

Living in the overflow of God's love Love Is Not Self-Seeking

Introduction: Caedman's Call- "This world has nothing for me, and this world has everything. All that I could want, and nothing that I need..."

With as much as we know about the universe, it's still pretty hard to give up seeing myself as the center of my world! The words of worship may be all about God and Jesus, but the experience is all about me! It seems to me that when push comes to shove, our human desire is to be like God. Our human desire is to see ourselves as capable of controlling our own world. In many ways this is what the world of science and scientific discovery produced in the marvels and miracles of our modern world. Science and scientific discovery has pointed us toward economic and political and social systems that are all about **self-government** and **self-sustenance** and unlimited **self-development**.

This world we live in gives us a lot of purchasing power to buy pretty much anything we could want. Many of the products for sale promise to make you everything and anything you'd ever want to be. Perhaps one of the greatest commodities we have in our world is life itself. We can buy and sell life. The search for meaning in life is determined more by what you can get, more than anything else. (Commercial- mini car).

Could it be that much of our religious life is just another commodity we acquire in order to keep our place at the center of the universe?

I wonder how self centered I am when I come to preach about love not being self-centered— while at the same time I'm wondering if you'll like my sermon.

I wonder how self centered I am when I speak of the salvation I have— and it comes down to what Jesus did for **me**?

I wonder how self centered we are when we make choices about churches based on what I can get out of it? Do people notice me at the level I think I should be noticed? Do these people agree with the way I think?

For many people relationships at church, and at home end up looking more like business investments—hoping to get a return on lots of happiness and security.

Consider what one theologian suggests (Donald Miller), "The problem with Christian culture is we think of love as a commodity. We use it like money.....If somebody is doing something for us, offering us something, be it gifts, time, popularity, or what have you, we feel they have value, we feel they are worth something to us, and perhaps we feel they are priceless. I could feel it so clearly, and see it in the pages of my life. This was the thing that had smelled so rotten all these years. I used love like money. The church used love like money. With love, we withheld affirmation from the people that did not agree with us, but we lavishly financed the ones who did" ["Blue Like Jazz (Nelson, 2003), p. 218].

Paul reminds us that love is not “self seeking.” 1 Cor. 13:5

Perhaps this morning will be a time for you to reconsider how comfortable you are in your own skin.

- This morning could be a time for you to look back at your own Christian baptism, not as an act of obedience that gets you into heaven, but as an act of death, burial and resurrection.
- Our Baptism ought to also serve us as a metaphor that describes our lives, not an argument that turns fellowship into a commodity.
- For the baptized believer, each day is a new day to die and rise again to new life.

When you leave this morning, my prayer is that you will see what Jesus sees. When you leave this morning, may you be the compassionate presence of Jesus –because my dear loved ones, it’s not about us but the one who lives in us! Let me assure you, when it’s about the one who lives in us, it changes the whole game.

In John 12, Jesus enters Jerusalem where he once again predicts his death. People are praising him and shouting “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the King of Israel!” **John 12:13, NIV.**

But before this Jerusalem scene ends, some Greeks come to Philip and say that they want to see Jesus. So Philip tells Andrew and then they both go to Jesus to tell him that these Gentiles want to see him.

Notice what Jesus says... it’s not the hour for personal appearances, but it is the hour for Jesus to be glorified. So he utters these familiar words (it’s a metaphor really) that we so easily relate to Jesus death, burial and resurrection.

Consider **John 12: 23-24** “Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

We know about the crucifixion, and burial and resurrection of Jesus, and therefore we can easily follow this metaphor. But then the teaching gets pretty difficult when Jesus shifts the metaphor for his life and uses it as a metaphor for all human life.

John 12:25-26 “The man who loves his life will lose it, (Whoever makes one’s own life the center of existence will lose it) while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”

Church— The woman or the man who wishes to serve Jesus must follow Jesus. And in the context of John 12 means this woman or man is willing to die and to be raised with him.

John 12:24-26 [MSG]

24 "Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. 25 In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you'll have it forever, real and eternal.

26 "If any of you wants to serve me, then follow me. Then you'll be where I am, ready to serve at a moment's notice. The Father will honor and reward anyone who serves me.

You know what I hear Jesus saying to us? I hear Jesus saying that it's not about your life or my life. It's about our death and resurrection.

Luke 9:22-24 (Peter's confession) "And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

Here's where it gets uncomfortable for us: The cross is not some kind of commodity we purchase and wear like costume jewelry. The cost of discipleship is not paid with church attendance, or our contribution on Sunday's, or our willingness to be baptized, or our taking the bread and the wine in communion.

Church, to follow Jesus is to be broken (of self-will)! This breaking is not an easy process. It takes a spirit of surrender.

This past Wednesday evening Helen and I watched a special with Tom Brokaw. It was the story of Aron Ralston. Here's how the [Rocky Mountain News](#) reported the story:

Aron Ralston, after being trapped with his arm under a rock for five days, decided that if he did not get free he would die.

Using his pocketknife, he amputated his arm below the elbow, put on a tourniquet and administered first-aid. He then rigged anchors and fixed a rope to rappel to the floor of Blue John Canyon.

Here's a man about to see his life vanish. He knew what he needed to do. The only way to get free was to break his own arm. He tells the story in great detail of how he managed to break both bones, and then cut through the skin and tendons and nerves. Once he broke his arm, he knew he could be free.

Once Jesus breaks our lives of our self-will, we be free! I promise you though... breaking our self-will hurts.

To follow Jesus is to accept that metaphor of the kernel of wheat for our own lives. It is to see our baptism as more than a step to our salvation. Salvation is more than being sinners who are saved. Salvation is about dyeing and being born again.

This being born again is different than our physical birth. Our physical birth was all about self-centeredness. We came into a world that revolved around us. People anticipated us and waited for our arrival. We came into this world as helpless screaming infants. Our growth and development were completely dependent on other people providing for us.

Some of us never stop seeing ourselves as the center of the universe and that is the life Jesus says is lost in the end.

Here's your lesson for the day: (John York)

1. When life is not about me, I can stop worrying about what everyone else thinks about me!
2. When life is not about me, I don't need to have the last word or be the power broker at the office or at home, or at church.
3. When life is not about me, I can stop using love as a commodity, as power to be wielded.
4. When life is not about me, the rest of you don't have to see it my way.

When we come to accept the love God has for us and that God's love for us is not based on any good we have done— Then we can begin to live in the overflow of God's love— Then we can begin to live a life that's not about us, but about the one who lives in us!

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