

# A Man or a Mouse?

by Richard Siple

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of manhood and living like a son of God, and it provides a biblical perspective on the nature and purpose of man.*

**Duration:** 40:59

**Scripture:** Psalm 8:4-6, Matthew 6:33, John 1:1-3, Hebrews 2:6-9

**Topics:** "Child Of God", "Overcoming Fear"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts a powerful moment in a classroom where a student named Julie is struggling to complete an assignment about her father. The speaker encourages Julie to write a love letter to her deceased father, reminding her that he is still present in her heart. Julie takes this advice to heart and pours her soul into a deeply intimate letter expressing her love for her father. The speaker then shifts the focus to the audience, urging Christians to stand up confidently in the world as children of God and heirs to His kingdom. The sermon concludes with a reminder of Satan's role in the fall of mankind and a poignant story about a student who cannot complete the assignment due to a history of abuse.

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## Transcript

Privileged to have a godly father, a great, great privilege. And my father was a man. He was human.

He was not perfect, but he was a good man and a godly man. And so I am extremely grateful. And then I am grateful that I had a wonderful father-in-law who became a father to me, my wife's father, and treated me as a son and could not have treated me any better if I had been born from him.

And they're both in heaven, so I'm going there. I am looking forward to seeing them there someday. Today, meanwhile, I know that all those things that have happened to me in life, they have had a hand in it because they were good and godly men.

And so that's very, very important to me this morning. Many years ago, people would have interesting things they would say to men. And especially if they were talking to a man that, at least in their opinion, was weak and seemed unable to kind of handle life.

And they would challenge him and say, are you a man or a mouse? Now, it's a long time ago, and all you young people have never heard it. But it was a common saying, are you a man or a mouse? And so I'm asking the question this morning to all the men, not just the dads, but all the men, are you a man or a

mouse? And you say, well, it's kind of silly. Well, no, I have a very important point to it, as you'll see, and some very important scriptural things to say about it.

What would your wife say that you're a man or a mouse, or your children, or those who know you best? The great philosopher King Solomon, when he was a very young man and had just become King of Israel, he wrote many things. And many of those things came out of natural human philosophy. And so he asked the question, what is a man? And he wondered about it, thought about it, looked at life.

He said he had tried everything there was. And he had a pretty good view of human life in the natural, just natural human life. So in Ecclesiastes 3, 18 to 22, he said this, I thought, this is his own human thinking, a very wise man too.

As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Man's fate is like that of the animals. The same fate awaits them both.

As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath. Man has no advantage over the animal.

Everything is meaningless. Well, if you believe that, that's true. Everything is meaningless.

All go to the same place. All come from dust, to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth.

So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work because that is his lot for who can bring him to see what will happen after him. And this is a very secular human philosophy. Sounds like it was written today, doesn't it? Where many people are saying, well, we're all just animals anyway.

We're just sort of a more developed animal in the evolutionary chain, but all just animals nevertheless. And if you don't have divine revelation, if you just have human observation only, you would come up with an answer like this. And you would look at life as absolutely without point.

And that's a terrible, hopeless view of life. But you see, once a view like that takes a hold of a man, the tragedy is that then he has a tendency to become more and more like an animal. That's the problem.

Though that's not what God intended. Later, however, this same man, Solomon, after many years and after really coming to know God and after having divine revelation brought to his heart, he talks again about man and what he is. And you see, that was in Ecclesiastes three, but when you get to Ecclesiastes 12, which is right at the end of the book and near the end of his life, you have quite a different picture.

These are his words. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets and the dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Ah, that's different.

See, now he does know there's a difference. He has come to see there's a tremendous difference between an animal and a man. Now all has been heard.

Here's a conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole duty of man. Before he said the only thing to live for, do the best you can at your job, have a great time because you're gonna die like an animal and that's the end.

But now with God's divine revelation in his heart, he has a totally different view. And he says, wait a minute, wait a minute, fear God and keep his commandments. Why? Because your body is going back to

the ground, but your spirit is going back to stand before the God who created it.

And you will continue alive out into eternity. Yes, the animal goes into the ground and ceases to exist, but the man does not cease to exist. His body dies and goes back into the ground to wait for the resurrection, but his spirit continues to live on in a conscious state in the presence and to stand before God.

