

Scripture: Matthew 21:28-32.

Topic: People -- Good and Bad.

Text: Matthew 21:29 -- "And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went."

Proposition: God has made people with capabilities for either good or bad, and given them the right and freedom to choose either.

Date written: March 21, 1969.

Dates and places used:

March 23, 1969, Alton, Colorado
Sept. 14, 1969 Oakland Park, Fla.

Scripture: Matthew 21:28-32.

Topic: People -- Good and bad.

Text: Matthew 21:29 -- "And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went."

Proposition: God has made people with capabilities for either good or bad, and given them the right and freedom to choose either.

Date written: March 29, 1969.

Dates and places used:

*March 29, 1969, Los Angeles
29 March 1969, Los Angeles*

In publicity announcing this sermon, we have billed it as being on a "disputed subject," under the general heading of "The Nature of Mankind." We have also indicated that we would think about whether people are good, bad, or in-between. We said that the doctrine of "original sin" and the possible progressive improvement of people are parts of this discussion.

In these days of buying everything "on time," through the installment plan, people sometimes feel like a lady who was being pressured by a salesman to make a particular purchase. "You pay a small deposit," said the salesman, "and then make no more payments for six months." "Who told you about us?" demanded the lady of the house. The nature of the installment system seems to encourage people to take on more obligations than they can meet

The nature of people, of mankind as a whole, or of an individual, seems to be able to be talked about in two categories,

In publicity announcing this sermon, we have billed it as being on a "disputed subject," under the general heading of "The Nature of Manhood." We have also indicated that we would think about whether people are good, bad, or in-between. We said that the doctrine of "original sin" and the possible progressive improvement of people are parts of this discussion.

In these days of buying everything "on time," through the installment plan, people sometimes feel like a lady who was being pressured by a salesman to make a particular purchase. "You pay a small deposit," said the salesman, "and then make no more payments for six months." "Who told you about us?" demanded the lady of the house. The nature of the installment system seems to encourage people to take on more obligations than they can meet.

The nature of people, of man-kind as a whole, or of an individual, seems to be able to be talked about in two categories,

the physical and the spiritual. This division into categories is only for talking purposes, of course, for every individual is a unity of body and spirit, and you can't separate the two parts of a person, except for talking purposes to help clarify our understanding of ourselves and others. Briefly, here we do make that division.

The Bible story of creation speaks of man (people) being made in the image of God. Is that a physical or spiritual image, or both? We here in this service probably would agree almost unanimously that it is a spiritual image, but there are large groups of religious people in this country, such as the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses, who would insist that in our bodily shape also we are made in the image of God. To some of us this is sheer folly, for a physical body such as we possess must be limited to being at one place at a time. We think of God as being omnipresent, everywhere within his created universe at one time, and this

the physical and the spiritual.
 This division into categories is
 only for talking purposes, of
 course, for every individual is
 a unity of body and spirit, and
 you can't separate the two parts
 of a person, except for talking
 purposes to help clarify our
 understanding of ourselves and
 others. Briefly, here we do make
 that division.

The Bible story of creation
 speaks of man (people) being made
 in the image of God. Is that a
 physical or spiritual image or
 both? We here in this service
 probably would agree almost unani-
 mously that it is a spiritual
 image, but there are large groups
 of religious people in this coun-
 try, such as the Mormons or the
 Jehovah's Witnesses, who would
 insist that in our bodily shape
 also we are made in the image of
 God. To some of us this is sheer
 folly, for a physical body such
 as we possess must be limited to
 being at one place at a time. We
 think of God as being omnipresent,
 everywhere within his created
 universe at one time, and this

cannot be without physical body of the type that you or I possess, can it? We will drop here this idea that we are in God's likeness in our bodies, but before we go on to thinking about how our nature is akin to God, let's think about our bodies for a few moments.

Our bodies are animal bodies. Whether we like to admit this or not, our likeness to the animals in things physical is apparent. We breathe, bleed, eat, digest and eliminate, reproduce, grow, are subject to accident and sickness, age, and die, just as the animals around us do.

However, we can and often do make use of our animal bodies in quite different ways from the other animals with which we are familiar. This is illustrated by the lengths to which some of the human race go to improve the appearance of their bodies. Every family to whom you or I are close probably is familiar with the sight of a mother or daughter in the household with her hair in curlers, so that she looks quite inhuman in contrast

cannot be without physical body of
the type that you or I possess,
can it? We will drop here this
idea that we are in God's likeness
in our bodies but before we go
on to thinking about how our nature
is akin to God let's think about
our bodies for a few moments.

