

## Sermon Just Who Do You Think You Are?

Lorraine Quesada August 20, 2006

Will you pray with me?

Beloved God, hear our prayer. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight because we love you and long to do your work and your will – nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. We pray in the name of Jesus, the blessed teacher you sent to show us the way. Amen

In Mark 8: 27-30, Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” and after they responded, he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” It is very human to want to know what people think of you and in some ways it shapes who you think you are. If I asked you just who you think you are, I would likely get a different response from everyone, but the scriptures tell us who God says we are.

In the Genesis scripture that Chris read, we learned that we are the images of God and that God considers us good.

In John 15: 16 Jesus says to his disciples, “You did not choose me but I chose you ... “ You are his disciples – you are chosen. Not chosen in the sense of being better than anyone else, but chosen in the sense of what is written in Mark 8: 18 where Jesus says, “Do you have eyes and fail to see? Do you have ears and fail to hear? ...” You are chosen because you have eyes that see and ears that hear and you believe.

Because of the grace of God, you were given gifts. Grace is unconditional love. You do not have to do anything, or be anything. You are loved simply because you are. There is nothing you can do to earn it – nothing you can do to deserve it – it is given – unconditionally – to you – by God. And because you are so loved, God has given you these gifts.

The first gift is the gift of the call. You are called by God. A call is something like when someone comes up behind you and taps you on the shoulder. You do not know who is calling you. This is much like what Samuel experienced in the scripture Chris read. The call is heard, the tap is

felt, but we do not know who is calling. In order to understand this God gives us another gift.

The gift of faith. This gift tells us that it is God who is calling. But for what? Why me? God knows that for you to fully understand you need another gift.

The gift of Christ – the blessed teacher who teaches us what God is calling us to do. His ministry was to teach the ways and the will of God and he did this in many ways – by example, by the life he lived, by telling stories and parables – he taught us in many, many ways, but it can all be summed up in the what has been called “The Greatest Commandment”. It is found in Matthew 22: 37-39. It is this: “ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Let’s take the second one first. Love your neighbor as yourself. That one is perhaps the hardest, because as you may have already noticed, some neighbors that are not all that loveable.

Love is a word that has many meanings – everything from “greater love hath no man that to give up his life for a friend” and “God loves you.” And all the way down to “I love spaghetti” and “I love a sunny day.” We should have different words for different kinds of love.

Snow is a big part of Eskimo culture and, we are told that they have 13 words that all mean “snow”. I don’t know what they are, but there could be one for the first snow, a wind-driven snow, an icy, biting snow, a soft gentle snow, or even some for the colors of snow – a blue snow, a yellow snow – never eat yellow snow.

The Greeks did a bit better. They had 3 words for love.

Eros was the word for erotic love – like falling in love or making love – not the lust that fell from the cross here one day – that’s different.

Philia was the word for brotherly love- Love for humanity, for friends and family, Platonic love.

Agape was the word for the kind of love in “greater love hath no man” and” – “God loves you” – the highest kind of love.

So “love thy neighbor” was for Jesus, not so much an emotion as an action. Jesus says in Matthew 25: 35-36, “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Love, as action, is still felt as love by the recipient. Love, as action, is an easy yoke – a lighter burden.

The first part of the greatest commandment, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind was also taught with its full meaning by Jesus. It means relationship. A lifelong, every moment of every day, commitment. We are not unused to this type of commitment. We commit our lives to our spouses, our children, our parents, our loved ones. We give our lives to them. That’s the kind of relationship God wants from us. To give our lives – not give up our lives – that was done once and for all by Jesus – on the cross – but to give our lives to a committed relationship. Jesus taught us this in his prayer. Our father – in Aramaic, his language, Abba, is more “Daddy” than father.

We are wanted by God to be in this kind of committed relationship with God. Just as in our other committed relationships, it is 24/7 that God wants us – to hear our voices – whether raised in songs of praise - or whispered in prayer, God wants to be in conversation with us. God speaks to us through scripture, or through the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit – that sometimes still, small voice that we have to be very quiet to hear.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 5: 13 and 14 that “You are the salt of the earth; ...” and ”You are the light of the world.” ...”

The Apostle Paul tells us in I Corinthians 6: 15, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?”

People of God, just who do you think you are? Here is who God says you are: You are made in the image of God, you are good, you are loved by God unconditionally, you are called by God, you are chosen, you are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world, you are the body of Christ, and you are wanted by God to be in a committed relationship, to give your

life to this relationship. You are the blessed people of God. Let us profess our commitment to God in song as we sing Hymn # 404 – Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Amen

### Offertory

As freely as you have been given, so freely give, that a light may shine from this place to light the dark corners of someone else's world.

### Prayer of Dedication

We give thee but thine own; what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone; a trust O Lord from Thee.

### Benediction

And now may the grace of God, the love of Christ, and the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, be with you, as you go in peace to do God's will – nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. Amen