King David asked God the same question. Great men of the past have always asked this question, what is man? When I was younger and thought I was wiser, I thought of writing a book entitled, What is Man? The older I've got, the more I'm afraid I don't know how to write it. But I do have some conclusions based on two things, the study of the scriptures and the study of people put together.

You know what I find? The longer I live and the more I study people, the more the scriptures prove to be absolutely true. We are just like it says we are, exactly. So King David asked God the same question in Psalm 8 verses four to seven.

He says, what is man? He asked the question, what is man that you're mindful of him? The son of man that you care for him. Now, why are you interested in people? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings, that is the angels, the princes of the spirit world, and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands.

You put everything under his feet. Tremendous statement that he had come to see through divine revelation. Then again, the apostle Paul asked the same question and he's quoting from Psalm 8, but he adds to it in Hebrews 2, six to 15.

And this is my main text for this morning. So follow it carefully. Hebrews 2, six to 15.

Maybe you wanna turn there, mark the place in your Bible so you can go back to it. As he begins, he quotes from Psalm 8 and he says, but there is a place where someone has testified, it's David, what is man that you are mindful of him? The son of man that you care for him. You made him a little lower than the angels.

You crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. So now he quotes from David and then he starts to add divine revelation to this passage.

Yet at present, we do not see everything subject to him. Says in this life, we don't see God's total creation subject to man, do we? A lot of it, yes. It's amazing how God's word has been fulfilled and how much of human life, the natural physical material life has been brought under the control of man.

It's just amazing. How many of you use a computer? Fantastic, incredible. And that little instrument, that little chip has enabled man to go to the moon and back.

Just all kinds of incredible things. And man has brought God's creation under his control. God said, he put all things under man's feet, but at the moment, everything is not subject to him.

But we see Jesus, who is the second Adam, who is the man who begins a new human race, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God for whom and through whom everything exists should make the author of their salvation perfect

through suffering, talking about Jesus. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy, that is both Jesus and human people, are of the same family.

So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity. That is the son of God, the eternal word came down from heaven, focused himself in a woman's womb and was born as a man so that he is a man the same as us. He became one of us because the first Adam had failed and plunged us into sin and bondage and death.

Now, the second Adam is not going to fail. He is going to be true to God as father and he is going to make redemption for all of us who lost it in the first creation. Are you with me? Stay with me, this is good theology, biblical truth.

So then he says, since the children of flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death, he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is the devil. And free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. So I want to ask again this morning to the men, are you a man or a mouse? Is man an animal or does he just act like one? Ravi Zacharias, an international evangelist of the Christian and Missionary Alliance told of a trip he made into communist China.

The bus he was on was held up for a time because it had struck and killed a farmer and his pig. Ravi asked the communist tour guide if there was any difference between the death of the farmer and the death of the pig. The guide answered that there was no difference.

Ravi responded by saying, well, Chairman Mao is dead. Was he a pig? Duck. Whoa, the guide became very angry and said, Mao is not a pig.

Ravi said, I agree. I believe Mao was a man and so was the farmer. See, where are you going to draw the line? The first church of which I was pastor was a congregational church in a small town in North New Hampshire, West Stewartstown, about three miles from the Canadian border.

I was getting close, but it took me another 30 years before I got here. Outside the town was the town garbage dump. Huge thing.

It's swarmed with large rats. And I don't mean mice. I mean big rats, hundreds of them.

We would take our 22 rifles up there and spend an hour shooting rats. We thought it was great fun at the time. I was a lot younger then.

And besides, I can't find such a place now. No, I don't even have a gun, relax. I have no idea how many of them I killed.

Was that the same thing as going on a shooting spree as some have done in recent times in killing people? Does that put me in the same class with those who have gone crazy and shot people indiscriminately? See, what's interesting is that even people who believe we're animals would say no. And we have friends, I mean good friends, who are atheists and who have high standards of moral decency and who would never think that it was all right to shoot a human being like you shoot a rat. But if you ask them, are we just an animal? They would say yes.

Interesting, isn't it? Is there a difference between a man and a mouse? Is a man simply a highly developed product of evolution? Is a man no more than a highly complex animal? Is a man just an accident in a

meaningless universe logically no different in value than a mouse? If that is true, then of course, abortion does not matter. Infanticide does not matter. Euthanasia does not matter.

Assisted suicide does not matter. Our political purges such as is going on in Africa today, they do not matter. They just happen to be unfortunate animals being slaughtered by other animals, right? If a man abuses his wife and children, it doesn't matter.