Our bodies are animal bodies.
Whether we like to admit this or
not, our likeness to the animals
in things physical is apparent.
We breathe, bleed, eat, digest
and eliminate, reproduce, grow,
are subject to accident and sick-
ness, age, and die, just as the
animals around us do.

However, we can and often do
make use of our animal bodies in
quite different ways from the other
animals with which we are familiar.
This is illustrated by the lengths
to which some of the human race
go to improve the appearance of
their bodies. Every family to
whom you or I are close probably is
familiar with the sight of a mother
or daughter in the household with
her hair in curlers, so that she
looks quite inhuman in contrast

to when she gets the curlers out. A dermatologist (a skin disease specialist) was reported some years ago as saying that women are increasingly threatened by thinning hair and baldness, and the cause is often from winding their hair too tightly on rollers and other curling devices. Richard Armour, an author of light verse which appears regularly in the magazine QUOTE, wrote this about the problem:

"So women, too, are now and then
Becoming thin of hair, like men,
And even bald upon the top.
The thing has really got to stop

But unlike men, who just inherit
it

And therefore truly do not merit
it,

It seems that women roll up
nightly

Their hair, and roll it up too
tightly.

With this cause of thinning hair,
Perhaps they'll henceforth take
more care,

And now, ere it becomes too
late,

Roll hair up loose, or wear it
straight

to when she gets the curlers out.
A dermatologist (a skin disease
specialist) was reported some years
ago as saying that women are in-
creasingly threatened by thinning
hair and baldness, and the cause is
often from winding their hair too
tightly on rollers and other curl-
ing devices. Richard Armour, an
author of light verse which appears
regularly in the magazine QUOTE,
wrote this about the problem:

"So women, too, are now and then
Becoming thin of hair, like men,
And even bald upon the top.
The thing has really got to stop

But unlike men, who just inherit
it

And therefore truly do not merit
it,

It seems that women roll up
nightly

Their hair, and roll it up too
tightly.

With this cause of thinning hair
Perhaps they'll henceforth take
more care,

And now, ere it becomes too
late,

Roll hair up loose, or wear it
straight

Most men, I think, would take the
girls
Without their fancy waves and
curls
Before they'd see them bald from
tightening
Or in their curlers -- still more
frightening.

Well, women can use their minds
to direct their hands to use tools
(curlers-usually designed by men)
to make their hair more beautiful.
This is an illustration of the fact
that members of the human race
have the ability to use their
bodies to perform acts and make
objects which other living things,
other animals, do not seem to have.
There are some tool-using living
things in nature, such as birds
that use sticks to pry insects
out of bark and holes in trees,
but such other natural beings have
only very limited abilities along
this line. Animals and birds
with such achievements sometimes
seem to pass along through heredity
or example to their young these
abilities, but succeeding generatio
tions don't seem to develop new
skills. So far, mankind alone has

skills. So far, mankind alone has
tions don't seem to develop new
abilities, but succeeding generations
or example to their young these
seem to pass along through heredity
with such achievements sometimes
this line. Animals and birds
only very limited abilities along
but such other natural beings have
out of bark and holes in trees,
that use sticks to pry insects
things in nature, such as birds
There are some tool-using living
other animals, do not seem to have
objects which other living things,
bodies to perform acts and make
have the ability to use their
that members of the human race
This is an illustration of the fact
to make their hair more beautiful.
(curlers-usually designed by men)
to direct their hands to use tools
Well, women can use their minds

Or in their curlers -- still more
frightening.
Before they'd see them bald from
curls
Without their fancy waves and
girls
Most men, I think, would take the

demonstrated an ability to plan the usage of his body and to direct its movements so as to create a continuing outflow of new things, and to solve problems in an ever-changing variety of ways.

It is in this planning ability, this looking ahead, this usage of something within humans which we call the "mind," that people are most obviously different from animals. This ability to use the mind to consider the past and to learn from it, to look at most or all of the factors involved in a problem and then to sift them out so that he can make use of the ones which help him achieve a desired and pre-conceived goal, is a strong indication of mankind's likeness to the creative God of the universe. Characteristics of the human mind, contained within his animal body, provide some of the chief evidence for substantiation of the Biblical idea that people are made in God's image.

