Believe: “How Does God See Us?”
John 3:16

We are on week 7 of our Believe Series, and the question of the week is, “How Does God See Us?”

As Christians, we can look to John 3:16 for our answer. Let’s read this famous scripture together:
“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Because of this powerful scriptural promise, here is our belief statement for the week: “I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.”

This morning I will unpack the question of how God sees humanity under three subheadings: 1) Why the question of how God sees humanity is the right question; 2) How God sees humanity according to the scriptures; 3) What a correct understanding of humanity will require of you and me…the church.

I. First, **Why is this question of how God sees us so important?** Why spend time on a subject that, for most of us who are Christians, might seem obvious and even a bit redundant?

The main reason is this: the value of a human life is not a given. Most of us have been raised in a Judeo/Christian context, and that is the only reason that the value of a human life seems obvious to us. However, if you were to study human civilizations over the past 5000 years, if you could take the time to travel to all the other countries in the world today, you would come to appreciate the fact that many of the world’s cultures have a very different view of humanity than that which we find in cultures formed around a Judeo/Christian worldview.

Take the value of women, for example. In our Judeo/Christian culture, women are highly esteemed and valued. I know some of you women might take issue with that statement, but I would suggest you compare the value of a girl’s life in America to that of other nations such as China, India, Cambodia, and the Arab nations. To this day it is extremely common for infant girls in China and India to be aborted or even tossed into trash cans because those cultures value male children that much over female children. In many parts of the world such as Cambodia, parents sell their little girls to traffickers for an average price of $90 because they need the money and it is a socially accepted practice to sell their girls. In the Arab Muslim world, the literacy rate among women is only 55% because either the women are not allowed to go to school, or they are given into marriage when they are 9 or 10 and their education comes to an end.
Another area that is greatly influenced by our view of humanity is the plight of the poor. In countries formed around a Judeo/Christian worldview, the poor are cared for through a myriad of services, shelters, tax benefits, food stamps, and other efforts to help the poor survive and hopefully escape the grips of poverty. I realize that those programs and services may not always be effective, but they are there because the poor continue to have value in our society by the mere fact that the poor are human beings who have intrinsic value. In India, as is the case in many cultures around the world, if you are born poor, that is your problem. There is no concept that the gods love the poor, nor is the government all that concerned about creating services and programs for the poor. In the religion of Hinduism there is a rumor that if you help the poor you can gain good Karma and advance your position in the next life, so many people give alms to the poor, but only in an effort to better their own standing with the gods. No Hindu would ever tell you that the poor have equal value to the upper class Brahmin…that would be a completely foreign concept to those living in India and in many other countries around the world.

In the western world, consider the view of humanity that logically derives from a Darwinian worldview---the conviction that life evolved from natural, unguided processes over millions and billions of years. The philosophical ramifications of a “godless, impersonal” universe has very significant implications on our concept of humanity. For example, the naturalistic explanation for human life gave birth to the practice of eugenics. Eugenics is the science of improving a human population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics. Within a naturalistic worldview, Eugenics is the logical assertion that human value is associated with genetic assets such as height, strength, beauty, and intelligence. Why? Because, as the theory goes, these are the people who are desirable for human reproduction and the survival of the fittest. Humans who are short, ugly, weak, less intelligent or handicapped are considered a drain on those resources necessary to preserve the species; it is assumed that their offspring are not as likely to survive and thrive; so, in theory, humans with such undesirable characteristics should not be allowed to reproduce…and if possible, they should not be allowed to be born, and in extreme cases, they should not be allowed to live. The greatest example of eugenics was Nazi Germany and the attempt to create a pure, Arian race free from black skin, handicaps, homosexuals, and of course, Jews. The perspective of humanity which led the Nazi’s to slaughter 6 million souls is the same philosophical perspective that inspired Margaret Sanger to create an organization called Planned Parenthood…an organization that continues to perform over 300,000 abortions a year in the United States. Make no mistake: Planned Parenthood was founded as a vehicle for eugenics with the intent of limiting the reproduction of black, urban women…those whom Margaret Sanger estimated were of less value than well educated, wealthy white women.

Communism was also birthed out of a godless, naturalistic worldview in which the value of the state was esteemed greater than the value of a human life. When the State determined the value of people, they also assumed the power to determine who would live and who would die, and
consequently 20 million souls were snuffed out in Communist countries such as the Soviet Union, Romania, and China in the 20th century.

Consider also the tribal genocides that occur somewhat regularly around the world when one tribe comes to the conclusion that the competing tribe is no longer to be considered human. Who could forget the massive genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994 when the Hutu tribe came to believe that the Tutsi tribe were nothing more than “cockroaches?” That perspective of humanity led to the slaughter of a million souls in just over 3 months.