If a man lies, steals, commits adultery or murders, it really doesn't matter since animals do those things all the time. So what's the difference? When I was a young pastor in Alabama and trying to find a way to make a little extra money to pay our bills, I decided to raise rabbits. And I got a book from the agriculture department and built me some cages and got \$2 and a buck and started raising friars.

Not only because we needed the meat, but I thought I was going to sell some, which I never did. God has never let me succeed at anything like that. Says, nope, nope, nope, nope, go do what I told you.

So I had a mother who started eating her babies. So we ate her. I said, that does it.

I gave her three chances. Three strikes and you're in the pot. How do mice live? Well, they eat, sleep, work, play, fight, reproduce, eat garbage, then die and turn back to dust.

Do men live like that? You bet they do. And some of them may profess to be Christians. All kinds of scientific experiments that are done with mice, they're based entirely on the mouse responding to pleasure, discomfort, hunger, sexual desire, fear.

They get the mouse to where they can ring a bell, turn lights on or off, provide various kinds of stimulation. And the mouse will eat, sleep, or do certain tasks. So are men just a bunch of mice scurrying around, eating, sleeping, fighting, squeaking, reproducing, then dying? Well, some men seem to live that way.

When I was holding revival crusades on a regular basis in churches, I went to Linden, Alberta to hold a revival crusade. And I was kept in the home of people who had a chicken farm. Man, that was a dilly.

They had 50,000 chickens. Whew. And you couldn't even smell it.

I mean, it was scientific. They had five of these great big long buildings and 10,000 chickens in each one. And they were absolutely sealed airtight.

And inside they kept the moisture right, the heat right, the amount of water right, the feed right, everything exactly right. So what you could walk by there, you'd never know it was chicken farm. You didn't smell or hear a thing, but you went in the first sealed door and then the second one, then you were in there with 10,000 chickens.

And it was interesting because they had that thing absolutely controlled so that the lights came on and the chickens woke up and ate. And then the lights went off and they went to sleep. And then the lights came on and they woke up and ate.

And so that's how they raised fires. And if you go to the Swiss chalet today, you'll eat one of those from that farm probably because that was one of their customers. And so they fattened them for the slaughter.

And when they reached a certain age, then the trucks came and away they went. And then they sanitized the place and put in 50,000 more. And so it was interesting.

The lights come on, they woke up and ate, the lights went off, they went to sleep. I was telling this story and a lady said to me, that's just like my husband. Maybe not a mouse, maybe a chicken.

A chicken. A chicken. In March, 1999, the US Department of Health and Human Services launched a new nationwide public service campaign, challenging fathers to remain emotionally and financially connected to their children, even if they did not live with them.

The campaign's tagline is that your kids be their dad. It stresses the importance of fathers by showing the consequences for children when fathers do not have a positive role in their lives. And I was amazed at their statistics.

This is secular government, not Christian or even religious. Girls without a father in their life are two and a half times more likely to get pregnant and 53% more likely to commit suicide. Boys without a father in their life are 63% more likely to run away and 37% more likely to abuse drugs.

Both girls and boys without father involvement are twice as likely to drop out of high school, twice as likely to end up in jail and nearly four times as likely to need help for emotional or behavioral problems. Children desperately need a godly man in their lives. And if you're a single mother, my heart goes out to you because though you love your children and may do everything you can for them, they need a man in their life.

They need a godly man in their life. And that's one thing I hope, and we talked about it some yesterday at a board retreat, I hope that we can find a way so that we can reach out to single mothers and somehow put a man in the life of their children, a godly man, amen, to help these children to come to know the Lord. Children desperately need that.

The other answer of course is that God is a father, amen. I am so thankful that God is my father. I had a wonderful father, but God is my father and he is a perfect father and he will be a husband to the woman who doesn't have a husband and he will be a father to the person who doesn't have a father.

Can a chicken or a mouse paint a picture, write a book, compose a song, worship God? Of course not. Can a mouse repent, change his life, help change other mice or love in a truly sacrificial way? Of course not. King David in Psalm 53 envied the wicked.

He said, I looked around and I saw people who were obviously wicked and they had a great life. They didn't have any problems, they didn't have any pain, they were healthy, everything was going great for them and I looked at all the problems I had and I got really upset and I said, why do I live for God? I'm gonna read to you what he finally came to. Then I realized how bitter I had become, how pained I had been by all I had seen.