Within most human beings there is something else which perhaps even more strongly identifies

demonstrated an ability to plan the usage of his body and to direct its movements so as to create a continuing outflow of new things and to solve problems in an ever-changing variety of ways.

It is in this planning ability, this looking ahead, this usage of something within humans which we call the "mind," that people are most obviously different from animals. This ability to use the mind to consider the past and to learn from it, to look at most or all of the factors involved in a problem and then to sift them out so that he can make use of the ones which help him achieve a desired and pre-conceived goal, is a strong indication of mankind's likeness to the creative God of the universe. Characteristics of the human mind, contained within his animal body, provide some of the chief evidence for substantiation of the biblical idea that people are made in God's image.

Within most human beings there is something else which perhaps even more strongly identifies

people with God, as we understand Deity. That is in the urge, the impulse, the conviction for an eternal life, an overcoming of death by the individual human.

Observation impells us to believe that all living things are fearful of death, except in a few unusual cases where some other great drive seems to override this natural fear shared normally by all living things. But humans almost universally, except for perhaps a minute fraction of one percent, are able to envision death as but a transitional stage leading to another, usually-better, usually-eternal life. All religions have this idea at their center, though they come up with many different concepts as to how this is achieved, as to what it is like in the land beyond the grave ... and then perhaps religions argue or fight furiously, each claiming its own insights or guesses to be the only right way. Nevertheless, this human participation in the life eternal identifies human beings as in the image of God, at least in their thinking and faith.

people with God, as we understand
 Deity. That is in the urge, the
 impulse, the conviction for an
 eternal life, an overcoming of
 death by the individual human.
 Observation impells us to believe
 that all living things are fearful
 of death, except in a few unusual
 cases where some other great drive
 seems to override this natural
 fear shared normally by all living
 things. But humans almost univer-
 sally, except for perhaps a minute
 fraction of one percent are able
 to envision death as but a tran-
 sitional stage leading to another,
 usually-better, usually-eternal
 life. All religions have this
 idea at their center, though they
 come up with many different concepts
 as to how this is achieved, as to
 what it is like in the land beyond
 the grave... and then perhaps
 religions argue or fight furiously,
 each claiming its own insights or
 guesses to be the only right way.
 Nevertheless, this human partici-
 pation in the life eternal iden-
 tifies human beings as in the image
 of God, at least in their thinking
 and faith.

Most people accept the concept that in the living of this life they are in one way or another preparing themselves for what may lie beyond the grave. They call the parts of themselves which transcend death their spirits. The Old Testament prophets, from Moses through Hosea and others, provided standards for the living of our earthly days which were projected as coming from God and as necessary to human preparation for the life after death. To neglect these standards was to bring both earthly and eternal punishment upon one.

Jesus brought together a more merciful, milder outlook on compliance with such laws, and put more emphasis on love and kindness, on attitude of the individual rather than on living by detailed laws.

Sin has usually been thought of as the willfull breaking of the laws of God, or willfully neglecting to live by the attitudes taught by Jesus. Much of The Old Testament and some of The New Testament

Most people accept the concept that in the living of this life they are in one way or another preparing themselves for what may lie beyond the grave. They call the parts of themselves which transcend death their spirits. The Old Testament prophets, from Moses through Hosea and others, provided standards for the living of our earthly days which were projected as coming from God and as necessary to human preparation for the life after death. To neglect these standards was to bring both earthly and eternal punishment upon one.

Jesus brought together a more merciful, milder outlook on compliance with such laws, and put more emphasis on love and kindness on attitude of the individual rather than on living by detailed laws.

Sin has usually been thought of as the willful breaking of the laws of God, or willfully neglecting to live by the attitudes taught by Jesus. Much of the Old Testament and some of the New Testament

uses the story of Adam and Eve willfully choosing to eat the forbidden fruit and being tossed out of the Garden of Eden as the device by which all human beings ever since fell into sin. People shared in the "Fall of Adam" thereby, and all are participants in "original sin," it is said. Though many of us must in all honesty look upon this account as a historic attempt of an early people to understand how wrong came into the world, there is in it the truth that all people do have in them the capacity for wrong-doing, and that everyone at some time does do some wrong. Some of our wrong may be unintentional, but a man is just as dead whether killed by me accidentally or on purpose. We all share to quite a great extent in wrongdoing, pain, suffering, anger, unkindness, and many other undesirable aspects of life, simply because we are parts of the human race.

