

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**The power of Christ revealed over the human condition**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - January 18, 2015**

**The Human Condition**

Have you heard that term before? What exactly is the human condition? It is the stuff of poetry, film, music and even dance. If you like Eric Clapton blues, then you are acquainted with the human condition. Philosophers, politicians, economists, theologians, sociologists and scientists all weigh in on the human condition. The way I understand it is that the human condition is kind of a dance between what we as humanity wants or desires and what we as humanity actually seem to achieve or get. Philosophers and theologians tell us that all people of every race and culture throughout all of our history have wanted the same transcendental things; **Truth, Beauty and Goodness**. Different from every other form of life and being is that we long for these three things.

**The Transcendentals: Truth, Beauty and Goodness**

Now I actually think that this is a pretty good summary and what we know as Christians is that *outside of Christ*, our pursuit of these things always ends in disappointment and even tragedy. We actually have hurt ourselves and each other as we try to find these things on our own. We find, in our fallen condition that the pursuit becomes at best a benign disappointment and at worst a deadly and violent struggle to take or steal what we want in hopes of it satisfying me. We experience want and death, working here to get what I want over here – only to find it does not really satisfy for very long or the fleeting pleasure slips away. Thomas Hobbes in his seminal socio-political work “Leviathan” sums up the human condition not by our lofty pursuit but by the tragic end result:

***In such condition there is consequently . . . continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” (Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan – Oxford University Press. Chapter VIII, p9)***

Even God has weighed in on the human condition. The Preacher tells us in Scripture:

**Ecclesiastes 1:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,  
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

<sup>3</sup> What does man gain by all the toil  
at which he toils under the sun?

The Hebrew term *hebel*, translated *vanity* or *vain*, is more specifically a “mist,” “vapor,” or “mere breath,” and metaphorically to something that is fleeting or elusive. What we want is a mist or vapor and we cannot have it here even if we mine the earth to its very core in trying.

***Now – don’t give up hope.*** In the words of Christ; ***“Do not fear, only believe!”***

What we are going to discover again today is that Christ has power. We have learned that Christ has power over the spirit world and even power over death, and now we will find out that Jesus has the creative power to redeem the human condition. We read about it in Mark 6, Luke 9, Matthew 14 and John 6 - an amazing story of the miraculous feeding of the 5,000, the only miracle accounted for in each gospel account of Jesus’ life. We are going to take a break from the Mark passage today to take a deeper look than what Mark provides us

**John 6:4-15**

Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. <sup>5</sup> Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” <sup>6</sup> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, “Two

hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.”<sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him,<sup>9</sup> “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”<sup>10</sup> Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.

<sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.<sup>12</sup> And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.”<sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten.<sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

<sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

### ***“Jesus, moved by compassion . . .” Mark account***

Jesus sees our human condition and it breaks his heart. Over and over we read that Jesus is a compassionate man. He feels things strongly; he is an emotional man who feels deeply. In the gospel of Mark alone we read of his compassion and how he acts out of his compassion.

- **Mark 6:34** When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.
- **Mark 8:2** I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat.
- **Mark 1:40-41** A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”
- **Luke 7:12-15** As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out -- the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise!” The dead man sat up and began to speak. And *Jesus* gave him back to his mother.

The crowd chases him, not because they want to worship him because he is the Compassionate Creator God but because they want free lunch. But remember Christ knows better than all of us combined what futility and vanity it is to seek after a full tummy, just to satisfy a temporary want. And this time he offers them the real answer to their human condition – Himself.

### ***John 6:24-27***

<sup>24</sup> So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.”<sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.”

Jesus is clearly saying, I care for you but it is not about your stomach.

### ***The human condition from the very beginning has led ultimately to death and Jesus is about life***

On our own our efforts bring us death because of our evil intentions and pursuits and God sees that.

### ***Genesis 6:5-6***

<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

But Jesus offers the Transcendentals: the eternal hopes we all long for - life, truth, beauty and goodness. We go on to read in our account:

**John 6:47-51**

<sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

Jesus is saying he has the power to redeem our human condition.

**Christ has the power to redeem our/my human condition**

The contrast could not be more clear:

**John 10:10**

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy (*and he leaves us with a nasty brutish and short life*) I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (*one of truth beauty and goodness*)

**A church having a heart for life**



It means standing for life in a culture of death. A church that stands for life would speak into a culture that is disinterested in the human trafficking of children. A culture that casually withholds education or food from impoverished or marginalizes the mentally ill and physically disabled. A church that stands for life would speak into a culture of death that takes the lives of the innocent unborn.

I want to speak into this subject of the human condition for a bit. This is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and once a year the church takes this time to ponder over and pray for the value of human life.

