

## **GOD and SELF-ESTEEM**

I Corinthians 1:26-31

January 30, 2011

This sermon is one we all need to hear. I believe this message could change somebody's life. What makes God happy? What is it that pleases God most?

The answer is God gets the most pleasure from taking something that the world perceives as worthless and giving it value.

Today's lesson from St. Paul says: "consider your own call, not many of you were wise by human standards ...not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise...

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not... to bring to nothing things that are...

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Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, Greece saying, "Take a look at yourself. You weren't much to begin with, but God wants to build up your self-esteem."

This is what we need to hear. God wants us to be proud of ourselves and proud of our church.

SOME OF US DON'T THINK WE ARE WORTH MUCH. In fact surveys show that two out of three of us have a low opinion of ourselves.

Psychologists call that low self-esteem. They have known for years that low self-esteem is often the root of many of our psychological and social ills.

People and churches with high self esteem are healthier than those with low self esteem. They thrive and live longer.

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People and churches with high self-esteem are much less likely to engage in self-destructive behavior. They feel the need to commitment themselves 100% to building each other up in love.

People with high self-esteem tend to get better paying jobs, and are more successful once they get a job. Why? Studies show it is because they expect to be successful.

Dr. Martin Seligman, a professor of psychology at the Uni. of Penn., surveyed salespeople of a major life insurance company.

He found that those who expected to succeed sold 37% more insurance than those who did not.

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A person who sees themselves as a failure will generally fulfill that prophecy. Self-esteem will also affect how a young person does in school.

In fact the National Institute for Student Motivation conducted a study. It showed that the correlation between self-confidence and academic achievement is greater than that between IQ and academic achievement.

No kid is stupid. They simply have a low opinion of themselves.

How we think about ourselves radically affects how happy and how healthy we are. No fact about us is clearer. "As a man thinks in his heart so is he...." (Pro. 23:7) And some of us don't think very much of ourselves.

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I just loved our preschool kids singing in church today. It reminds me of a story.

A kindergarten teacher wrote a song about popcorn. Then she had her class crouch down on the floor as they sang it. At the appropriate point in the song, all the children would "pop up."

The teacher had them "popping" all over the classroom. One day, during the popcorn song, the teacher noticed that one little boy remained crouched down when all the other children popped up.

"What's wrong?" the teacher asked. "Why can't you `pop' like the other children?" The little boy replied, "I'm burning on the bottom of the pan."

Some of us are like that little boy. We feel like we are burning on the bottom of the pan.

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We feel like we have no worth as persons.  
That is so sad.

GOD SEES US AS PERSONS OF INFINITE WORTH  
AND THAT IS THE WAY WE NEED TO SEE OURSELVES.

God sent Christ into this world on our  
behalf. How can we be worthless? How can  
anybody say we have no value?

If we would place the same value on our  
lives that God places on them, our lives  
would be radically changed.

If we would see our possibilities as  
clearly as we see our problems, we would turn  
the world upside down.

Listen to this delightful story about  
the late actor Gregory Peck. It concerns how  
Peck bought his beautiful home.

Peck was in the middle of filming the  
life of General Douglas MacArthur.

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They were working on a deadline and Peck was very busy. He had no idea his wife had decided to go shopping for a home.

On that particular morning they were going to film the scene in which MacArthur addressed both houses of Congress.

Six hundred hired extras were on hand to play congressmen and senators who would listen to the "old soldiers never die, they just fade away" speech.

Peck put the finishing touches on his eloquent lines, straightened his full-dress uniform, and prepared to shoot the scene. Just then he was called to the phone. It was his wife.

"Honey, you've got to get down here. I've found our dream house," she said excitedly.

Gregory Peck said, "What dream house?"

"The dream house we've been looking for all our lives. You know what I'm talking about. You've got to come down here and see this house.

It's on the market and it already has a couple of offers on it, but we've got to have this house. You've got to get down here."

