

Sunday, September 28, 2014

Rekindling Our Passion – Jesus’ Self-Understanding, Our Self-Understanding

Matthew 16: 13-17; John 3: 22-36; John 8: 48-59; Galatians 2:20

Who am I?

Who are you?

What kind of name do we make for ourselves?

Have we made for ourselves?

“Making a name for oneself” is an idiom in our English language

– meaning, “to become well known and respected in a particular area.”

We all want to be somebody.

A blog provides 7 steps for young entrepreneurs on how to make a name for themselves:

1. What do you stand for?
2. Start a blog
3. Meet your audience
4. Show up on search engines
5. Monetize your niche
6. Grow your credibility
7. Drive traffic to you and your business through a network of people.

A lot of who we are and how we are “somebody” has to do with our self-understanding, and how we express ourselves.

And how we understand ourselves is integral to our passion for life, our passion for living.

There is an excitement and zest for life when there is a deep sense of “who I am”

- because you have a sense of yourself wherever you are headed,
- able to assess what adds to you and also what takes away from you.

But when we don’t, life can be debilitating because we are alienated from ourselves.

In exploring the life of Jesus in the Gospels, we come away with a strong sense that Jesus knew who he was,

He understood what he was about,

What he came to do,

Jesus had a deep awareness of who he was.

That did not keep him from the difficulties and struggles of life

– yet in the midst of them, he was able to navigate through these difficulties and struggles with strength.

In one encounter with the Jewish leaders, Jesus expressed who he was

– in response to their conclusions that he was a Samaritan and demon-possessed (John 8:48).

Jesus response is telling.

Not only was his mission deeply integrated with what he heard and saw God saying and doing (as we explored last Sunday) . . .

But his identity

– who he was

– **was tied up with God as well:**

“I am not possessed by a demon, but I honor my Father and you dishonor me.”

And in presenting to them that he has come to bring life (cf. John 10:10): “I tell you, whoever obeys my word will never see death.”

To which they exclaimed: “Now we know you are demon-possessed. Abraham died and so did the prophets – are you greater than our father Abraham?”

And then we hear how Jesus understood and understands himself:

“If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me” (John 8:54).

And following some other interchanges, Jesus declares, “Before Abraham was born, I am.”

Jesus was deeply self-aware of who he was and what he came to do.

Though he struggled with that understanding, especially, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus continued in expressing his self-understanding

– that he was not about making a name for himself,

– **but rather revealing and making clear the name of God and God’s redemptive mission of restoring all humanity and creation to live abundantly.**

What was unique about Jesus in relation to his self-understanding is that he knew God.

It’s interesting in John’s Gospel, it is never expressed of Jesus that he *believed in God*, rather it is expressed that he *knew God*. (cf. Beasley-Murray, John, p. 138).

He knew God intimately because his life was tied up, integrated, in community with God.

This knowing God

– is what is deeply shaped the life and ministry of Jesus

– is what deeply shaped his self-understanding

– and is, transforming of our lives as human beings

So, what are we about?

Who are we?

How does this self-understanding lead to passion in our lives?

All our lives we have been sold the idea that “who we are” depends upon what name we make for ourselves.

But who we are has more to do with “whose we are.”

And coming to know that we are known by the One whose we are.

Paul expresses in Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

This is a fundamental expression of identity – as to “whose” we are!

Paul’s self-identity, self-understanding is intertwined, rooted together with Jesus Christ, knowing Jesus deeply – and I submit
– so is ours as we seek to live as disciples of Jesus.

This does not mean
– we are nothing
– but rather we are something in a completely different way,
– than what we try to make of ourselves.

It is in “losing” the name we try to make for ourselves that we find our true name, that we discover our true being known
– our deep selves, who we truly are
– seeing ourselves as God sees us.

The key to understanding this is in Jesus’ expression in John 8:
“If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.”

How is our self-understanding shaped if we no longer are seeking to glorify ourselves?

To “glorify” means: to “reveal or make clearer the glory of God by or through our actions.

And “glory” means: “. . . as related to God in the Old Testament bears with it the idea of greatness of splendor – [a certain weightiness].

In the New Testament, the word translated “glory” means "dignity, honor, praise and worship."

Putting these two together, we find that glorifying God means to acknowledge His greatness and give Him honor by praising and worshipping Him, primarily because He, and He alone, deserves to be praised, honored and worshipped.”

Frederick Buechner’s thoughts appear in a daily blog – and on Friday he had something to say about “God’s glory.”

Glory is to God what style is to an artist. A painting by Vermeer, a sonnet by Donne, a Mozart aria – each is so rich with the style of the one who made it that to the connoisseur it couldn't have been made by anybody else, and the effect is staggering.

The style of artists brings you as close to the sound of their voices and the light in their eyes as it is possible to get this side of actually shaking hands with them.

In the words of Psalm 19:1, "The heavens are telling the glory of God."

It is the same thing. To the connoisseur, not just sunsets and starry nights, but dust storms, rain forests, garter snakes, and the human face are all unmistakably the work of a single hand.

Glory is the outward manifestation of that hand in its handiwork just as holiness is the inward.

To behold God's glory, to sense God's style, is the closest you can get to God this side of paradise, just as to read *King Lear* is the closest you can get to Shakespeare.

Glory is what God looks like when for the time being all you have to look at him with is a pair of eyes.

Therefore, to glorify God is to live in such a way that God's artistry is revealed.

And we glorify God when, somehow our lives are hidden in God – and as a result, our lives reflect, reveal the artistry of God in and through all we are and do.

And in this revealing, our lives become an expression of worship to God
– because we want to get out of the way enough so that we do not want to hide God's artistry, and yet God's artistry also rubs off on us.

Living a life of worship, is not just about engaging in acts of worship
– but rather, we ourselves in who we are and all that we are
– become an expression of worship unto God

Our life is worship
Our self-understanding has to do with worship, with *worth-ship* to God

In this way we move from mere believing in God and grow in knowing God.

And we grow deeper in discovering that we are known by God
– all this shapes our lives as lives of worship.

Our living, our being becomes worship
– much more so than merely the songs we sing, the prayers we pray, the gathering together in community.

And yet, when we do gather together, we are this confluence of “living worship,” “lives of worship”
– mosaic tiles (and all the uniqueness and diversity that image expresses)
– displaying the artistry of God.

In discovering whose we are, and in our gathering, reminding one another whose we are
– we reveal God's presence,
– we reveal God who knows and seeks to be known.

And in so doing
– as we glorify God/reveal God's artistry
– God's presence so engulfs us, shapes us, God's artistry re-creates us
– and in being shaped in this way, we come to discover how God sees us, our true and deep self-identity
– and it is with this identity that we live and work in this world
– participating with God in creating and re-creating that which expresses life!

Therefore, as we live, as we express who we are . . .

May we not merely make a name for ourselves,

But may we worship, glorify God, reveal God's artistry

And in so doing,
we discover who we are,
because we discover whose we are

May we live in this reality of worshipful living!