

**The Rat Race Vs. The Human Race**  
**Luke 10:38-42**  
**Preached by Rev. Dr. Harry Cahill**  
**Babcock Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, July 25, 2010**

I once had a conversation with a thoughtful man who happened to be a research scientist. He has a PhD in microbiology and works down at Hopkins Hospital. He told me after he graduated from college he went straight into seminary. I asked him, "So, you wanted to be a minister. Did you ever get ordained? What made you change your vocation?" He responded, "Oh, I never had any intention of being ordained. I always wanted to be a biologist." "Then why did you go to seminary?" "I thought if I went to seminary I'd begin to learn how to be human."

He went to seminary to begin to learn how to be human.

We think being human means being flawed, but that's not what the Bible teaches.

Before Adam and Eve were banished from Paradise, they were fully human, in perfect harmony with God and each other. The New Testament teaches Jesus came into the world to bring us back to that original state so we, like Adam and Eve before the fall, could begin to know what it means to be fully human.

And then this: The Early Church Fathers after searching the scriptures fashioned numerous Creeds proclaiming Jesus as both fully divine and fully human. In other words, Jesus' humanity was unspoiled by sin and in perfect harmony with the Father and with the world around him. His personality was fully integrated, completely whole. And what's more Jesus invites us all to share in his humanity.

That's why my friend went to seminary. "I thought that if I went to seminary, I'd begin to learn how to be human." Not every Christian can go to seminary, but we are encouraged to realize our fullest humanity. We aren't expected to be perfect but we are expected to be human.

Remember Psalm 8? "When I look at your heavens...that you have established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them and mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor."

When God created the world and made us in his image, he crowned us with glory and honor, so at our best, our humanity could soar high into the heavens, come to know God and become his friends.

But like Adam and Eve, we are also tainted by sin. Because of the gift of free will, God doesn't interfere with our decisions, so we can do whatever we want whether God likes it or not. But whenever we choose our way over God's way we lose a bit of our humanity and join the rat race.

It's true isn't it? The more we're charmed by those vain things that ultimately cheat us and leave us with nothing, we lose touch with God and our humanity.

And what are these vain things? Probably the most prevalent is the mistaken belief we're at the center of the universe. Imagine the pressure we put on ourselves trying to push our Christ to keep ourselves at the center; needless pressure straining our relationships, compromising our integrity, and robbing us of our humanity. That's the rat race, running aimlessly, frantically in every direction at once.

But once in a while, by God's grace, we realize we've been fooling ourselves. It's then time to quit the Rat Race and reenter the Human Race by recommitting ourselves to that sacred purpose: to know God and to enjoy him forever. And it's from this sacred purpose all other good things flow. Remember what Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom and its righteousness and all these other things will be added to you."

But wanting to quit the rat race and actually doing it are two entirely different things. Certainly wanting to be truly human is half the battle, but to win the race we need Jesus.

The New Testament story of Mary and Martha gives good insight on how we can nurture and enable our humanity. Jesus arrived, unannounced at the home of Martha and Mary. He's welcomed like one of the family. Right away, Martha instinctively does what she does best. She storms into the kitchen to prepare one of her famous dinners. Martha, by nature is a work horse, the "do it now" personality every family needs to keep things moving.

Mary on the other hand, having a completely different disposition, goes into the living room and sits at Jesus' feet. Mary has a kind and gentle spirit, the type of personality every family needs to keep harmony. Please note: both personalities balance the other.

But something happened to upset this balance. Martha, the human dynamo, gets so busy, so frantic, so obsessed with preparing dinner she can't

begin to appreciate Mary's role. "Master," she yells from the kitchen, "tell that Mary to get in here to give me a hand!"

Listen to Gene Peterson's translation of Jesus' response to Martha. "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. Only one thing only is essential and Mary has chosen it. It's the main course and it won't be taken from her."

Martha was trying to prepare a six course gourmet meal, but quiet, gentle Mary was doing quite well with her simple main course. She was sitting at Jesus' feet, learning from him what it means to be truly human.

Warning: Don't let this story leave you with the mistaken impression Jesus put down hard work. The world wouldn't run right if the Marthas we know and love suddenly went on strike. But what this story does teach is this: our good works, our hard work, even done with the best of intentions can be our undoing if they're not complimented by being grounded in Christ.

Too many of us have adopted an identity based on what we do instead of who we are. A career becomes an end in itself. We devise our little systems and set our goals, then as an after thought, call on God to come down and baptize it and make it Christian. That's how the human spirit gets compromised, by being so caught up in doing we forget the importance of being.

At the end of the last century the pervasive theology of the Church was based on a horrific misconception. Church theologians were convinced that because of the stupendous leaps in the arts and sciences the Kingdom of Heaven was slowly evolving on earth. "We are becoming like God," was the claim. The first hint this was all sham took place in April of 1912. "God himself couldn't sink the Titanic," boasted her captain. But on her maiden voyage, she sank. Two years later World War I. Twenty years later World War II once and for all shot that good works theology full of holes.

Now we know better, or do we? In very subtle ways the Rat Race, our attempts to orchestrate everything with "good works", is still very much alive. This is exposed in the attitude that shouts, "Hey, look at what we're doing! Look how successful and cutting edge we are!"

At the outset of his ministry Jesus claimed, "The Kingdom of God is already here, look around you, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk." That's the Good News! God, not us, is working hard to make it happen. God works out his purposes in and through us, bringing all things together, healing broken lives so we can quit the Rat Race and enter the Human Race.

In the Old Testament we find the words, "When there is no vision, the people perish." Lose your vision you lose your humanity. But whenever you seek God's vision you enter the new life. How do we catch the vision? Like

The Rat Race Vs. The Human Race  
Luke 10:38-42

children seeking out the air currents so their kites can soar or a surfer waiting patiently for the wave to give him the ride of his life, we too must wait for God to reveal his purpose and will, and then respond accordingly and faithfully.

And mind you, hard work doesn't make the wind blow or the waves flow, only God does that. Simply wait for God to do the work and then go along for the ride. Instead of being a good works people, we can become the Good News People celebrating Christ and the Gospel, waiting to see what God is up to and then becoming part of the flow, and soon enough, to our surprise discovering we're not bringing in the Kingdom, for lo and behold, the Kingdom is already here. Again, look to Mary. Our task, like Mary, is to sit at Jesus' feet and hear the old story again for the first time. We learn about Jesus, we drink in his presence and we accept his invitation to become more like him, to be human.

"I thought that if I went to seminary I'd begin to learn how to be human."

Let us pray!