

In Deuteronomy I read this week; “And there rejoice before the LORD your God... eat them (your sacrifices) in the presence of the LORD your God... you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to.” (Deut. 12:12, 18, 19) God’s goal has always been for us to enjoy his presence, to rejoice in his presence, and to know that he enjoys our presence, that he rejoices in us his children. You’ve got nothing to fear, you’ve got nothing to prove. Only a living God, in Jesus, who wants to

share his life with you and the rest of his family.

Which reminds me, let’s not imprison God expecting him to prove himself before we’ll accept him. That was the trap the Children of Israel fell into. They went God shopping. After all there could be a better one. One with only five commandments instead of ten. Or at least leaving out the sixth commandment so we could have fun like everyone else.

If you are letting what you do determine who you are, then repent, and let Jesus be God, not your

performance. And then join Paul in daily pursuing your relationship with Jesus, letting who you are in Christ find expression in the different roles and functions you’re called to in life, and always do it rejoicing in the LORD’S presence.

Let us pray.
 Jesus thankyou for saving me from a wasted life.
 Thankyou for saving me from the oppression of always having to perform, of labelling myself to feel good about life. Jesus thankyou for loving me, so that I can love myself in you, and let the new nature you’ve gifted me with find expression in of life as we share it together. Thankyou that I can rejoice, and celebrate life in your presence.
 Amen.

21 March 2010

I AM IN CHRIST

Philippians 3:4b-21



In the reading from Philippians today Paul exposes one of the Devil’s tricks he uses to enslave us. Paul says; “If others think they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more...” (Phil 3:4b) So what’s the trap?

Finish this phrase; I am a? I am a Pastor. I am a Father. I am a Success or Failure. I am none of those functional descriptions. I am in Christ, a child of God, whom the Father loves and is well pleased with.

Paul was enslaved to being a successful Pharisee. He had devoted himself energetically to this task, to the point he could say; ‘I am a zealous Pharisee’. And he could prove it, he’d sanctioned the stoning to death of Stephen. Paul could proudly boast that he was a zealous Pharisee and not a lot of hot air. He could

point to his track record. And there’s the trap.

If your life is determined by your track record then you’re trapped. You’ve got to keep performing at that same level or better. You’ve got to keep proving yourself. You’re trapped by other people’s expectation. Trapped by your own ego, your own desire to look good, to be good, to stand out from the crowd.

If you think any occupation, any function, any image determines you, now is the time to repent. Paul certainly did; “But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...” (Phil. 3:7,8)

What I do, no matter how good it is, doesn’t determine who I am, that is God’s role. He

determines who I am, so that now shapes what I do. In Jesus, I am a child of God, and so now I seek to live true to who I am. Just like the fruit doesn’t determine the tree, the tree produces the fruit.

That’s what we mean when we say we live by faith and not by works. It’s my relationship with God through Jesus that determines who I am, and that shapes what I do. Faith will always express itself in works, but my works should never determine my faith. Then I’m a slave, just one step away from being redundant, one step away from not simply failing but being a failure.

In Jesus I can never be a failure, no matter how many times I fail, because Jesus isn’t a failure, and Jesus determines who I am. He has died and risen again that I might die to self and live in him. That I might die to being a slave

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
 Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

to my good deeds, to my performance and live a loved child of God.

Is this just theological waffle or does it have significance for your life?

In a nation where depression is on the rise, where substance abuse is on the rise, where image is all important, this is crucial.

One of the factors in depression is that we move from failing to being a failure. We move from feeling in control, to feeling totally out of control, and so we lose hope. I can't make the changes I'd like, and so I slowly become depressed. I feel my life is just mundane, routine and I'm not accomplishing anything. It's just a different day, but the same old rubbish.

The moment I believe I am equal to what I do; depression is a knocking. I am a Prophet of God. So I can't be wrong, otherwise I'm not a Prophet, or maybe God has left me. I am a Pastor, and we all know pastors don't make mistakes, that

they help people and don't need help. We all know pastors are men of God, full of the Holy Spirit, supermen. What happens when you get tired, make mistakes, crash and burn? Have I become less of a person?

Thank God Jesus saves us from this sort of rubbish. Never let what you do determine who you are.

I am

Now is the time to repent. I am not a pastor. I am a child of God, in Christ Jesus, whom God loves and is well pleased with. Now I have the wonderful opportunity of sharing life with Dad, of letting his character find expression in my life, for as his child, his character has become my character. I carry his DNA. I have nothing to prove.

God has called me to perform different functions; he has gifted me to perform different functions. Through these functions my character is

able to show through, and as Dad and myself share life together he gets the enjoyment of seeing his child take his first steps, or watching me learn to run, or picking me up when I crash, skin my knee and cry. There he is able to comfort me and help me to try again. Secure in his love, knowing without a shadow of doubt that I'm his loved child.

I'm not a pastor. I'm not a farmer. I'm not a teacher. I'm not a manager. These are roles Jesus may or may not call me to function as his child. I'm not even a father, that's a wonderful role Jesus has called me to where I can discover and grow in part of that wonderful nature of God that I have in Jesus. Part of that wonderful nature is discovering the Fatherhood of God, that parent part of his nature, which is part of my nature in Christ.

If my function becomes my identity, then I'm trapped by my image of what a good father is. Then failure labels me as

a failure. Welcome depression, anxiety, resentment at those who always get it right, when I always seem to miss part of the equation.

Paul doesn't label himself a failure or a success. He's free of all that rubbish. Rather he says; "I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection..." (Phil. 3:10) Do you notice that Paul moves from performance to a living healthy relationship? He wants to do what? Paul wants to get to know Jesus. Paul wants to live life with Jesus, not as some abstract, not following some teaching, not achieving a pass mark as an apostle, but Paul wants to get to know Jesus.

Was Jesus' life a success or a failure? What did he achieve? He owned nothing. He had no degrees. He was executed, because it was more convenient for Pilate than to deal with a riot. Why was Jesus' life the most successful? Because he never lost faith in his Father's love for him.

Even when he cried out in total agony; 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me'. Jesus still breathes last with these words; 'Into your hands I commit my soul'. Jesus finds his worth, his security, his being in that wonderful relationship of love he shares with his Father. And so he loses everything rather than that relationship.

I am in Christ.

After all, in Jesus' own words; "What good will it be for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul?" (Matt. 16:26) It'll do you no good at all, because you'll lose the one thing that will last, and that is the Father's love of you in Christ Jesus.

So Jesus calls us to go and make disciples of him. That's relationship talk. That's not a new thing to do, or more letters after my name, but a relationship with a living,

breathing, very much alive person; Jesus. Paul is seeking to build a healthy relationship with Jesus, that's what he presses on toward. He doesn't let himself get sidetracked by his past mistakes. He doesn't live shaped by his failures. Paul doesn't live wracked by regret, because he's focused on Jesus and living that special relationship they have.

Paul is focused on that wonderful day when he see Jesus face to face, and their relationship will leap to a whole, wonderful new level. And Jesus won't be embracing Paul the apostle, but Paul. Paul the loved child of God, who is precious to his Father, with whom he's over the moon. Paul won't have to hide from his Dad in a fine suit or deeds trying to impress him. Paul will be wrapped in Jesus, having no fear, having not need to play games and prove himself. But open to be loved and enjoy that most wonderful of all relationships, delighting in God's presence.