

Be Yourself. Everyone Else Is Taken

7/15/2018

I TIM. 4:14 -- Do not neglect the gift you have.

Today I want to speak about being our true self and loving who we truly are. I speak on this frequently, not entirely because I have forgotten that I have recently spoken on it, but that may be part of it. As I get older, I've noticed that I can repeat myself. Did I mention that I repeat myself?

More accurately, I think it comes to my mind because I still haven't gotten it. I still struggle with the old realm of the worldly-thinking, and the accompanying thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions; I haven't fully grasped the 'new' world that Christ is drawing us towards: the sacred and divine.

As I constantly say, we are Children of God. That is a fundamental truth about our nature. When we can see through our spiritual eyes, as God sees us, we are inherently joyous, loving beings. We are truthful, honest, dependable, and capable. That is who we truly are. Because we are spiritual beings, filled with the Spirit of God, we can spread blessings wherever we go, sharing happiness and kindness. Spirit within us causes us to be strong, healthy, and courageous. The more we exhibit the truth of who we are the more powerful we become as expressions of Christ.

When we display those qualities, we are in the sacred realm. We look upon others as God sees them; we see the Light of God within them and not just the worldly dross of flesh and ego. When we are

living from this sacred mindset we see beyond human error and are filled with compassion. We don't judge or condemn ourselves or anyone else. We accept everyone for the Divine being that they are. We accept ourselves and our gifts, and when we see something within us that does not meet Divine standards, we forgive ourselves and strive to be all that God has made us to be.

That is who we truly are, but we are not born into this perception; we uncover it. It is there already; it is who we are. But we must be 'born again' into its realization. Jesus says in John 3:5-8 -- "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit.*" In fact, we forget so frequently who we truly are that through prayer, meditation, and contemplation we must daily die to the old world and be reborn into our true nature.

When we are reborn into the sacred realm, there are no longer two worlds, just one. This is the meaning of the veil in the temple being torn when Jesus died. In those days, a large veil separated the congregation from where the priest would go. It divided the unholy from the holy. But when Jesus died, the veil in the temple was torn asunder. That is what Jesus meant when he said the temple had to fall. "...not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Our word *profane* comes from two Greek words, "pro" and "fanum", which means 'outside the temple'. Jesuit priest, Teilhard de Chardin, said "...nothing here below is

profane for those who know how to see. On the contrary, everything is sacred.”

When we are in the sacred zone of perception, we know how to see. There is only one world, God’s world. When we have seen one burning bush, all bushes burn. When just one time we can look past the worldly unpleasantness of a homeless person, seeing past the smell, sight, and behavior, and seeing the Child of God within, then we can see the divinity within every soul, regardless of situation or circumstance.

Fleeting it is to engage this perception. Our earthly perspective and ego so quickly fill our heads and hearts with old tapes. “Look out for that guy. He’ll probably hold us at knife point or try to assault us.” We quickly fall prey to the profane realm and its fears and ways of thinking.

The worldly dimension uses our lower ego as its voice of reason in every situation. Instead of God’s still small voice we hear Ego’s loud obnoxious croakings. Judgment, disapproval, and condemnation are rampant, not only of others but ourselves.

We dismiss our talents and gifts. Whatever we can do, it is not enough. We can only see ourselves through the eyes of the world, not of God. We see ourselves as limited, incapable, unworthy, and insufficient. We cannot see ourselves objectively; neutrality and impartiality are forsaken for the ego’s rantings.

We commonly diminish ourselves and what we have to offer. Over the years my ego has badgered me: “Patrick, don’t fool yourself.

You can't convey a message as well as Rick Warren, Andy Stanley or Billy Graham. You can't play the guitar as well as James Taylor, Michael Chapdelaine, or Earl Klugh. You can't sing like Scotty McCreery, Pavarotti, or Elvis Presley. Face it Patrick, you have nothing to offer. Just quit already."

That's the ego talking; the voice piece for all the fears that the world tries to convince us to believe. But if we can just tune that out for a bit, and I know how hard that is, but if we can stop up our ears to the world for just a short while, move into prayer, and ask God to reveal to us who we truly are, new information starts to percolate up. It has a different message: "Patrick, there is already been a Rick Warren, a James Taylor, and an Elvis Presley. Be yourself; everyone else is taken. Use the gifts I gave you; the talents and propensities I gave you. Those are what I need in the world right now." The voice of Christ in our ears is always accepting, approving, and appreciating, always loving.

