

LONELINESS

Introduction

The fairy tale of the Frog Prince carries an interesting teaching for us as Christians. In the fairy tale, a witch (Satan) turns a prince into a frog (a sin cursed man) and only the kiss of the princess (evangelist) can turn him back into a prince. The message for us is that in every person there is a hidden prince, however ugly he may appear at present. This prince is the image of God hidden in him. It is our role as the children of God to release this image of God in others by leading them to Christ and helping them to grow to maturity in Christ.

Some time we are the ones who are the frogs who need to be delivered. This feeling of frog-hood comes as one author puts it:-

“The Frog feeling comes when – you want to be bright, but feel dull. You want to share, but are selfish. You want to be thankful, but feel resentment. You want to be big, but are small. You want to care, but are indifferent. Yes, at one time or another each of us has found himself on a lily pad floating down the great river of life, frightened and disgusted, but too froggish to budge.”

This feeling of inadequacy results in our inability to accept ourselves as we are. Because we cannot accept ourselves, we look for acceptance from others. When we do not get this we feel rejected and lonely. This loneliness has become a major problem people are facing today.

The roots of Loneliness

Loneliness is not being alone, but not having relationships. So we can be in a crowded room and yet be lonely. We can be alone and yet not be lonely. We can be married and yet be lonely.

How do we reach this kind of a state in our lives? A lot of this comes from our childhood experiences. The pressures of life make us feel inadequate.

It has been proven that children when they are small have an instinctive desire to be cuddled by their mothers. Today with the pressure of financial needs often both parents are working and the children feel rejected and inadequate.

Similarly the pressure of competition in school makes it difficult to find acceptance here also. Parents are pressurizing children to do better and the children come away with the feeling that they are inadequate. We have had cases of children who have done very well obtaining a rank of 2nd or 3rd but have committed suicide because they did not come first. This happens because they feel unaccepted by their parents when they do not come first.

Also when I see my class mates as competitors in the race to come first, it becomes difficult to have a proper relationship with them. We do not see them as friends but as enemies.

Further, all cannot come first, but only those who win are recognized, while those who do not are ignored. It is even worse when we fail – there is no consolation for failures. We lose confidence and we fail even more and we become even lonelier as we do not get the recognition we are desperately seeking.

Children can be cruel, and ridiculing and making fun can be a sport. This destroys those who are exposed to this kind of torment. But what is worse when even your parents laugh and poke fun at your inadequacies. This shatters our confidence completely and we do not know where we can turn to for support. In India, where I come from, parents compare children unfavorably with others, especially on the color of their skin, in their presence, leading the children to have a strong sense of rejection amongst them. Similar things happen in other cultures also.

But the greatest reason for feeling inadequate is the presence of sin in our lives. As Paul says in Romans Chapter 7, we keep doing the things we do not want to do and do not do the things we want to do. This leads to a realization that within us is an evil we detest. This confirms to us that we are just evil and need deliverance. We ask with Paul, who can deliver us from this body of sin.

The troubles this leads to.

When we are lonely and unable to have proper relationship with others, as we are looking for approval and not a relationship, it leads to a lot of problems in our lives. We tend to immerse ourselves in activity as we cannot be alone and face the realities of our lives. This activity can be work, can be play and for believer it can be ministry – anything to help keep my mind of the realities of the demons within me. Sometimes these diversions can be destructive like alcohol and drugs or less destructive like music or more destructive like violent music.

Even greater problems come when we get drawn into improper relationships. As we look for approval, we fall for any person who appears to accept us leading to extra-marital or pre-marital relationships. We are afraid to deny the person the advantage he/she is taking of me as I do not want to lose the relationship. In the same we are drawn to cults like the Children of God and other extreme groups. Some gay behavior also have their roots here.

It is only when I have learnt to accept myself that I can begin to live with myself. Then I can lead a normal life where I do not have to run from myself into work and other activities or get into destructive relationships.

The Solution

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28 “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto our souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

When I come to Jesus He accepts me and I can sense His presence with me. Jesus accepts us as we are. When I know that God has accepted me I do not need to have acceptance from man. I am freed from the desperate search for approval. I can then have a normal and quality relationship with people.

What the passage says is important for us to come to Christ. Jesus says that we have to take His yoke upon ourselves. This essentially means that we can no longer do what we want, but have to walk in the path that Jesus has laid out for us. This is what baptism is all about, when we die in Christ in baptism and now live with the yoke of Christ on us doing only what Christ is asking us to do.

Walking with Jesus we learn from Him and grow in knowledge and understanding. One of the things we learn is that we have been created by God exactly like He wants us to be and so I do not have to try and be someone else. As one speaker put it “God has made you a first class original, do not become a second rate copy.” I can be proud of being an original of God not looking for approval from man but seeking to fulfill the purposes of God in my life. This understanding of the purpose of God in my life makes my life meaningful and helps us to understand our importance in the economy of God.

However, we cannot experience these blessings if we do not forgive ourselves out past failures and sins. It is only when I put my past behind me and I accept myself as I am can I experience the great deliverance God wants to give me from my feelings of inferiority.

The promise of Jesus proves to be so real, that His yoke is easy and light. Life becomes a joyous freedom.

The challenge

John 17:18 says “Even as the Father has sent me, I am sending you into the world.” We are the representatives of Jesus in the world. Just as Jesus reaches out and heals people from their inferiorities we also need to reach out to people. Are you willing to accept people when you do not like their behavior? My wife accepted me even though I was drinking and smoking and that helped me understand the acceptance of Christ in my life. Jesus accepted the woman caught in adultery (improper relationships) and so I believe healed her. Do you accept people?

Our calling is to reach out to people and bring healing to them. Our calling is to bring out the beauty of Jesus in people. Can we continue to encourage and build each other up in the kingdom? Our calling is to kiss the frogs around us. May God be with you as you do so.