

FINDING OUR IDENTITY.... BY LOSING IT



My soul magnifies the Lord.

The words of Mary in what is known as The Magnificat is probably one of the clearest expressions in Scripture of how Grace is always clothed in lowliness.

***"My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden."***

Luke 1:46-47

Unless the Lord returns, in the meantime, there will come a moment in each of our lives, when it will be time to leave this world: As we stand on the threshold of the world beyond, all distractions will fade into oblivion, and one question will rise up in our consciousness demanding an answer.

We will **not** ask,

"Did I have a nice time while I was here?"

"Will my friends miss me?"

"Will I have a big funeral?"

"Who's going to get my money (if there is any)?"

"Will I be remembered?"

The one question which will drive every other question out of our minds will be:

"Did I fulfill my purpose, accomplishing what God put me here to do?"

Nor will this question strike us as a new thought. We will realize, as never before, that this question was with us from the day of our birth. We spend years of our lives distracted by a million empty pursuits, and rarely give a second thought to the essential issue.

But the question lingers in our souls, like our heart's continuous beating:

"Am I fulfilling my purpose, getting done what I am here to do?"

Most of us, instead of seeking the answer to that question, try to find our 'identity', not in the call of God, but where we think we stand in the eyes of other people. If somehow, we can impress them with who we are, or what we accomplish, or how much we have, then we think we have worth. If nobody is impressed, then we suspect we have no worth.

Hence, the professional athlete, the actor, the senator, the millionaire, the PhD, the nuclear physicist, all have worth. They made something of themselves. They achieved their goal.

And we, with our lesser talents, though we may not weigh as much on that scale, take the same route. We find our identity in terms of what we've achieved, or what we have, or what kind of dent we've made in "history".

When you follow the latest news to see who is making an impact on this world, you hear about revolutionaries, dictators, actors, giants in the realm of sports, music and art. Perhaps some troubled soul who beat his father to death with an axe. Follow up on those people five years later and you will see that the great ones, the rich ones, the powerful ones, are more victims of the flow of history than the movers and shakers they appeared to be when they were trending.

As long as we try to find our identity in what kind of dent we can make in history ... even if it's a little teeny dent ... we're going to stumble along with an ego problem all our days. How can you make a dent in history, when history is like quicksand? "Well, at least I'm going to put down this board, so people can walk over it to safety." ... Twenty minutes later that board is swallowed up in the quicksand.

Mary told us a long time ago that the destiny of this world is not in the hands of the rich and the powerful and the great, but in the hands of the Living God, who affects change and brings nations to judgment by means of people who in their generation are always numbered among the meek and inconsequential.

If we want to find out who we are, there is no better place in all of Scripture than to turn to these words spoken by Mary. Mary is pregnant. She's making for the hills. She's on her way to be with her kinswoman Elizabeth, who, much past child bearing age, is also pregnant.

They greet each other under the anointing of the Spirit. Mary's greeting becomes a prophecy, inspired by the same Spirit who inspired Hannah, the mother of Samuel, centuries before:



***"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour,
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.***

***For behold, henceforth, all generations will regard me blessed,
For he who is mighty has done great things for me— and holy is his name.***

And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm;

He has scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree.

He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent Empty away.

***He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and his posterity, his seed forever.***

(Luke 1:46-57)

Mary is telling us how she knows who she is, and how we can know who we are.

"Am I fulfilling my purpose, accomplishing what I was put here to do?"

My purpose, along with all of creation, is to magnify God.

Magnify God with my soul.
Magnify God with my body.
Magnify God with my Spirit.

When I magnify God with my soul, and with my body, and with my spirit, God will use me, along with countless others, to redeem the earth and make it new again.

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour"

Mary is not magnifying Mary...Or rejoicing in Mary...But in God!

What peace comes into our lives when we turn from incessantly magnifying ourselves---to magnifying God! We magnify ourselves, not only by exalting ourselves, but also by sitting around feeling sorry for ourselves and blaming everybody around us for our misery. We magnify God when we turn our attention away from the mess, which is our 'self', and fix it on Him.

We magnify God *with our soul* when, with an act of will, we turn to God and worship Him—waking and sleeping, day and night—inwardly worshipping Him...praising Him...adoring Him...serving Him...loving Him...thinking about Him...rejoicing in Him.

"My soul magnifies the Lord!"

We magnify God with *our body* when we present our body as a living sacrifice to Him--- as Mary presented her body, a living sacrifice to God. From that moment she carried in her body the life of God, her body was used, spent, given, and poured out to fulfill God's purpose.



When we present *our bodies*, our physical bodies, to God as a living sacrifice, the same thing happens. He fills them with the life of His Son. And now we spend, pour out our physical strength in His worship, and in His service.

"Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word."

We magnify God with *our Spirits* when we accept a place of low estate in this world.

"For He that is mighty hath done great things for me."

And He does great things for us when we are willing to be lowly in this world, then He is able to do great things, things that may not look great to the world at the moment, but will one day be confirmed as great because they magnify Him.

"He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imaginations of their hearts; He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted them of low degree; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away."

The shattering changes which are taking place on this earth are being accomplished by God through people who are of low estate. The best example of how this works is found in our Lord. This baby carried in Mary's body was a king, and yet from the day of His birth until the day of His death, and even to His resurrection down to this moment, He is of low estate.

He's a nobody—He doesn't count as far as the world is concerned.

How does the world look at Him?

***"Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;
He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains..."***

Isaiah 53



He was born of Mary, and he grew up as a root out of dry ground. He was not appealing. It is significant that there is nothing said about Jesus except that brief incident in the temple – nothing--- until the age of thirty, He began His ministry. He was almost like a piece of furniture... "Jesus? yeah, sure...Joseph and Mary's son." He walked around Nazareth like an inconsequential shadow.

When Jesus began His ministry, He had nothing that the world considered of value. Of course He healed the sick, raised the dead, laid down His life as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, rose from the dead, and is now Kings of kings and Lord of lords. But to this day He is still despised and rejected by the world, and hardly of much account, beyond lip-service, to the "Christian world".

And those who follow Jesus share his lot.

They too are despised and rejected.

You can talk about God all you like, have faith in God all you like, but when you begin to follow Jesus, when you begin to confess Jesus before the world, you quickly experience how the world despises and rejects Him, and those who belong to Him.

In the world we find our identity by looking into the eyes of other people, to see if there is some admiration coming back to us.

In the kingdom, we find our identity by losing it in God.



If I am willing to be of low estate, then God can use me for His redemptive purpose on earth.

If I am willing that my name should be hidden in God, then God can use me as a voice crying in the wilderness, pointing to the Lamb.

And Mary said:

***"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden."***

One day, barring the return of the Messiah, each of us will take leave of this world. As we stand on the threshold of the world beyond, all distractions will fade into oblivion. One question will rise up in our consciousness, and demand an answer.

The question that will drive all other questions out of our minds will be:

"Did I fulfill my purpose, getting done what God put me here to do?"

And my purpose is to magnify God with my soul, with my body, with my spirit.

May God use my low estate as the means by which He does mighty things.



Prayer: Lord, may we willingly lose our identity in you. Forgive us for trying to find our identity in achievements, in what others think of us, and in empty pursuits and pleasures. Rescue us from these mindsets and behaviors. Instead, may we love you so much that we do fulfill any purpose you have for us in this life, that you can use our low estate to do mighty things in your eyes, even if it means being despised and rejected by men, Oh Lord, may pleasing you, magnifying you with our bodies, souls, and spirits be our greatest pursuit. And may magnifying you... bring us great joy and be our song, our lifeblood, and our identity to the end of our days. Amen.