BUT we cannot think of the just, merciful and loving God revealed by Hosea and by Jesus as punishing us vengefully or harshly for misdoings

uses the story of Adam and Eve
willfully choosing to eat the forbidden
fruit and being tossed out
of the Garden of Eden as the de-
vice by which all human beings ever
since fell into sin. People share
in the "Fall of Adam" thereby,
and all are participants in
"original sin," it is said. Though
many of us must in all honesty look
upon this account as a historic
attempt of an early people to un-
derstand how wrong came into the
world, there is in it the truth
that all people do have in them
the capacity for wrong-doing, and
that everyone at some time does
do some wrong. Some of our wrong
may be unintentional, but a man
is just as dead whether killed by
me accidentally or on purpose. We
all share to quite a great extent
in wrongdoing, pain, suffering,
anger, unkindness, and many other
undesirable aspects of life, simply
because we are parts of the human
race.

BUT we cannot think of the just,
merciful and loving God revealed by
Hosea and by Jesus as punishing us
vengefully or harshly for misdoings

based on our animal natures, or on our earthly humanity.

Instead, we recognize that most of us have choices to make in which we can choose how we are going to act, whether our attitude (and actions based on it) will be loving, kind, confident and hope-filled. When we do not make such positive choices, then we sin, and certainly part of the consequent suffering is the guilt we experience, as well as the feeling that we have sinned against God. Each individual does have in most of his life the choice to do right or to sin.

The Scripture that we read today indicates this type of choice, in a parable by Jesus. A father asked a son to go to work in the family vineyard, one day. The son answered, "I will not," but afterward he repented and went. The son exhibited a very human impulse to resist authority and work, but he rose above his original impulses and did what he should. The father asked another son to go to work also, and was answered, "I go, sir."

based on our animal natures, or on our earthly humanity.

Instead, we recognize that most of us have choices to make in which we can choose how we are going to act, whether our attitude (and actions based on it) will be loving, kind, confident and hope-filled. When we do not make such positive choices, then we sin, and certainly part of the consequent suffering is the guilt we experience, as well as the feeling that we have sinned against God. Each individual does have in most of his life the choice to do right or to sin.

The Scripture that we read today indicates this type of choice, in a parable by Jesus. A father asked a son to go to work in the family vineyard, one day. The son answered, "I will not," but afterward he repented and went. The son exhibited a very human impulse to resist authority and work, but he rose above his original impulses and did what he should. The father asked another son to go to work also, and was answered, "I go, sir,"

But he did not go. After telling the story, Jesus asked his hearers which of the two sons did the will of his father, and the answer had to be that it was the first one.

Then Jesus made his application of the story, that many people who sin greatly, such as harlots and tax collectors for the hated Roman government, but who repent and believe on God through him, would "enter into the kingdom of God," while many who from the first, who all along, say they believe rightly and obey the rules of God do not really do so and will be lost.

In other words, be honest, and don't deceive ourselves. Only you can make the choices between right and wrong for yourself. Your choices may affect many other people but the greatest and eternal effect of your choices is on yourself.

For God has made people with capabilities for either good or bad, and he has given each of them the right and freedom to choose either. It is your choice. You do share in some of the wrongs and

Matthew 21:28-32
But he did not go. After telling the story, Jesus asked his hearers which of the two sons did the will of his father, and the answer had to be that it was the first one. Then Jesus made his application of the story, that many people who sin greatly, such as harlots and tax collectors for the hated Roman government, but who repent and believe on God through him, would "enter into the kingdom of God," while many who from the first, who all along, say they believe rightly and obey the rules of God do not really do so and will be lost.

In other words, be honest, and don't deceive ourselves. Only you can make the choices between right and wrong for yourself. Your choices may affect many other people but the greatest and eternal effect of your choices is on yourself.

For God has made people with capabilities for either good or bad, and he has given each of them the right and freedom to choose either. It is your choice. You do share in some of the wrongs and

sins of the whole human race, but you have the power within you to rise above many of them, for God has given you that power through Jesus Christ. People are somewhat good and somewhat bad, but they may be saved from most of the bad through commitment to the way of Jesus. Thus he becomes your S_avior and mine.

Matthew 21:28-32
sins of the whole human race, but
you have the power within you to
rise above many of them, for God
has given you that power through
Jesus Christ. People are somewhat
good and somewhat bad, but they
may be saved from most of the bad
through commitment to the way of
Jesus. Thus he becomes your Savior
and mine.