

Are You Glad You Are You?

By Dr. Mark Smith

June 20, 2010

Psalm 139:13-18, 1 John 3:1-2

*It's not that easy being green
Having to spend each day the color of the leaves
When I think it could be nicer being red, or yellow or gold
Or something much more colorful like that*

*It's not easy being green
It seems you blend in with so many other ordinary things
And people tend to pass you over 'cause you're
Not standing out like flashy sparkles in the water
Or stars in the sky*

*But green's the color of Spring
And green can be cool and friendly-like
And green can be big like an ocean, or important
Like a mountain, or tall like a tree*

*When green is all there is to be
It could make you wonder why, but why wonder why
Wonder, I am green and it'll do fine, it's beautiful
And I think it's what I want to beⁱ*

Are you glad you are you? Or do you sometimes wish you were someone else?

Lots of folks have trouble accepting themselves. They are not happy with who they are or where they are in life. When the good Lord passed out gifts and talents, they feel as though they were overlooked. The sing a melancholy song to themselves, kind of like Kermit: *"It ain't easy bein' me, blending in with the crowd... living as a person without distinction . . . just a nobody!"* I've met so many people in the course of my ministry who were down on themselves, feeling quite worthless and useless. Nothing they do is right. Nobody loves them. Everyone is better than they are. They feel downright inferior.

That makes me think of the story of the man who paid a visit to his local psychologist. When the doctor asked him what had prompted the visit, the man said, *"I'm suffering from an inferiority complex."* In the ensuing weeks, the psychologist put his new patient through an intensive battery of tests. Next came the long wait while the test results were tabulated and appropriate correlations were made. Finally, the doctor called the man and asked him to the clinic. *"I have some interesting news for you,"* the doctor began. *"What's that?"* asked the man. *"It's no complex,"* the psychologist retorted. *"You are inferior."*

Of course, having people in your life who keep putting you down doesn't help.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale tells how one night as he was leaving the stage of a large auditorium after he had just spoken, he was helped down the steps by a young man who had a tattoo on the back of his hand. The tattoo read *"Born to Lose."* Peale says he pondered how that slogan must have also been tattooed on

that young man's mind. And then at the bottom of the steps stood a pretty young woman who said, "*Dr. Peale, I'm a nobody, but I just wanted to meet you.*"

"I'm just a nobody!" More folks feel that way than we know. They have a deep sense of inadequacy.

According to a Gallup Poll *only one out of three* Americans has a healthy sense of self-regard. And yet it is so crucial to our functioning as human beings.

The same poll demonstrated that those who a strong sense of self-regard

- Have a high moral and ethical sensitivity.
- Have a strong sense of family.
- Are far more successful in interpersonal relationships.
- Their perspective of success is viewed in terms of interpersonal relationships, not in crass materialistic terms.
- They're far more productive on the job.
- They are far lower in incidents of chemical addictions.
- They are more likely to get involved in social and political activities in their community.
- They are far more generous to charitable institutions and give far more generously to relief causes....

On the other hand, persons who think poorly of themselves experience so many difficulties in life. They constantly question their value and feel they can never measure up to the standards of others or to God. Since they view themselves as being unlovable, they tend to see God as unloving, rejecting, and vindictive. Their lack of self-acceptance leads to lives that are stripped of enthusiasm and a vital sense of well being. They fail to see their own potential for good and tend to squander whatever gifts they have. Because they do not love themselves they have a hard time loving others.

Sometimes a poor sense of self-regard is expressed in ways that we wouldn't normally think of. For example, people who chronically over indulge-whether it be in drink, in food, in athletics, in work, or in other activities. It may well be that their excessive behavior is a way of compensating for some deep sense of personal inadequacy. Some people brag a great deal about themselves and are almost viciously competitive in their relationships with others. We may think at first that such persons are filled with an unhealthy kind of self-pride; we think they think they are better than other people. But if we look beneath the surface it may well be that all their bragging and competing may well be simply a cover-up for a deep sense of unworthiness and a feeling of inferiority which they harbor within themselves.

Obviously, this is no way to live. God has so much more in mind for us! In fact, when Jesus walked this earth, he was busy restoring the self-respect of people, lifting them up so that they felt like valuable, worthwhile, human beings once more. He reached out to all sorts of people who felt worthless and passed over by the world... people whom many deemed to be of no account.