You see, how we view humanity is critically important to the way we live our lives, how we respond to people who are different from us, how we treat those in minority groups, and, of course, how we create laws. Take the issue of abortion for example. All Americans agree that murdering a human being is wrong and against the law. However, the question about when life begins is at the heart of this debate, as is the value of an infant’s life over the value of a woman’s right to terminate her pregnancy. Obviously it is this very question of HUMANITY that lies at the heart of this debate, and even now our country is waiting to see if a new supreme court judge will shift our country’s view of humanity and the laws concerning legalized abortion.

We should acknowledge that Americans are becoming accustomed to the Supreme Court legislating answers to our world view questions such as the value of a human life, the establishment of same-sex marriage, and the indoctrination of a humanist, naturalistic worldview in our public-school curriculums. However, as we’ve seen over the past several weeks, the Supreme Court’s opinion on any particular issue is up for grabs depending upon who is seated on the Supreme Court. Which means the opinion of any human court is really NOT authoritative, right? Whatever opinion that is rendered at any given moment in history is simply the majority opinion of those people entrusted to make those decisions by the President and a simple majority of the Senate, and those elected to the office of President or Senator are simply those who gained the highest number of votes at any given election.

Such is why the question we are asking today is the RIGHT question to be asking, and it is an incredibly important question: “How Does God See Us?” How does God define the value of a human life? When does life begin according to God? How does God view the value of women, children, minorities, people with handicaps or those who are impoverished? How does God view those who are rich and powerful who enjoy luxuries and a life of ease? How does God view murderers, rapists, and terrorists? What does God think about humanity? If God exists, it stands to reason that we should align our convictions about humanity around God’s convictions of humanity, right?

**II. So…How does God see us?**
1) First, God sees all human beings as having intrinsic value because humans bear His image. As we read in Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them.”

Again, please do not allow familiarity to breed contempt for this foundational truth statement found in God’s Word. In light of human history, the Judeo/Christian understanding that both men and women were created in God’s image is HUGE! I really cannot overstate the importance of this biblical doctrine that establishes our essential view of humanity. Those who hold to a biblical worldview see human beings as those who bear the image of God…that is why we must assume that every human being is beautiful, intelligent, personal, and intrinsically valuable. And notice: women are equal to men in this regard. Women bear the image of God at exactly the same measure as men. If you could jump into a time machine and step back into the ancient world some 3500 years ago, you would be astonished by this revelation, because in NO culture anywhere in the ancient world would you find an egalitarian perspective regarding the value of men and women, nor would you find such a strong value associated with every human life by the mere fact that they are human beings, created in God’s image. That is a unique understanding of humanity, found only in the cultures birthed out of the biblical revelation that we just read in Genesis 1.

2) Next, God sees all human beings as having more worth than all other creatures…even more worth than creation itself. In Genesis 1 we read: And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Human beings have been given dominion; human beings have been given a value that is beyond that of whales or trees or dogs or even…fish.

Jesus says the same thing on multiple occasions in the NT. Jesus asks in Matthew 12:11, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep?”

Again, Jesus says in Matthew 6, “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Father in heaven feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

Jesus tells His disciples in Matthew 10, “Are not sparrows sold two for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

When we read the scriptures that describe the end of this age, the description is violent and horrific. We read in 2 Peter 3:10: But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the
heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Think about it: both the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire, and creation will come to an end as we know it. There will be no more sun, no more moon, no more planets, no more animals, fish, birds, trees, and no more sea…but not so with human beings. According to the scriptures, all of creation is expendable and even replaceable…God will provide a new heaven and a new earth, according to Rev. 21…but humans are not expendable. Humans are not replaceable. Come what may, humans will go on…they live forever…they have God’s image…and thus they are worth more to God than all of creation.

3) Next, God sees all human beings as morally accountable and without excuse. From the moment that Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit in the garden, opening their eyes to the moral law of good and evil, human beings became morally accountable to God. All throughout the Bible we find a holy and just God making His moral law clear; and He makes clear a time of judgment is coming for all people as well. As Paul writes in Romans 1: For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Paul writes in Romans 2 that “the works of the law are written on the hearts of men” and later in Romans 3 Paul writes, “We know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight…for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

All humans beings are accountable to God, and all human beings…should they be held up to the righteous standard of God’s moral law, will be sentenced to the justice that they deserve.

