

The Denial and Discovery of Identity

03.03.2024

Luke 15:11-32

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Luke 15:11-32

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with

compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Matthew 16:24-25

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

Who am I?

What is the "I" at the center of all that is "you"?

"We are less likely to think that our social class is really who we are, and more likely to think that our desire for fame or fortune or sex says something real about us and our relationship to others."

- Tara Isabella Burton, *Self Made*

Matthew 16:25

Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

“Lose yourself in Me [or] because of Me”

“Genuine self-knowledge begins by looking at God and noticing how God is looking at us. Grounding our knowing of our self in God’s knowing of us anchors us in reality. It also anchors us in God.”

- David Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*

“Christians affirm a foundation of identity that is absolutely unique in the marketplace of spiritualities. Whether we realize it or not, our being is grounded in God’s love. The generative love of God was our origin. The embracing love of God sustains our existence. The inextinguishable love of God is the only hope for our fulfillment. Love is our identity and our calling, for we are children of Love. Created from love, of love, and for love, our existence makes no sense apart from Divine Love.”

- David Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*

Colossians 3:1-3

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

“Though the experience of being the Beloved has never been completely absent from my life, I never claimed it as my core truth. I kept running around it in large or small circles, always looking for someone or something able to convince me of my Belovedness. It was as if I kept refusing to hear the voice that speaks from the very depth of my being and says: ‘You are my Beloved, on you my favor rests.’ That voice has always been there, but it seems that I was much more eager to listen to other, louder voices saying: ‘Prove that you are worth something; do something relevant, spectacular, or powerful, and then you will earn the love you so desire.’ Meanwhile, the soft, gentle voice that speaks in the silence and solitude of my heart remained unheard or, at least, unconvincing.”

- Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*