned with glory and honour" on account of His suffering death.

Death is one of the main reasons why we cannot fulfill God's purpose for us in a final sense.

No matter how well we do at ruling this creation (and we should try to do well) we can never overcome death which means that we are ultimately subject to the creation rather than the other way around.

Jesus, however, is "crowned with glory" meaning He is given the right to rule after He has died which means He has conquered death and that is clearly demonstrated in His resurrection from the dead.

That leads to the writer declaring that "by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

To understand that phrase we need to understand that Jesus, in His humanity, would have lived forever because He never once rebelled against God.

Human beings, you and I included die because we disobey God. Each one of us deserves God eternal judgment and a part from Jesus people remain under His just condemnation.

Jesus though doesn't die because He deserves it, but because He is truly human He can be killed.

To taste death means He really experienced it, but He does so because He takes upon Himself the penalty that we deserve.

He tastes death so that we can escape it.

By doing so He guarantees that in the world to come everything will be visibly under His rule and we will have the privilege of participating in and enjoying His reign over creation forever if we put our faith and trust in Him.

Do you see? In the humanity of Jesus, God's purpose for humanity is fully restored and realized for eternity. No one else can do that.

[Have you ever heard about the sword in the stone? It is a legend about King Arthur. As the story goes there was a sword in a stone that could only be pulled out by one worthy enough to be king and only Arthur could pull it out. There are so many stories like that aren't there? Stories where people are waiting on a hero, on a long foretold rescuer who alone can make a difference. Why do we like stories like that so much? Because that is the story of the world. It needs a rescuer and Jesus is that Saviour.]

It is the rule and reign of King Jesus that finally and perfectly fulfills God's intention for humanity.

To live upon the earth in fellowship with God, bearing His image for His glory and our eternal good.

*What are we as human beings? We are specs in the universe, but even so God sets His affection upon those who belong to Jesus.*

We are stamped with the image of God and therefore we have an incredibly high and noble purpose.

Sadly, on account of our rejection of God we fail to fulfill that purpose, but praise God, He can do what seems impossible to us. He made Jesus "A Little Lower than the Angels" and so in Him everything that God made us to be will come to pass.