Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Who are you – Week 26

Identity

Day 175: Baptism Prep Day 1

I'm going to translate what you said to me at the end of last week.

Great!

I am loved – which means, someone wants what is healthiest for me, at all times and in all places.

That's a great translation.

You keep interrupting before I am done!

Oops! I apologize. I'll be quiet until you invite me back in.

Thank you.
…
Specifically, there is a person, who wants what is healthiest for me, who can release me from death, from evil, from fear. That person wants me to achieve health in every way: "shalom." That person is known as Jesus of Nazareth. He is anointed to bring me from death and despair into life and hope. Make sense so far?

Yes! This is wonderful! You are understanding!

I am not understanding your phrase "in Christ, through Christ, with Christ, of Christ" though.

There are many ways to try and explain that – perhaps the best though, is to start off with asking you a question.

Ok…

What are you?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 176: Baptism Prep Day 2

I am humanoid, which means I am Caucasian / Asian / African / indigenous / other; I am male / female / something else I identify with; I am tall / short / skinny / wide; I am intelligent, have emotions, can communicate, build, relate, move – I am human.

Nope.

What do you mean, "Nope!"

Everything you have identified is a transitory attribute – some of them even change during your life here on earth. When you were born, you were shorter and less able to communicate, for example.

But that's what we spend so much of our focus on – our identities, what we belong to!

It is because we are blind, confused, fearful, and teach ourselves lies.

What lies are you talking about?

I don't mean lies in terms of intentionally deceiving each other (though there may be some of that). I mean lies in terms of false realities – non-truths in the sense that they don't describe the true reality.

For example?

When the decision was made not to teach our children Christianity, the teaching of a true reality was replaced with the teaching of a false reality.

What's the false reality?

That truth is subjective, a matter of opinion, not objective. That reality is also subjective, may or may not equate with truth and, is ultimately whatever we declare it to be. That we're all mere atoms which are accidentally combined together – that we are nothing more than 'more intelligent than most' animals. That our children should be able to figure out for themselves without guidance what is morally correct, if there is a god, and what that god actually is, even to the point of inventing it. It's a recipe for confusion, blindness, and acrimony.

What's the true reality?

What I've been trying to explain to you for the past 175 days – there is a God, He created you, He loves you, and He wants you to live with Him because that's what is healthiest for you.

There's one thing we should always teach our children, and our present society is totally missing it.

What's that?

Their true identity. What they actually are.

Again, what are you?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 177: Baptism Prep Day 3

What's my true identity then?

Let's think it through. God wants you to live with Him in shalom for all eternity, right?

Yes.

Do you think that, in eternity (let's make it simpler and a little more relatable, say, "in a trillion years"), do you think God will care if you were Caucasian or African?

Probably not?

Do you think God will care if you were male or female? Tall or short? Had green eyes, brown, or blue? Were married or not? What career you had, where you lived, what sports you played, what you ate?

I'm guessing the answer is 'no..'.

A trillion years from now, living with God, what do you think God will care about?

If I love? If I know I am loved? Meaning, if I am working towards the health of all around me, and know that is the desire of God and of others towards me?

Precisely. Well done! And why will that be important to God?

Because God loves me? Because I am God's Image?

Because you are God's Image. That is your true and only identity – everything else is a transitory attribute. That is what we need to teach our children, and each other. You are created in the Image of God.

To love, and to know you are loved, because you are created in the Image of God. Do you think that is the purpose of your creation? Please explain.

Share your answers with others whom you trust

Day 178: Baptism Prep Day 4

So, "in Christ, through Christ, with Christ, of Christ" means?

What is the way of Christ?

The way of love?

Amen. Living in the way of love, through the way of love, with the way of love, of the way of Christ.

That's everything to it?

Nope.

What do you mean? You're driving me a bit crazy here…

Christ is not some neutral force or aspect of life, like gravity. Christ is a living, sentient, eternal being. Christ is one of the three persons of God. You need to expand it a bit.

Let me think.

…

Living what is healthiest, through what is healthiest, with what is healthiest, in partnership with (and imitating) the living and eternal one and only God, as shown through His Son?

Wonderful. And all the exploring you do is around what is healthiest, and how to achieve it. Today, and in eternity.

When you are being baptised, you are saying, "I am Image of God, and I commit to living what is healthiest, through what is healthiest, with what is healthiest, in partnership (and imitating) the living and eternal, one and only God, as shown through His Son, Jesus the Christ."

Describe some ways you are living what is healthiest, through what is healthiest, with what is healthiest, in partnership with (and imitating) God through Christ.

Share your description with others whom you trust.

Day 179: Baptism Prep Day 5

So how do I live what is healthiest?

That's the exploring! Let's start with the basics. Are you living a healthy life physically, socially, mentally, and spiritually? Are there things you could do to improve your health in each of these areas?

Things like physical exercise, relationships, games and learning new things, and participating in church?

Like that, yes.

How are you living a healthy life physically, socially, mentally, and spiritually? What could you do to improve your health in each of these areas?

Share your thoughts with others whom you trust.

Day 180: Baptism Prep Day 6

Don't just look at it from a "self-love" point of view though. How can you make this sustainable, so it improves all of creation? God knew He was improving His creation when He created you, after all.

For example?

Well, maybe in relationships you don't just seek what is healthiest for you, but also what is healthiest for the other person you are relating to. This may be to address their physical, emotional, spiritual, or mental needs. A strong and sustainable relationship feeds both participants.

What about spiritually?

Spiritual is not just between you and God, but also between all the other Images of God. How can you grow spiritually and enable other Images to grow as well? How can you not only give God joy through your own relationship growing, but help others to grow their relationship with God as well?

Participating in worship and encouraging others to do the same?

That's a good way, yes. What about contributing through your gifts and talents? What about contributing financially?

I knew it! I knew it! You just want my money. I was wondering when this would happen.

I don't want your money. God doesn't want your money. All money is, is a form of stored energy – and energy is needed for God's people just as it is for others. That energy is needed for leadership, for transportation, for buildings, for a multitude of items – all to support people learning and living the love of God. Some people focus on striving to teach, lead, and support the community of Christ so they don't have time for other activities to make money with – and that is where your money can be of help.

I never thought of it that way. How much money? I'm not independently wealthy, you know!

In the Old Testament there is the concept of tithing ("a tenth"), plus gifts at certain times and for certain circumstances. If you added up all the required giving, it totals around 23% of your income (https://pushpay.com/blog/20-bible-verses-about-tithing/). The idea that you're concerned about me "wanting" or "taking" your money though, makes me think we need to explore another question a little bit before we proceed further.

What's that?

Whose are you? Who (or what) do you belong to? More explicitly, who (or what) owns you?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 181: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.