I was so foolish and ignorant, I must have seemed like a brute beast to you, God. Yet I still belong to you. You are holding my right hand.

You will keep on guiding me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail and my spirit may grow weak but God remains the strength of my heart.

He is mine forever. God, my father. I love the sense of the arms of God around me.

When I was a little boy and learning to swim, my father was a strong swimmer and he would say, just get on my back and put your arms around my neck. Now hang on, don't let go. And he goes swimming out into the deep water and I was a little frightened but I thought, well, I'm okay, I'm on dad's back, hang on, you know.

Well, I'll tell you, dad's been in heaven a long time and I have found that I have a heavenly father who put his arms around me and never, never has taken them away and who will hold me and keep me and when I think I'm sinking, he won't let me sink. And when I want to give up, he won't let me give up. And when I get discouraged, he won't let it defeat me.

And I've said many times, I don't understand but there is something inside of me that says, no, you can never give up, I won't let you. There is God the father holding us fast. I wanna bring to your attention three things out of the scripture that was written by David but mainly by Paul, three things about men.

Are you ready? Three things about men. Men are God's crowning creation. I don't mean men as the sex, I'm talking about mankind in general but men are God's crowning creation.

They are made a little lower than the angels that is in their authoritative position at the moment but they're set over God's creation. You know what? Someday, someday I'm going to be glorified, I'll even be good looking. I know it's hard for you to believe but I mean, I'm going to be made like him and I'm going to rule over the universe with Christ.

Boy, Star Trek doesn't have a thing on me. I'm going to look at the whole thing. You see, God's intention for man was that he should take the place.

Satan was the high priest of heaven. He was the angel that walked up and down in the coals of fire. He was the anointed cherub that hovered over the throne of God.

He was the one that led the worship of the universe, worshiping God. He directed that worship to himself. He fell, he was cast out of heaven and God said, I'm going to make a creation to take his place to rule over the works of my hands and he made us and he crowned us with glory and honor and he doesn't expect us to live like an animal.

He expects us to live like sons of God, like men with royal blood. My father is the king of everything. Stand up, man.

Don't let your head hang down. Are you a Christian? Stand up. Look the world in the face.

Don't be afraid. You're a child of the king. You have royal blood in your veins.

When they're gone, you're going to rule the universe with Christ. May God give Christian men the sense of who they are and what he wants them to do and what he wants them to be. God's crowning creation.

But men are fallen by Satan's usurpation. That is Satan usurped that place. He came to the garden, he deceived Eve.

Then he got Adam to sin. He knew better, but he did it anyway. And he usurped that place and tried to get it back and is trying to rule over this world.

And he is the God of this world and the prince of the power of the air. But I want you to know that Jesus totally and completely and utterly defeated him. And you do not need to be under his power at all.

Every place that Satan holds, he holds by deceit and lies. And he doesn't belong there. And eventually God is going to fix that and cast him into hell forever.

But meanwhile, I want you to know that the word of God says the son of man was manifest to destroy the works of the devil. And as a Christian man, you need to stand up and face the world and face the devil and face the sin and the pressure that's all around us and be men of God. I loved a Nazarene guy that I had in my church in New Hampshire.

He said, every morning I get up, look God in the face, spit the devil in the face and begin the day. Why? Because I'm a son of God. I have royal blood.

All right. Don't be afraid of sinners. The fear of man brings a snare.

Don't be afraid to confront other men about the gospel of Christ. Don't be afraid that if they mock or scorn, stand up and face them in Jesus' name and tell them the truth about God and about themselves and about the fact that God has crowned them and wants to make them a shining example of his glory as a man in this world. Men are redeemed by Christ's incarnation.

I'm sure through all eternity, we'll never get over it that God in his wonderful love and wisdom decided to become a man. He decided to become a man. He talked about it.

He told the prophets to talk about it. He said, it's going to happen. It's going to happen.

It's going to happen. And then in the fullness of time, he came down and focused himself in a woman's womb, the second person of the divine trinity, the eternal word, the everlasting son of God. And he took on himself a total human nature so that when he was born into this world, he was totally man and totally God.

Only this time, this man did not yield to Satan, did not sin, and finally went to the cross of Calvary. And when he died on the cross, he took all the sin of all mankind upon himself and paid the full price for it and went down into hell and conquered hell and conquered judgment and conquered the law and conquered sin and conquered Satan and rose victorious. And he is alive.

