

No Selfie Necessary

BY BILL VAN SCHIE

Just recently we had a visiting pastor at our church and he alerted us to the fact that we are living in the “selfie” generation. That today we seem to be so absorbed in taking our own photos in all sorts of poses with all sorts of celebrities in all kinds of circumstances to broadcast to others. It seems that we are in a tidal wave of the “selfies spirit” focussing on one self to impress others.

He pointed out that this was nothing new to mankind. Adam and Eve fell for the “selfie spirit” when they succumbed to Satan’s temptation to be like God. Jesus disciples repeatedly argued regarding who was the greatest disciple and competed for the best position in the kingdom. Throughout Scripture there are many examples of the “selfie”, “self-centred spirit”. In contrast to the “selfie spirit” we read the following in John 13:1-17

“It was just before the Passover Festival ... The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. So he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him ... When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

The very person who is fully entitled to have a “selfie” became a servant. The one whom through all things were made and for whom all things were created and who holds all things together became the lowest of all servants, the foot washer!

The question can be asked, “What enabled Jesus, the Son of God, the creator of the universe to be such a servant?” “Even a servant to the cross entering hell itself for His people?” Well I believe that the answer is also in this passage. *“Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;”*

Jesus knew who he was! He knew he was the Son of God. He had a solid, sound and intimate relationship with his heavenly Father. A relationship he fostered by spending time in the presence of his Father’s love, regularly. On the basis of Jesus knowing who he was, he could humble himself and he could become the least and serve his disciples.

For many years I thought that these statements in John 13 were highlighting the contrast between Jesus’ greatness and his humble service. Although the contrast is there it is also saying, Jesus being confident in whom he was, was enabled to serve. You see humble service, humility and rejection could not change his core identity, and this freed him up to serve.

Jesus then gives us a profound challenge. *“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”*

Now, to just simply follow Jesus’ example of service would mean we are given a moral challenge without the power to achieve it. However, if we understand that this example also includes his example of knowing who he was, the enabling power of this service, then we are so much more able to carry out the command.

So the question is, **“How well do we know who we are?”**

In 1 Pet 2:9 we read, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* When was the last time that you saw yourself as specially chosen, royal, holy, God’s own special possession?

In 1 Pet 1:18-19 we read *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”* Understanding the purchasing principle that the price paid reflects the value to the purchaser, this passage tells us that we are not just worth gold or silver to God, but that we are worth a precious Jesus, because that is the price the Father paid for us. Valuable indeed!

In Eph 2:10 we are told that *“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* The word “workmanship” in the Greek really means “master piece”. We already are God’s amazing, unique, excellent and valuable master pieces to be used in His master plan.

In 2 Cor 5:17 we read, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new has come!”* We already are new creations!

These and many other passages tell us who we are “in Christ” because when we know who we are, then we can be true to ourselves, and be used by God our Father to serve others.

So as counsellors let us remember the suffering and death of our Lord. Let

us remember with gratitude the forgiveness and cleansing that we have received. As we celebrate his victory over death in the resurrection, let us also celebrate the change of value and identity that has occurred in the core of our being.

May we fulfil our calling based on the new identity Jesus has given to us. Let us conduct our ministry as counsellors understanding the amazing truth of the core identity that Jesus offers. We indeed are greatly loved, and so, no “selfies” are necessary!

