

Coram Deo
Soli Deo Gloria, Soli Deo Gracia, Soli Scriptura
Agnus Dei, Qui Tollis Peccata Mundi
Deo Volente

Sermon Preach at Stouffville United Church

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“You Are Worthy” Series 3

Sermon Series: Who Do You Think You Are?

Finding Your True Identity in Christ.

Ephesians 1:15-23

January 30, 2022

Last week you'll remember I ended the message by quoting Nelson Mandela who at his inauguration said,

Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate,
but that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.
We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous, handsome, talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?
You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world...

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.
It is not just in some; it is in everyone.

And, as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give
other people permission to do the same...

You were born to manifest God's glory on the earth; to express the glory of God in you. This amazing statement of identity was spoken by a man who had been imprisoned because he and others rebelled against the racist policy of Apartheid.

Bishop Tutu said, Before Nelson Mandela was arrested in 1962, he was an angry relatively young man. He founded the ANC's military wing. When he was released, he surprised everyone because he was talking about reconciliation and forgiveness and not about revenge."

For generations, people in South Africa endured being considered useless, insignificant and worthless because they were black; until Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu and those of their generation stood up and understood that when you know your worth, no one can make you feel worthless.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who chose you before the foundation of the world, and predestined you through adoption as children of God...who has blessed you in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessings in Christ...according to the riches of his grace...purpose of his will...for the praise of his glory...”

Like Mandela, St Paul, was in prison; and while there, he wanted the believers to never forget their worth. For they were heirs of the kingdom not prisoners of the state. They were children of God, born to manifest God’s glory on the earth.

And so are you. Now here is the problem. You don’t believe it; not really.

I’m not judging. I’m just observing. You see, we all let the world around us press in on us and pressure us into believing that our identity is determined by what we accomplish, what we have, how we look, what we wear, what we do for a living.

One of the first questions we ask after meeting someone for the first time, is “What do you do for a living? According to the world, what we do determines who we are, but within Christianity it is the opposite. Who we are determines what we do, not what we do determines who we are.

Who are you? According to the Scriptures - according to our Lord, you are a child of God, chosen and precious in His sight, and you are worthy. For you are one for Whom Christ died! That is no small thing, to have someone die for you.

Having heard this, you might say, so what? What does it matter if I am appreciated or valued? The truth is it matters a great deal. When one feels worthy or valued they look at life differently. They live life differently.

I

When one understands they are worthy or valued they move from **grumbling to understanding**. *“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, [16](#) I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers...”*

When we feel neglected, taken advantage of and taken for granted we can find ourselves grumbling about doing what we previously enjoyed and wanted to do. It was because we focus on what was wrong instead of identifying and understanding what was right.

Once a wise man held a seminar to teach people how to get rid of sorrows in their life. Many people gathered to hear the wise man’s words. The man entered the room and told a hilarious joke to the crowd. The crowd roared in laughter.

After a couple of minutes, he told them the same joke, and only a few of them smiled.

When he told the same joke for the third time, no one laughed anymore. The wise man smiled and said, “You can’t laugh at the same joke over and over. So why do you cry over the same problem over and over?”

Paul was in prison and had every reason to grumble and complain yet, instead he gave thanks and prayed for the well-being of others. He didn't allow his circumstances to dictate his attitude because he knew that God had begun a good work in him and would continue it until the day of Christ's coming. He knew that he had all he needed in Christ. So he was able to turn his focus from himself and his circumstances on to others.

A father said to his daughter "You graduated with honors, here is a car I acquired many years ago. It is several years old. But before I give it to you, take it to the used car lot downtown and tell them I want to sell it and see how much they offer you. The daughter went to the used car lot, returned to her father and said, "They offered me \$1,000 because it looks very worn out." The father said, "Now Take it to the pawnshop." The daughter went to the pawnshop, returned to her father and said, "The pawn shop offered \$100 because it was a very old car." The father asked his daughter to go to a car club and show them the car. The daughter took the car to the club, returned and told her father," Some people in the club offered \$100,000 for it since it's a Nissan Skyline R34, an iconic car and sought after by many."

The father said to his daughter, "The right place values you the right way," If you are not valued, do not be angry, it means you are in the wrong place. Those who know your value are those who appreciate you. Never stay in a place where no one sees your value.

Paul, though in prison, was praying and given praise, because he understood his true worth in Christ.

II

When you understand you are worthy or valued you begin to move from grumbling to understanding and from **competing to encouraging**. *"For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, [16](#) I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers..."*

Paul spent his entire ministry lifting people up and encouraging them without concern for his place or how he would be seen in the eyes of others if they succeeded and he appeared to have failed. Lincoln said, "It is difficult to make a person miserable while they feel worthy themselves and claims kindred to the great God who made them."

