

THE GOSPEL

GOD'S GREAT RESCUE



WEEK 2: HUMANITY – SACRED, BROKEN MIRRORS

Last week, we saw how God is the God of great tensions...the God of the yet. He is...

- just and yet merciful.
- independent and yet relational.
- transcendent and yet incarnational.
- righteous and yet loving.

This week, we look at who we are in light of the fact that God created us and wants to be in relationship with us.

"The gospel is unique in its description of humanity in terms of its optimism and realism. According to the gospel, humanity is more precious, valuable and dignified than we dream is possible, and yet is simultaneously more fallen, broken and sinful than we fear is possible. Only the gospel lovingly describes and offers solutions to that tension."

1. ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL, HUMANITY IS MORE SIGNIFICANT AND MORE VALUABLE THAN WE EVER DREAMED

- Read Genesis 1:26–29

Genesis describes God as the creator and source of all life. It is God's own words that tell us humanity is created differently to the rest of creation, because we carry the *Imago Dei*, the image of God himself. This status of being higher than the rest of creation has major implications:

- All human life is sacred and therefore has equal dignity.
 - All human life is equal in value and therefore has equal worth.
 - All human life has divine intent and therefore has equal purpose.
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- ❖ Q: Why is it true that, when we strip people of their God-given identity, they will begin to act in undignified ways?
 - ❖ Q: In what ways do we, as a society, do this to people?
 - ❖ Q: In what ways are we personally guilty of not living out what the gospel says to be true about our equal worth? (E.g. How do you treat people of a different racial or social class, or a different job rank? Think about someone that you know in a station above you, as well as someone in a station below you. Compare the way in which you treat them, the kind of time, courtesy, energy, kindness and the attitude you extend towards them both.)
 - ❖ Q: Why is it true that both the street sweeper and the doctor in the Sandton Paediatric ward, have equal purpose?

Personal Reflection: It is one thing to agree intellectually with these statements – that is, to say we all have equal dignity, worth and purpose. But what about when our hearts and behaviour reveal that, deep down, we don't really believe it?

- ❖ Q: What does repentance and faith look like for us here?

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2. ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL, HUMANITY IS MORE FALLEN AND MORE BROKEN THAN WE EVER FEARED

- Read Psalm 139:13–18, Genesis 3:6–13 & Romans 3:23

We have difficulty in holding tensions in our faith, but we have to learn to do so, because Christianity is full of them. Though humanity is sacred, each and every one of us is also fallen in our very nature. And because of our profound brokenness, we are hopeful about change but also realistic about progress. Having this double diagnosis is important for change but is only the first step. The problem is that our sin is in us, and that we cannot escape it by trying harder. Our own sin is the biggest issue that we all face in life, and it is the cause of most of our problems.

- ❖ Q: Why is it important that we first know our inherent worth as image bearers of God before we look at the deep and tragic problem of our sinful nature?
- ❖ Q: Why is our biggest problem the sin that resides within us, rather than the sin of other people around us?
- ❖ Q: Why is Paul always reminding us that we are weaker and far worse than we even think we are, and that we cannot fix ourselves? And why is that actually good news?

3. ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL, GOD LOVES AND SAVES VALUABLE AND YET BROKEN HUMANITY

- Read Romans 3:23–26

God did not leave humanity with the double diagnosis: he provided the solution. Christ entered into human form, and got to experience both sides of humanity; the wonder of being an image bearer of God, alongside the futility and frailty to which humanity has been subjected since the fall. In living out the perfect design for humanity (living in perfect obedience to God's law), he came to restore the broken "mirrors" of our image bearing. He did what we could not do, and then he paid the price for our sin through his death on the cross. He accomplished both, and in so doing performed the perfect rescue mission for humanity. This is why the gospel is called the GOOD NEWS!

- ❖ Q: Why were we unable to bear the image of God after the fall?
- ❖ Q: How did Christ restore us as God's image-bearers?
- ❖ Q: Why is the gospel good news to broken people who no longer bear the image of God in the way in which they were designed to?

Personal Reflection:

- ❖ Q: How would you explain this element of the gospel (i.e. the restored image-bearer) to a friend who does not know Christ?