4) Which leads us to the next observation: God sees all human beings as those who need a Savior. Hundreds of years before Christ, God spoke through His prophet Isaiah who summed up the human predicament and God’s plan to do something about it. In Isaiah 53 we read, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

All people everywhere…all human beings…need a Savior—one who will take on the iniquity of us all, because we have all sinned, we have all turned away, and not one single human being will escape God’s justice without this Savior who intercedes for sinful humanity.
This biblical description of the human dilemma is, again, so familiar to many of you that you now fail to appreciate how radically unique and important this biblical perspective is. In most cultures around the world, you have the good people and the bad people. You have the people who are favored by the gods and those who are cursed by the gods. You have those have done more good than bad and deserve to go to heaven, and those who have done more bad than good and deserve to go to hell. But notice: the way God sees humans is 100% consistent: all human beings need a Savior without exception. There are no “good people,” there are no “bad people.” There are just people…all of whom are created in God’s image with a moral conscience; all of whom have turned away and fallen short of God’s holy standard; all of whom will feel the wrath of God’s judgment should they be judged according to the Ten Commandments; and all of whom are powerless to save themselves or earn their way into God’s presence for eternity. All human beings…men, women, children, white, black, rich, poor, eastern cultures and western cultures,…doesn’t matter—we are all in the same boat…there are no exceptions. All people need a Savior.

5) And that leads us to my final point: God sees human beings as those worth dying for. Our central verse this morning continues to sum up this perspective of humanity better than any other: For God so loved the world…(fallen human beings) that He gave His only begotten Son (who was perfect and infinite), that whosoever…(anyone anywhere at any time)…believes in Him (and Him alone…Jesus the Christ)…should not perish (which is what all humans ultimately deserve) but have eternal life (which is what no human being deserves).

God sees human beings as those He longs to redeem. God sees human beings…you, me, them….all of them….as those He is unwilling to leave behind. Each human soul is like a wandering sheep that is vulnerable and in danger, and God is not willing to leave even one behind (Luke15). God loves human beings that much…He loves you that much, he loves me that much, he loves our children that much, he loves every child that much, he loves those in cities that much, he loves those in the country that much, he loves those with white skin and dark skin that much, he loves Republicans and Democrats that much, he loves the Hindus and the Muslims and the Buddhists and the Atheists that much, he loves all of us…ALL OF US HUMANS…that much!

III. So given how God sees humanity, What does that mean for the church?

Church, it goes without saying that how God sees people is the way that we—His church—need to see people, amen? If God loves sinners…if God loves the prostitutes and the politicians the same; if God loves murderers and misfits the same; if God loves the Jews and the Gentiles the same; if “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” Romans 5:8—it stands to reason that those who are in Christ must seek to love people the way God loves people. We must make our decisions, live our lives, and vote for lawmakers in a way that aligns with God’s perspective on
humanity. We must contend for a biblical worldview because that directly influences the way people view people. We must gently but firmly oppose those with a corrupt view of humanity that leads to humans made in the image of God being devalued because of their gender, their nationality, the color of their skin, or their particular sin of choice. We must not grow weary of relationships with people...because relationships are necessary for sharing the Gospel and leading people to an intimate, transforming, saving relationship with Jesus. We must not underestimate our role in spreading the Gospel to every corner of the earth because ALL PEOPLE NEED JESUS. We must resist turning away from the homeless, the addicts, the homosexuals or the inmates...they are all human beings created in God’s image, they are all those whom Jesus died to save...God loves them, and He saved us to love them as well. Let us never forget that we are all the same in God’s eyes...we are all loved, we are all sinners, we are all in need of a Savior...Everyone need grace.

Now, in closing, I must give you fair warning: A biblical view of humanity is a burden to bear...at least it is for me. If you truly see people like God sees people, if you see people like Jesus saw people, your heart will be broken on a regular basis because you will carry a burden for those who are wandering without direction...you will carry a burden for those who are lost, for those who are enslaved, for those who have been systemically devalued, for those who are suffering, for those who are homeless, for those who are depressed, for those who are orphaned, for those who are trapped in poverty, and for those without hope. People sometimes observe that I am quite serious and a bit melancholy...my kids sometime express concern when I let out a long sigh from time to time...my wife worries that this furrow in between my eyes rarely goes away. Well...I would suggest that if you ever truly see humanity as God sees humanity, if you ever accept the responsibility that God has placed upon His Church to enter into the brokenness of humanity with the hope of the Gospel...you may find yourselves carrying a similar burden that I, and many other Christ-followers, carry in our spirits 24 hours a day. I believe it is the same burden that Jesus carried in His heart. Consider Matthew 9:36: When He saw the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

It is a burden to see people like Jesus sees people, but that burden becomes a bit lighter when shared by others who carry a similar burden and are committed to faithfully love the world back to Christ. That is the church...we are the fellowship of those who agree with God’s perspective of humanity and are willing to be the hands and feet of Christ in this hurting culture. If you carry no burden for humanity, ask God to show you how He sees people...ask Him to show you today—right now...and let His perspective of humanity move you to compassion. We will unpack compassion next week, so I hope you will join us.

For now, I would ask that your align your perspective on humanity with God’s perspective of humanity. Allow that belief to move from your head to your heart such that your conviction about the value of every human life leads you to be the light of Christ in a hurting culture, so that the lost are found, the broken are made whole, the fatherless find hope, and our city is blessed. Let us pray.