

Who am I, really?

A reflection about our identity as a human being having faith in Christ.

13/6/20

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Let us pray:

O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

Amen.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The continuation of the Holy Gospel taken from St Matthew 9: 35 – 10:8.

Glory be to thee, O Lord.

An extract...

“ ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

(vs 7 – 8)

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Glory be to thee O Lord.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=morHP2cJoZs>

Have you ever been that person?

I have.

What do I mean?

Well, let me explain.

When you meet someone for the first time, what do you normally raise in the conversation after sharing your names?

I know what I always ask.

“What do you do?”

I am not the only one to ask this question.

It is a common response from many of us as we strive to understand and know the new person we have met.

Why do we do this?

Why don't we ask the new person we have just met, some other questions like?

“Are you happy?”

“Are you at peace in the world?”

“Tell me about your loved ones.”

“Do you have a faith and value system that is important to you?”

Instead, we immediately ask the person about their career. It is, I suppose, at a conscious level, a way of summing up a person in terms of their level of skills, their income and where they would “fit” into the unspoken levels of society. You see, it helps us work out how we would relate to them.

I am just as guilty of this, as many of you probably are too...

I distinctly remember being at Rhodes University in Grahamstown/Makhanda, finishing off my Divinity Degree in my final year as a student who had now resigned from the ministry. My identity could cope with being a student

studying Divinity at Rhodes, although I was no longer an ordinand. However, the moment I started driving home to Cape Town, I would always have a crisis of identity. The feelings were so strong one day, while I was driving, that I had to stop my car and try to work out my confused emotions...

“Who was I, now that I was no longer an ordinand?”

“What were my goals?”

“Where was I going in life?”

“What was my new identity?”

These were hard times for me...

Psychologists say that identity is largely concerned with the question: “Who are you?” What does it mean to be who you are? Identity relates to our basic values that dictate the choices we make, e.g. relationships and career. These choices reflect who we are and what we value. For example, we can assume that the investment banker values money, while the college professor values education and helping students.

So, where are we getting this wrong?

My challenge to you this morning is to revise how you identify yourself, both to yourself and to others?

Sound crazy?

Give me a moment.

If we are Christians who believe in Jesus Christ, as the centre of our lives and being, then surely this will have a massive impact on our identity, on our choices, values and relationships in our life? Yet, many, if not all of us, fail to acknowledge Jesus, and the role He plays in our life, to a person that we meet for the first time.

I wonder why we do this?

Are we perhaps embarrassed about our faith in Jesus?

Are we perhaps concerned that the new person we have just met might label us as a “Jesus freak” and not talk to us again?

If this is the case, then how serious are we really about our faith?

Maybe we should revise our strategy when we meet someone for the first time?

Instead of the conversation going along like this...

“Hi, Darron, my name is Paul.”

“Tell me, Darron, what do you do?”

I would normally say something like this...

“I am a primary school teacher and a part-time priest.”

I could rather say...

“I am a child of Jesus, who is the centre of my life, and everything I do is based on my relationship with God.”

Wow!

How liberating would that be for us?

Do you see what is happening here? I am shifting the focus of my identity from what I do to what I believe! My actions come OUT of my faith. The most important part of my life is my faith, for my faith is the foundation of my actions...

So then, when we meet someone for the first time, why do we focus on our actions (what we do on a daily basis) rather than our faith that facilitates and empowers our actions and careers?

This is a challenging thought process for all of us.

You see, as Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of St Matthew this morning, He has given to all of us freely so that we might believe. If we choose to believe, then we must have faith. If we have faith, then we can act and live out of that same faith. Our actions and life is based on our faith. This then, becomes our primary identity. Now, we are able to go out into the world and follow the important

instructions of Jesus to, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons."

We cannot heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy and drive out demons, as a teacher, banker, mechanic or even as an assistant priest. However, we can heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy and drive out demons as a CHRISTIAN! Jesus is not so worried about our career choice, as He is about our relationship with Him. For, if our relationship with Jesus is solid, then so will our career choice be.

It is all about priorities.

So, let us recap for a moment.

Jesus has given His life for our sins, freely, so that we might believe and be saved.

We have a choice to believe in His salvation or not.

If we choose to believe in the grace and love of Jesus, then we accept that this will have an over-arching reach into our lives, as our primary identity becomes with Jesus, not with ourselves, not with what we do, not with what we wear or how much we earn. It is with Jesus. Full stop.

When we have moved our primary identity to be with and in Jesus, then we accept that our actions and lives will be aligned with His mission and love.

This then becomes our new identity and language of love.

We are all called to make a difference and to contribute to the Kingdom of God in our own small way. However, we cannot do this by ourselves, we can only do this by identifying first and foremost as a Christian, part of the Church of God.

***He said 'Freely, freely you have received; freely, freely give.
Go in my name, and because you believe others will know that I live.***

Every blessing for the week ahead.

I wish you a peaceful and restful Sunday.

Amen.

Fr Darron.