



# Humanity

Genesis 1:26-30

TRINITY PULPIT

**L**ecrae Devaughn Moore (1979 - ), simply known as Lecrae, is an American Christian rapper, songwriter, record producer and actor. He is the president, co-owner and co-founder of the independent record label Reach Records, and the co-founder and president of the non-profit organization ReachLife Ministries.

At a conference appearance (PASSION 2015), Lecrae told the story of a recent trip to Hollywood during which he stopped into a department store to buy a T-shirt. Not a fancy silk or diamond studded shirt—just a plain cotton T-shirt. As he pulled one from the rack, he noticed the price tag and thought to himself that it must be mis-marked. So he pulled another only to find the same price on the tag. Incredulous, he approached the salesperson to question the exorbitant price—\$640!

The salesperson told him the price was correct—\$640 was the “special” sale price!

He began to question what could possibly be so special about this T-shirt to warrant such a value. “Am I going to be healed of some disease when I put this on? Am I going to get some kind of super-power?” She replied, “It’s the designer’s name on it that adds value to it.”

It is the designers name on it that gives it value. In Genesis 1 we read:

*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, 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.*

Today we are turning our attention to humanity. We have been looking at the doctrine of God and we have explored God as creator, God as Trinity, and God as a revealing God. Today we turn to the next part of our central verse John 3:16.

Lets say it again together:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever would believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

For God so loved...THE WORLD.

The word here is not simply people but the Cosmos. God so loved all of creation, including all of the inhabitants, that he sent his one and only Son, Jesus. This wonderful verse that we many times personalize as you and me is much more than you and me. It is everyone that has ever lived but even more than this, it is the insight that God is not only redeeming people but also God is going to redeem all of creation. God is going to make all things new through Jesus.

For our purpose today let’s focus on the inhabitants of this world. Let’s focus on humanity. For God so loved the world, including all of humanity, that he sent his one and only son. What is the doctrine of humanity and why is it important?

To help us, we turn back to creation itself, back to those opening words of scripture, as the story of creation follows from day 1 to day 6, and on that 6th day God does something amazing. God has created the oceans, land, and sky. He has created the animals and creatures of the land and the deep. God has created the heavens with the moon, sun, and stars. Then we come to the last part of day six and God takes pause.

The way that this is written is as if God, after creating all else, pauses for a moment

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and says, now, for the finale. Now for the crowning act. Now for what we have all been waiting for. It is as though the vastness of the universe and the beauty of this earth are only a prelude to what is coming next. God has been speaking and creating. Then at the end of day 6, God's language and self talk changes.

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In this incredible moment at the end of creation God creates humanity. Let me share three thoughts with you today on God's creation of humanity and the Doctrine of humanity.

First, we are created in the image of God. God says let us make humankind in our image and likeness. There has been much said about the terms image and likeness. The words are two different words but, interestingly, they are very similar. Throughout the centuries, many scholars have tried to say that the image of God is something that lasts. The image of God is our special place in creation. The image of God is the thought of reason, consciousness, and us being like God in will. The likeness of God is more spiritual. The likeness of God is more the idea of being without sin and like God. So, if this is true then in the fall, in the moment when man and woman sinned, what became lost is not the image of God but the likeness of God. We know that the likeness of God, however, remains after the fall because there are references to the humanity in the likeness of God. What we can say for sure is that the image of God and the likeness of God apply to us all. All people everywhere for all time are as human beings, created in the image and likeness of God. Yet, this image and likeness is marred and imperfect because of the choice of sin.

What does it mean that we are created in the image and likeness of God? First, it means that everyone has dignity and everyone must have humility.

A seminary professor writes about a newspaper article he read called, "The Irony of Being Human"

- two stories:

First, a young woman who had left her husband and children to be with another man, who then left her — alone, abandoned, her life falling apart, and in despair — took her life in a hotel room. She left a note that said, "Don't cry for me, I'm not even human anymore."

*God so loved all of creation, including all of the inhabitants, that he sent his one and only Son, Jesus.*

In the convention center of that same hotel, on that same night, a group of adherents to the new-age religious movement gathered. After a number of speeches, the crowd was riled up and

a celebrity led them all in a chant, "I am God! I am God! I am God!"

The article concluded, "The irony of being human, is that people in the same time and place can have such contradictory views of themselves."

Pratt said, We don't know what to think of ourselves. Some of us feel so worthless that we can hardly stand to live another minute. Others are so full of self-importance that they lift hands in praise of their own divinity. One says, "I am nothing." Another says, "I am everything." One says, "I'm below human — mere animal; dirt." The other says "I'm above human — divine."

