What we believe – 4. Humanity

Overview

The speaker argues that humans are uniquely made in God's image, which grounds **inherent human dignity** and distinct moral, relational, creative, mental, and spiritual capacities compared with animals. The talk links this theological claim to practical attitudes toward social issues, pastoral behavior, and public debates such as assisted suicide.

Key Topics

Animals v humans: moral, mental, creative differences

- The speaker distinguishes animals from humans by listing capacities humans possess that animals lack: **moral awareness**, advanced **mental capacity**, creative invention, complex emotions, and deeper relational life.
- Examples used to illustrate differences: animals learn by reward and punishment, dogs and cats find home or navigate mazes, but animals do not deliberate about moral questions or solve large-scale human problems (e.g., wars).
- Human creativity examples cited: making music, building computers, launching satellites, and improving cars (contrast between an older car and a new one with navigation and speed alerts).

Spiritual nature and eternity

- The speaker asserts humans are **spiritual beings** with material bodies and immaterial spirits that enable relationship with God, including prayer and hearing God spirit-to-spirit.
- Because of this spiritual component, humans are described as eternal and suited for fellowship with God.

Dominion and biblical grounding

- The speaker cites Genesis 1:26-28 to state that God gave dominion to humankind over animals; dominion is presented as a defining aspect of being made in God's image.
- The speaker emphasizes that dominion was not given to apes or angels, reinforcing human uniqueness.

Inherent dignity and practical implications

- From being made in God's likeness follows the claim that every person has inherent dignity and value, regardless of sin, illness, age, disability, or background; Wayne Grudem is quoted to support this point about marred image yet retained status.
- Practical implications listed: treat all people with dignity across race, nationality, and minority status; oppose treating groups as second-class citizens.
- The speaker insists dignity extends to the unborn and to people of differing religions or political views, and that disagreement should not negate respectful treatment.

Contemporary public ethics: euthanasia and assisted suicide

- The speaker discusses assisted suicide debates and Swiss clinics (named Digitas) that facilitate lethal ingestion; he contrasts the movement label "dignity in dying" with his view that true dignity means recognizing each life as precious.

- A rhetorical rebuttal is offered to the claim that humans should be treated like sick pets (put down); the speaker responds that humans are not dogs and deserve different ethical treatment.

Politics, civility, and examples from public life

- The speaker recounts a local MP's email concerning a Commons vote on assisted suicide, using it to illustrate complacency or smugness in public debate; the email asserted that the House of Commons should have its say.
- The speaker praises Ann Widdecombe (described as recently murdered in the transcript) as an example of a politician who could argue forcefully yet remain respectful across political differences; this is used to model civil behaviour.

Church posture: for vs against messaging and pastoral care

- The speaker criticizes the church for being known primarily for what it opposes (abortion, euthanasia, sexual ethics, etc.) rather than for what it supports, and advocates being known for what the church is for (loving, caring, enabling abundant life).
- He urges a pastoral emphasis on explaining *why* sexuality and marriage are presented as sacred, arguing the church has sometimes only told young people "you shall not" without communicating the positive reasons and the specialness of marriage.
- A personal anecdote is given about someone expelled from a youth group after a relationship; the speaker apologizes for how the church treated that person and uses it to argue for more compassionate pastoral responses.

Fellowship with God, worship, and delight

- The speaker highlights that humans were created for fellowship with God, citing Genesis `3:8` to suggest daily communion in Eden and the Westminster Catechism about glorifying and enjoying God; C.S. Lewis is paraphrased to explain that enjoying God is part of glorifying him.
- A worship example is described from a service with a strong African presence where joyful, physical praise was encouraged; the speaker emphasizes that God delights and rejoices over people (scripture reference given as a passage the speaker cites about God rejoicing with singing).

Illustrative closing anecdote

The talk ends with an anecdote about a battered violin revealed to be a valuable Stradivarius, used as an analogy: human worth derives from being crafted by God, likened to an artist's masterpiece.