And brother and sister, there's a man in the glory. He has nail prints in his hands and feet and a wound in his side. And he's wearing the crown.

And he is the second Adam, the man who leads a new race. Oh man, we need to stand up for Jesus Christ. We need to learn how to rebuke Satan in the name of Jesus.

I haven't really preached on that here. Wasn't sure you were ready. I have a good sermon entitled Lion Country.

He goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Man, I want you to stand up against Satan in your family. Take a stand every morning of your life, get up and pray.

Heavenly father, I bring to you my wife, name her and my children. And I pray you'll cover them with the blood of Jesus and that you will hold them in your hand and that you will surround them with your angels and that you'll protect them from Satan's power. You have the right and authority to do that as a Christian

man.

You have been set free by the incarnation, the fact that God became man, Jesus, our savior. In the beginning was the word. That's the eternal self-revelation of God.

And the word was with God and the word, what? Was God himself. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him.

Without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines on in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light that all men through him might believe. And then it starts talking about this eternal word that he came into the world.

He came into his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him to them, he gave the power to become the sons of God. Even to them believe on his name, which are born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but they're born of God.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, the glories of the only begotten of the father, full of grace and truth. I tell you, man, Jesus did it all to save you and deliver you from sin, Satan, and to crown you with glory and honor in this world.

Well, I'm gonna close with this. A woman writes, our local newspaper was sponsoring an essay contest entitled, Why My Father is the Best. And since I was teaching a high school writing class, that was my assignment.

All students but one were busily writing. She said, you know, during this hour, I want you to write an essay on why my father's the best. They all went to work but one.

Julie stared stone-faced at the wall as her pen rolled off her desk and clattered to the floor. Need some ideas to get started, Julie, I prodded. I'm not doing this assignment, she stated flatly.

My dad's dead. Is there another man you could write about then? A grandfather or maybe or an uncle or a stepfather? I've had four stepfathers and they all abused me. Now my mom's new boyfriend has moved in with us.

The venom in her voice made me shiver. Not knowing how to respond, I silently pleaded with the Lord for help. Julie, I whispered, kneeling down beside her desk so only she could hear me.

Just because your father's dead doesn't mean you can't write about him. Pretend he's here right now. What would you tell him? She studied me for a few moments then nodded.

For the rest of the class, her pen scratched furiously across page after page of notebook paper. When the bell rang, Julie brought her essay to me. May I read it to you, she asked quietly.

I sat down to give her my whole attention. What she read to me was a profoundly intimate love letter from a daughter to her father. Some of you should try that today.

Either write it or say it. Every word had been dug from the deepest level of her soul. She ended by saying, though you died before I could know you, you are the best father in the world.

I love you, daddy. I've never forgotten that conversation with Julie. I too knew what it was like to grow up without a dad, but I never had to endure a parade of men through my home.

In fact, I was so young when he died and my mother was such a positive force in my life that I honestly didn't feel bad about not having a father. It wasn't until the birth of my own sons that I realized what I'd missed. One afternoon, my husband Steve swept Tyler up in a huge bear hug and swung him around his arms while Tyler squealed in delight.

So that's what I missed, I thought, as unexpected jagged grief brought tears to my eyes. It was then nearly 20 years after his death that I began to grieve for my father. For some time, I floundered in the world of what might have been.

The most often repeated phrase in my mind became, if only I'd had a father. In a Bible verse in Romans, brought my self-pity to an abrupt halt. It said, we've been adopted into the bosom of God's family and that we call him daddy, my daddy.

For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we really are God's children. The familiar word suddenly became rich with new meaning. I had a father and he would never leave me not through death, divorce, abuse or abandonment, not ever.

I smiled heavenward as the security of those words wrapped around me in a warm hug. I have a father and on Father's Day, he is the one I celebrate. Let us bow in prayer.

Father, only you know the hearts of the men in this room. And Lord, I pray for any man here today who has not opened his heart to Jesus Christ, has not been restored through the Savior to the Heavenly Father. I pray that you will help that man right now to pray silently where he sits to call out to you, to confess his sin, his need, to tell you that he believes you died for him, to open his heart to the Savior, help him to do that right now.

I pray for us who our fathers were so imperfect, help us to understand, however, who we really are. God's sons, his representatives crowned with glory and honor, help us to do that in our homes and wherever we are. Make this a day of fresh beginnings for each one of us who are men.

We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

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