Everyone has dignity. This applies to everyone who is here today. Some of you might be here and you have very little self-esteem. Maybe you have been body-shamed as a young boy or girl. Maybe you don't think you have measured up to others. Maybe you struggle socially, or maybe no one has ever really told you they loved you, or those who have uttered those words have mistreated you. You think you don't measure up and that you are unlovable. John 3:16 and Genesis 1:26 says differently.

They say you are created in the image of the almighty God. John says because you belong to the created order, God loves you and has sent Jesus out of this deep love for you.

C.S. Lewis wrote:

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, and civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with,

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marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption.

My friends, there is no one on this earth that does not carry the dignity of being created in the very image of God. So here is an incredible concept. Every interaction is a sacred interaction. It might be so lost in sin that it is almost impossible to notice, but if we are all created in the image of God, as God's word teaches, then each person is a person of dignity.

However, it also means that our being created demands humility. Humility toward God who created us and toward one another. We are God's special creation, but we are still creation and thus, since we are not the creator, then it only makes sense that the one who created us deserves our worship and lives. It is the old saying that there is one thing we all know: there is a God and I am not God.

The doctrine of humanity says we are all created in God's image and thus we have our identity with God. However, creation also reminds us that we have purpose. Many scholars have suggested that the term image and likeness have to do with a statue or created image of God. Thus, when you see humanity, it is representation of God. In addition, especially the word likeness has a meaning of a shadow. Thus although we are not the full revelation of the likeness of God, we are God's representative on this earth. We have purpose - the purpose of God. In creation we find this invitation to purpose.

We are created to rule over or tend to God's creation. Humanity is placed in a place of ruling over creation. We are to give care to all God has created and in addition the first commandment of the Bible is to join God in creation. Genesis says God created humanity in God's likeness and created us both male and female.

We are reminded that both male and female, men and women, carry the same image and likeness of God. We are reminded that God created us male and female for a purpose and that is to join God as

co-creators in this world. The first commandment is to go multiply. God's order is that there is male and female and that difference is not about dignity or worth but it is for purpose - to join God in God's creation.

Humanity not only has the identity of the image of God, but also it is commanded to find life's meaning in joining God in the rule and care of creation and the participation in creation.

So let me just say in a very succinct way, we do not know life's - real life's - purpose, until we find our purpose in God's commands and invitation. My friends, that is why we can chase everything in this world and be empty. This is why we can come to the end of our dreams and find them to be nightmares. When we chase the purpose we have established for self we are empty. Jesus said what do you gain in gaining the world and losing your soul?

Yet, when we seek the Kingdom of God first all things are added to us. Why? That is why we were created. In fact, Paul says we are created for the very purpose of inheriting eternal life.

The Doctrine of humanity says we find our identity and purpose in God.

Finally, the Doctrine of Humanity reminds us that we are sinful and in need of God. We were created in the image and likeness of God but we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have marred the very image of God. After sin, the work and purpose of man and woman became difficult. Remember the punishment for Adam and Eve? It was that work becomes toilsome and childbearing becomes difficult. Our purpose, to tend creation and multiply, becomes difficult after sin. We have sinned as human beings and we need forgiveness.

So here is the good news. Although we have marred the image of God through sin, God sent Jesus. As Paul puts it, God is reconciling the world to himself, not counting our sins against us.

That is why we come to the Lord's Table today. We come to the Lord's Table to be reminded that God has reconciled us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

As we come to the table today we are reminded

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that first we are loved by God. You are created in the image of God and you are of worth to God. The Lord's Table reminds you of your incredible worth to God. The Lord's Table is a reminder that you are invited to find purpose in Christ. You are invited to be reminded that you are to participate in sharing the Good News of Jesus. God has reconciled the world to himself in Jesus and now makes his appeal through us. That is our purpose and that is our mission.

Finally, we are reminded that here we find forgiveness.

I love the fact that we call it the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table. There is something inviting about those words. The supper is a place of invitation and

intimacy. The supper is a place where you invite people to come and join and take a deep breath and all the pretense breaks down. It is a place to know and be known. It is a table meaning there is a place for you. In fact, there is a place for everyone. This is a place of invitation. All can come.

Will you come? Will you come and be reminded that you are created in the image of God. You are a person of worth. Will you come and be reminded that you will find life when you put Jesus back at the center? Join God in the mission of Jesus. Will you come and find forgiveness?

For God so loved the world — yes, the whole world but also it is true, all people — you and me. ▲



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Trinity Baptist Church  
4815 Six Forks Rd • Raleigh, NC 27609 • (919) 787-3740

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