When we understand our own worth before God, and knowing that we are of value, worthy in His sight and appreciated and one for whom Christ died; we have no need to out perform or compete with others we don't need to put people down in order to feel better about ourselves; rather we are able to lift others up and celebrate their successes without feeling neglected or devalued or of less value than they are.

I mentioned this previously that the founder of Navigators international died as a result of a boating accident. A speeding motorboat bounced on a wave and shot Dawson Trotman and a little girl into the frigid water. To keep her from drowning, the man held her head above water while the boat circled back. They rescued the girl. But Dawson sank and drowned. According to a quote in Time Magazine, "He lived to save others. His death was just the way he would have planned it." [1] "Dawson Trotman, was always lifting someone up."

An old man walked across the beach until he came across a young boy throwing something into the breaking waves. Upon closer inspection, the old man

could see that the boy was tossing stranded starfish from the sandy beach, back into the ocean.

“What are you doing, young man?” He asked. “If the starfish are still on the beach when the sun rises, they will die,” the boy answered.

“That is ridiculous. There are thousands of miles of beach and millions of starfish. It doesn’t matter how many you throw in; you can’t make a difference.” “It matters to this one,” the boy said as he threw another starfish into the waves. “And it matters to this one.” Living your life to lift others up. To do that you have to understand your own worth.

III

When one understands they are worthy or valued they move from grumbling to understanding, competing to encouraging, and **preforming to serving**.

“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, [16](#) I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. [17](#) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit[f] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. [18](#) I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19](#) and his incomparably great power for us who believe...”

In Phoenix, Arizona, a 26 year-old mother stared down at her 6 year-old son, who was dying of terminal leukemia. Although her heart was filled with sadness, She also had a strong feeling of determination. Like any parent, she wanted her son to grow up & fulfill all his dreams. Now, that was no longer possible. The leukemia would see to that. But she still wanted her son's dream to come true. She took her son's hand and asked, 'Billy, did you ever think about what you wanted to be once you grew up? Did you ever dream and wish what you would do with your life?' Mommy, 'I always wanted to be a fireman when I grew up.' Mom smiled back and said, 'Let's see if we can make your wish come true.' Later that day she went to her local fire Department in Phoenix, Arizona, where she met Fireman Bob, who had a heart as big as Phoenix! She explained her son's final wish and asked if it might be possible to give her 6 year-old son a ride around the block on a fire engine. Fireman Bob said, 'Look, we can do better than that. If you'll have your son ready at seven o'clock Wednesday morning, we'll make him an honorary Fireman for the whole day. He can come down to the fire station, eat with us, go out on all the fire calls, the whole nine yards! And if you'll give us his sizes, we'll get a real fire uniform for him, with a real fire hat, not a toy one with the emblem of the Phoenix Fire Department on it, a yellow slicker like we wear and rubber boots.' 'They're all manufactured right here in Phoenix, so we can get them fast.'

Three days later Fireman Bob picked up Billy, dressed him in his uniform and escorted him from his hospital bed to the waiting hook and ladder truck. Billy got to sit on the back of the truck and help steer it back to the fire station. He was in heaven. There were three fire calls in Phoenix that day and Billy got to go out on all three calls. He rode in the different fire engines, the Paramedic's van, and even the fire chief's car. He was also videotaped for the Local news program.

Having his dream come true, with all the love and attention that was lavished upon him, so deeply touched Billy that he lived three months longer than any doctor

thought possible. One night all of his vital signs began to drop dramatically and the head nurse, who believed in the hospice concept; that no one should die alone; began to call the family members to the hospital. Then she remembered the day Billy had spent as a Fireman, so she called the Fire Chief and asked if it would be possible to send a fireman in uniform to the hospital to be with Billy as he made his transition.

The chief replied, 'We can do better than that. We'll be there in five minutes. Will you please do me a favor? When you hear the sirens screaming and see the lights flashing, will you announce over the PA system that there is not a fire?' 'It's the department coming to see one of its finest members one more time. And will you open the window to his room?' About five minutes later a hook and ladder truck arrived at the hospital and extended its ladder up to Billy's third floor open window, 16 fire-fighters climbed up the ladder into Billy's room. With his mother's permission, they hugged him and held him and told him how much they loved him.

With his dying breath, Billy looked up at the fire chief and said, 'Chief, am I really a fireman now?' 'Billy, you are, and the Head Chief, Jesus, is holding your hand,' the chief said. With those words, Billy smiled and said, 'I know, He's been holding my hand all day, and the angels have been singing.' He closed his eyes one last time.

One day your life will flash before your eyes. Make sure it is worth watching. You think about that. Amen.