

Sunday Sidebar- September 15, 2019

Identity is Important

A process theologian once wrote, "We begin life with a borrowed significance." How true. Our name has been chosen for us, and it may be a family name or another name that held significance for our parents. But we are given a name that borrows meaning from another's life. Then we have to grow into that name and make it our own.

Nabal's name meant "fool," and he lived up to it in 1 Samuel , chapter 25. David's name meant "beloved," and indeed, he was a man after God's own heart. My name is Penelope and means "weaver" in Greek....not quite sure about that one... But what I am sure about is that our identity is important, and sometimes we forget who we are and to whom we belong. We forget that we are sons and daughters of the living God and we forget that Jesus died to save us from our sins and bring us into right relationship with God.

In today's Scripture, David has a bit of an identity crisis. He forgets that he is loved of God; he forgets all that God has promised him; he forgets all that God has done for him in blessing him and protecting and guiding him. David basically panics and runs away from God. We read about this awful time of his life in 1 Samuel, chapters 27-30.

In Luke, chapter 15, Jesus told a parable about a father who had two sons and loved both sons, and one son forgot who he was and what he was supposed to live for....and off he ran to live a very carnal and unsatisfying lifestyle. He was experiencing an identity crisis....

Some bad things happen to him and he finds himself in want and pretty miserable. In the midst of all this, he "comes to himself," and remembers who he is. He has a father and a family and a destiny that is much better than his present situation. He decides to return home and throw himself on the mercy of his Father. Maybe Dad will take him back or hire him on as a servant where at least he'll have food and a warm place to sleep....He makes the journey and finds his father thrilled at his return! He receives not condemnation, but grace. And forgiveness.

In David's case as well, he found himself in a bad situation, surrounded by difficulty and angry people, when he suddenly remembers who he is. He has a father and a family and a destiny that is much better than his present situation. 1 Samuel 30.6 describes the scene when David comes back to God:

David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God.

David remembers who he is, a child of God and the anointed future King of Israel. He snaps out of his depression and self-pity, comes back to God in repentant prayer, and moves ahead in proper, faithful fashion.

Have you ever had an identity crisis? The world certainly encourages us to “find ourselves.” But sometimes in the busyness, confusion and intensity of life, we can end up losing ourselves or questioning our identity. If you’ve wandered away from your true identity, your home with Christ, then maybe it’s time to “come to yourself.” Remember that you are a son or daughter of God, and come home. The Father will be thrilled at your return! You will not be met with condemnation, but with grace and forgiveness...

As Christians, we are identified in Christ in part by the label. But our identity is not in name only. Our identity in Christ should be reflected in the way we live our lives, the service we offer, and the love we express for God and for others. Do you know who you are?