- We have all been impacted by abortion. Since 1973 there have been 57 million babies aborted and based on national statistics, that means that of the 200 here in this room now, many of us have been directly impacted. In talking about this subject I am not trying to float a guilt trip or open a deep wound. In fact, where this conversation is going is that Jesus has come to rescue us and forgive us who have been hurt by the human condition of abortion.
- But I also want to say that many of us have been deceived into thinking that because abortion was made legal in 1973 that it somehow became moral at the same time. God says no. God is a God of life, and I believe that this national claim to exercise our personal rights has resulted in a grave injustice.
- Abortion grieves God and I believe that it is an evil of outrageous proportions. This is not a political conversation with you, this is a spiritual conversation. God is a God of life and we cannot reconcile this national habit of abortion with the Biblical mandate to defend the innocent and to protect life made in the image of God.

Interview w Alternatives

Let me suggest five ways for you to consider responding today

1. Submit yourself to God, being a visible and audible Christian;
2. Pray earnestly and regularly for awakening in the churches;
3. Use your imagination and prayerful mind to see abortion for what it really is;
4. Support alternatives to abortion with money and time and prayers; and
5. Use your democratic privileges of free speech to press for legal protection for the unborn.

One last time, the human condition is a desperate condition of want and death without Christ. But Christ has the power to rescue us from our human condition. However - and this is going to be hard for some of you to hear – However, feeding every hungry tummy some lunch, healing every blind person, cleansing every leper, finding a home for every homeless person and saving every unborn child is empty and meaningless, *a vapor of activity*– **unless in the process of that activity we point back to Christ – our Manna from Heaven, the Bread of Life, Truth incarnate, Beauty made flesh and the infinite and perfect Goodness of God in the form of Person.**

The Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga has written:

*As the Christian sees things, God does not stand idly by, coolly observing the suffering of His creatures. He enters into and shares our suffering. He endures the anguish of seeing his Son, the second person of the Trinity, consigned to the bitterly cruel and shameful death of the cross. Some theologians claim that God cannot suffer. I believe they are wrong. God's capacity for suffering, I believe, is proportional to his greatness; it exceeds our capacity for suffering in the same measure as his capacity for truth and goodness exceeds ours. Christ was prepared to endure the agonies of hell itself; and He was prepared to accept this suffering in order to overcome sin, and death, and the evils that afflict our world, and to confer on us a life more glorious than we can imagine.*

In a moment we will sing a wonderful confession of faith, a song that testifies of our new human condition, of our found and saved status in Christ. We will remind each other with our singing that we do not trust the human efforts of humanity to rescue us from ourselves but instead we will trust Christ alone.

**No guilt in life no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand**

**Benediction verse**

**Col. 3:12 - 13**

<sup>12</sup>Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

**Discussion questions:**

**What do you think best defines the "Human Condition"? Maybe a better question is *what forms the human condition?***

**Dave mentioned the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and his thoughts on the positive side of the human condition and the pursuit of the so called Transcendentals: Truth, Beauty and Goodness. Do you think everyone really wants these kinds of values? How is it that beauty and goodness seem 'to be in the eyes of the beholder?' Is truth really absolute?**

**Then Dave spoke of the perversion of these hopes and the reality that life is, "Nasty, Brutish and Short." (Thomas Hobbes)? Is that more the reality?**

**Christ has come to save us from ourselves and our human condition. Do you see the feeding of the 5000 as a way that Jesus was trying to address the human condition? Or was it something else entirely?**

**Re-read the account of the miracle. What are some of the parts of the story that stick out for you that perhaps you did not see before?**

**Dave said:**

“Feeding every hungry tummy some lunch, healing every blind person, cleansing every leper, finding a home for every homeless person and saving every unborn child is empty and meaningless, *a vapor of activity*– **unless in the process of that activity we point humanity back to Christ.**”

**What do you think of that idea?**

**Do you think that the reality of abortion on demand and the idea that our culture is a culture of death is an overstatement? Has the life issues been overshadowed by the politics of abortion? How so?**

**What do you think is an appropriate Christian response/4Cs response to the reality of abortion in our country and the world? What other 'life issues' demand our culture transforming attention?**

**Additional notes:**



This Byzantine mosaic is preserved under a modern church today, but it was once part of a church which commemorated Jesus' feeding of the 5000. The artist was apparently unacquainted with the fish in the lake as none have two dorsal fins.

The Byzantine pilgrims were mistaken in locating this miracle here because Scripture says that it took place in a remote place by Bethsaida. The Byzantine Church built in 350, expanded in 480 with these tiles, was destroyed in 618 by Persians



Two miles west of Capernaum is what Josephus referred to as the "well of Capernaum." Undoubtedly a popular fishing spot of the locals because of its famous "seven springs," Heptapegon (today the name has been corrupted to Tabgha) is the traditional location for several episodes in Jesus' ministry.



Plain of Bethsaida several miles from the sea as it is today