If we are feeling down on ourselves, feeling like we just aren't worth much and feeling sorry for ourselves, we clearly need to think differently.... We have to change the tape running in our minds.

You and I have to remember what and who we are.

According to the Bible, we are God's special creation and the subjects of his concern and his care. Next time you are feeling down on yourself, read the words of the 139th psalm:

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

In other words, you and I are the special creation of God, and as the saying goes *"God don't make no junk."* Each of us is an unrepeatable miracle; a one of a kind masterpiece. It's a miracle that we are even alive. How often do we stop to think about what a gift life is? In spite of all our heartaches and troubles, isn't life worth living? Isn't it amazing that you and I are even here?

And since we are God's creation, he values us more than we know. The psalmist knows it: *"How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of the sand..."*

Knowing that we are the special creation of God and that he values us more than we know ought to go a long way to dispel our feelings of worthlessness and self-condemnation. God made you who we you are. Rejoice in that!

But you and I not merely the creatures of God, but the children of God. Listen to the Apostle John who says in amazement: *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"*

Think about it! You and I are not just the creatures of God, but the *children* of God, and in Jesus Christ God adopted us into his own family. That means you and I are *somebody!* We have status. We have identity. We belong to the family of God! We have a divine heritage. We bear a great family name. We are sons and daughters of the King of Kings, and as such we have a great inheritance.

According to Greek legend, Helen of Troy was kidnapped and taken across the seas to a distant city where she suffered from amnesia and became a prostitute in the streets. She didn't know her name or that she was of royal blood. Back in her homeland, friends didn't give up. One admiring adventurer believed she was alive and went to look for her. He never lost faith, and set off on a journey to find her.

One day he found himself wandering through the streets of a strange city. He came to a water fountain and saw a wretched woman with deep lines across her face and wearing tattered clothes. There was something about her that seemed familiar, so he walked up to her and asked, *"What is your name?"* She gave a name that was meaningless to him. *"Can I see your hands?"* he asked. (He knew the lines in Helen's hands.) She held her hand out in front of her, and he gasped. *"You are Helen! You are Helen of Troy! Do you remember?"* She looked up at him in astonishment. *"Helen!"* he shouted. Then the fog seemed to clear, and a sense of recognition came to her face. Helen discovered her lost self, and she put her arms around her old friend and wept. Then Helen discarded the tattered clothes and once more became the queen she was born to be.

Have we forgotten our divine heritage? Have we forgotten that we are royalty? *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*" Scripture says we have joint heirs with Christ. We are members of the royal family!

And as the children of God, our potential is unlimited. Those who have low sense of self-regard can see only their limitations. Those who have a high regard for themselves see not only their limitations but also the possibilities and the potentialities within them. John reminds us our future potential for greatness: *"Dear children, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him..."*

As children of God, our future couldn't be brighter! God thinks we are beautiful just the way we are, for we are his children. But in the end, we shall be even more beautiful as we allow the Spirit of God to work on us, making us more like Jesus.

Back in 1989, research was carried out by the Children's Television Network on the song Kermit the frog first sang back in 1970. It was discovered that many preschool children failed to recognize that Kermit felt happy about being green by the end of the song. It's probably because the song itself sounds so sad.

But it ends so positively! You remember that in the song, Kermit begins by lamenting his green coloration, expressing that *green "blends in with so many ordinary things."* But by the end of the song, Kermit remembers that lots of cool things are green and in the end he embraces his greenness ("It's beautiful! And it's what I want to be...") [Let's play it again...]

All in all, Kermit was glad to be who he was... after he thought about it for awhile... "You know, what" he could say, *"I am beautiful, just the way I am!"*

And in God's eyes, we are just that – beautiful.

We are God's special creation, but more than that, through faith in Jesus Christ you and I are made the children of God, adopted into God's own family. Let that wonderful, amazing realization sink in. *"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are!"*

A little girl received a new dress. She danced with joy about the room singing *"I'm glad I am me!"*

How many of us can say the same?

"Don't underrate yourself," says the Book of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha, *"a low opinion of yourself leads to sin."* And conversely, an old Scottish weaver used to pray, *"O God, help me to hold a high opinion of myself."* Maybe that should be our prayer too. *"Lord, give me the kind of healthy self-appreciation to be able to say "I'm glad I'm me!"*

ⁱ lyrics by Joe Raposo