Peck tried to say in a very sweet tone, "Darling, you have to realize that I'm about to shoot a scene. We have six hundred hired extras. The set is prepared. I have to be here all day shooting. I cannot leave."

"But honey," she said, "you've got to come." "Not really, darling," he answered, "You've got to understand the picture. I am in full-dress uniform and I'm playing General Douglas MacArthur.

My hat has all the stars across the front. My lapels shine in the light with all of the service ribbons and medals. I am literally General Douglas MacArthur. I'm too busy to come and look at a house."

"But honey," she insisted, "you've got to see our dream house or we're going to lose it."

He could tell his wife was in no mood to be turned down, not even by General Douglas MacArthur.

So he finally worked out an hour for lunch and took the studio limo over to the address she had given him. He strode onto the property in full-dress uniform. As far as anybody who really didn't know him could tell, he was General Douglas MacArthur.

"Where's the Realtor?" he said.

"Show me the property."

He walked around the estate for six minutes, never looked inside, and then said to his wife, "Buy it. I don't care what it costs. Buy it." And then he was gone.

The irony was that Gregory Peck declared that he was terrible at making decisions. And yet he made one of the biggest decisions of his life in six minutes.

He added, "I have a feeling it had to do with the uniform." He saw himself for a few moments as tough, decisive Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

How we view ourselves makes all the difference in the world. Former NHL Hockey great Wayne Gretzky turned 50 this week. He won three Stanley Cups for the Edmonton Oilers.

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During one playoff he was asked whether his coach had shown the players their mistakes on video.

Gretzky said that rather than showing them a video of their mistakes, their coach showed highlights of them performing well. Why reinforce negative images?

They needed to see themselves as they could be, not as they had been. By the way, Gretzky's eventually went on to break most of Gordie Howe's records.

Some of us concentrate on our mistakes, our failures, our blown opportunities.

We replay in our minds the time we looked foolish, the word we wish we had not said, the slight that should never have been given. God says, the past is past.

All that matters is the future.  
God delights in taking people who feel terrible about their lives and helping them make a bold, new beginning.

Nothing thrills God more. Don't forget, there is more rejoicing in heaven over the one lost sheep that is found than all the ninety-nine safely in the fold.

Please don't think I am encouraging a vain, egocentric style of living.

I am convinced, however, that many of us could benefit immensely from standing in front of a mirror each morning and saying to ourselves, "I am a person of immense value.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. There is nothing that will arise today that I cannot handle with God's help."

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It will change your life, if that one message becomes a reality.

One thing more needs to be said.

GOD WANTS US TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE DISCOVER THEIR REAL WORTH AS WELL.

If God gets so much pleasure from bringing value to that which is considered worthless, then we give God pleasure not only by turning around our own life but also by helping other people turn around their lives.

That is evangelism at its best.

(IT IS WHAT Franklin CHURCH SHOULD BE ABOUT!)

Hear what Richard Block of The H & R Block Income Tax Service says about success.

Richard Block said, "Every morning when I go to my office, I picture in my mind a mother of two small children who teaches math in the junior high school.

We've trained her as a tax counselor. She opens the door of that little office, sits behind a wooden desk with a wooden chair, planning to make a few extra dollars to supplement her income.

"A pick-up truck pulls up. A man gets out wearing cowboy boots...He wears a cotton flannel shirt, and under his arm is an old shoe box full of canceled checks and W-2 forms.

He drops that box on the bare desk and says, `Ma'am, I sure hope you can help me.'" Richard Block concludes, "As long as we can remember that teacher and that fellow in the flannel shirt, there will be a need for H & R Block."

When will we be successful doing the work of Christ in this world?

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It will be the moment we can visualize individual persons whom we can reach out to with the love of God.

We will be doing Christ's work when we offer them encouragement, hope and the belief that they, too, are persons of real value.

When that happens, God and the entire heavenly host rejoice.

How do we please God? It happens whenever any person in whatever situation comes to discover their true worth.

Why don't make a new start with God's help, and why don't we look around and find others that we can encourage along the way?

**AMEN!**