I think part of our challenge is to recognize our gifts. There are people we really like to be around because they make us feel good, or safe, or comfortable. Those are their gifts that we are enjoying. These people don't even recognize them as gifts because the world tells them they aren't a talent or an ability.

Oh, really? I could argue in their favor. And just because they aren't a skill that was developed, are they not still awesome gifts? The person that can enter a room with a pleasant, easy, sincere smile gifts everyone with their countenance. Someone's gift can be a talent that comes naturally, or one developed over years of practice. Artists come to mind: painters, sketchers, and other

graphic and computer wizards, sculptures, photographers, video and film makers, actors and comedians, musicians, writers and poets, dancers, and athletes have much to offer. Still others are talented in math, mechanics, engineering and all the other sciences. Others have a designer's eye for flower arranging, interior design, landscape artists, and architects. Some are talented with clothing: tailors and designers.

The Bible mentions: prophecy, teaching, leadership, mercy, exhortation, knowledge, faith, healing, speaking in tongues and its interpretation. Also: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. Then there are: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

But there are other gifts that people can have: to bring harmony to situations, and simply the willingness to give of ourselves in whatever way is beneficial at the moment.

Talents are unlimited, and the point of having a God-given gift is to share it with others while thanking God so that it will be spiritually fulfilling for all. The seeds of our gifts are within us; God intends for us to water them, nurture them, and bring them to full fruition.

When we ignore our gifts, we shortchange God and diminish ourselves. When we deny our gifts, we deny ourselves and allow the world's voice to be heard rather than Spirit's. By withholding our gifts, we cling to the world, holding to fear and mediocrity. When we embrace our gifts and who we are we step up, out of the

mundane and profane, and enter the realm of the sacred. Whenever we make a move toward Christ, we move toward the holy.

To move from the worldly to the sacred is an inner journey, done in the quiet of prayer through the embracing of our true self. St. Augustine wrote: “I was admonished to return to my own self, and with You to guide me, I entered into the innermost part of myself, and I was able to do this because You were my helper.” By using God as our helper, we can transform our sadness, disappointment, and anger into strength, action, and even joy. We can then bless those around us. Without God’s help, we do not transform, but transmit our general orneriness to everyone around us.

Our challenge then is to be ourselves and not try to imitate anyone else. But who are we, truly? As much as the world wants us to believe it, we are not the loner who can do it all ourselves. We are not the only one with a good idea, or the correct perspective, or the truest way to believe. Our way is not the best way for anyone but us. When I am being true to myself, I am not being true to the weak, over-weight, unworthy, material-minded, self-righteous, self-conscious, egotistical, world-loving person that I see in the mirror. That is not who I am striving to be. That person in the mirror is who I have created; not God.

But God sees beyond my small-minded limited vision of myself. God holds a different vision of me. God sees me as large, capable, valuable, worthy, whole, and useful. We are created to be vessels for Spirit to use. The Christ within powers all that we are, have, and do, if we will just get out of the way. God wants us to be our

self, the ‘self’ created from infinite Love, Wisdom, Peace, and Joy, put here with a purpose.

God wanted each of us to be here. How do I know? – because you are here. We are here by divine appointment. The world would not be the same without us. Our light, our specialness, is missed when we leave our bodies. Just think about anyone you have loved and is now in pure spirit. Sure, we go on, we heal, but there is always a scar. At times, we have to put on a prosthetic to continue living and loving, because we miss the ones we have loved; they cannot be replaced. Still, we can move on, missing them, yet grateful for the time we had together. Eventually, our eyes adjust to the darkness of their absence, and we begin to feel joy again, peace again; knowing they are still with us, just not in their bodies.

We are a divine creation. There is no other person quite like us, nor will there ever be another you or another me. God has created only one of us, so no matter how hard we try we cannot be someone else. God knows best, and since we are here it is now time to bless the world with our talents and abilities, with our insights and appreciation, and most importantly with our love. All that we need to do is move into prayer and hear that still small voice whisper: “My beloved, have no fear; just be who I have created. Be yourself and allow others to be themselves. Always know that you are loved just as you are.” As St. Augustine wrote: “God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.” So, let us go out and be ourselves, loving as only God can through us.

Let us pray....