

Child of God... or ... unworthy servant – a case of mistaken identity

Our reading of Jesus' parable of a servant & master in **Luke's Gospel Ch 17 verse 7-10** ... ends telling us... "that after we have done everything... we are to say... 'we are just unworthy servants'"

Whereas we also read the letter of the apostle **John in Chapter 3 verse 1-3** ... clearly stating... "We are children of God... and that is what we are!"

Please take a few moments of quiet to think... which are you? ... Which am I?

Child of God ... or Unworthy Servant

SILENCE SILENCE SILENCE

This is unquestionably the most important question we ever have to settle.

It's normally a question of "Mistaken Identity!"

In church we may say that we believe that we are Children of God... but deep inside... we believe and behave... as unworthy servants... always trying to gain acceptance

Our problem is that we don't know the difference between **IDENTITY** and **ROLE**.

We are both Children of God and unworthy servants ... of course - that's God's word!

But these two are in completely different senses. And that's what we fail to understand... deep inside!!

We need to understand...and embrace deep down... the difference between

IDENTITY and ROLE

Who we ARE and what we DO/perform

We have the answer to this apparent contradiction in **Philippians Ch 2**

Jesus ... who was in **very nature** GOD... His identity absolutely clear ... SON OF GOD

Took on **the role** of a servant... and served obediently... even unto death

Jesus had distinct IDENTITY and ROLE. We too. Are No different!

We are offered the **GIFT** of identity to receive ... child of God ... here's our infinite worth

AND... We are invited to **TAKE ON** a role ... obedient servant ... never source of worth

Servanthood ... it's **NOT** our **IDENTITY**... it is the **FAMILY BUSINESS!!**

Jesus repeatedly teaches these foundational differences:

Matt 7 v 13-14 ... Jesus gives a stark choice between two roads...two pathways, two gates ... one wide and easy... one narrow and hard.

The important truth here is that one path/gateway is natural... its human nature

The other is completely against all our instincts.

All our instincts are that we work to gain who we are ... our identity... our worth/reward

It's the hardest thing for us to accept that we can do nothing to gain or add to our identity... it's the GIFT of being a child of God!... to as many as believe, he GAVE...

Matt 18 v 2-3 ... Jesus presents a stark challenge ... putting a little child before them He says... "Unless you change and become like little children you'll never enter the Kingdom".

What is so natural for babies and little children...to receive everything as GIFT Becomes for us adults the hardest thing in the world! Babes can do nothing for themselves... they contribute nothing to their worth or identity. Yet we count each baby as of infinity worth. It's done nothing.

We find it so hard to receive our identity as GIFT... we are so wired to work at it

Luke 15 v. 11-32... Jesus' best loved parable...Story of the prodigal father... of 2 lost sons. Both sons had only one understanding of the "way home"

Younger Son in the pigsty... here he did NOT repent (change his thinking). He rationalised I will go to my father and say "I am no longer worthy... make me as one of your hired SERVANTS!!

Older Son out in the fields... all my life I SLAVED for you...and you gave me NOTHING!

Both enslaved by natural human nature of the broad road... missing the narrow gate...

Older brother who had actually already been given by his father HALF OF EVERYTHING... but deep down could not receive it and live in that GRACE.

Younger brother ... who even though also given half of everything - which he had wasted... still could only think of earning his way home as a SERVANT

But faced with his father running to him with arms open wide ... he never got to make his offer of being a servant... he finally broke & accepted the offer of sonship as GIFT instead.

Which Sibling are you today?

Is your identity still tied up in all your serving? It will never give you true worth or settled IDENTITY

Or as the younger brother, despite all your failures... have you seen your heavenly father running to you with arms open wide... and have you surrendered to the GIFT of his love freely bestowing on you ... what you can contribute absolutely NOTHING towards....

"YOU ARE MY BLOVED DAUGHTER... BELOVED SON... IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED!"

My Dad ... lived most of his life travelling on the wide road.
He attended church every Sunday, morning and evening.
But never knew the gift of a personal relationship with Jesus.
He served so well that he was appointed senior elder and served for 14 years.
That is until at age 64 he finally broke and knelt down asking for prayer.
And he asked to receive the gift of being filled with the Love of God.
For the rest of his life he was empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve as an evangelist.
Offering to others the gift of knowing they are Children of God... till he died age 98.

Myself ... I was baptised and confirmed and responded to evangelism as a child.
I wanted to follow Jesus and serve him... travelling on the wide road.
But by my teenage years, I gave up ... because of repeated failures in my efforts to serve.
Disillusioned, I became an atheist at University.
Things only changed at age 32, through my wife Mary. She asked me a blunt question...
Whether I could be sure I would go to heaven?
Then, without her saying anything, the Holy Spirit showed me that Jesus had done it all for me ...
I just had to receive his gift!

Postscript:

My interpretation of Jesus' contrast of the broad and narrow way ... or wide or narrow door/gate,
may have caused some sense of questioning, disease ... uncertainty.

Maybe because, (although Jesus gives no other interpretation) ...
the more natural ... instinctive human interpretation of these two pathways, is of the broad being the
“**self-indulgent**” and the narrow being of “**self-denial**”.

But what if both these paths are the broad road!?

This would correspond with the two sons... both lost. One in self-indulgence and one in self-denial.

And this could again, lead us deeper to the key question for all of us.

Which son was nearer to home? The one in the far country pigsty... or the one in his father's fields??

And then the shocking answer would be ... that it's the son in the sty...
simply because he is nearer to the end of himself!

And though setting out on the same broad road to make for himself a place at home through service...
faced with a father running to him with outstretched arms... he could no longer resist the father's gift of
GRACE!

A journey that reached it's fulfilment in letting go and yielding to the father's embrace...
back in the family at last! ... While his elder brother continued to languish outside.

Prayer;

Father. We lay down our burden of seeking to gain our identity through serving you. Instead, we yield to your gracious gift and receive our true identity as you CHILD,.. And settle in your embrace.

Father. Empower us to go into your world and embrace your family's role to serve anyone As Jesus has served us to the point of death on a cross.

Amen

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