

2010 1-10 take another look at yourself Isaiah 43v1-7

Have you ever been to an amusement park and walked into the hall of mirrors? I think I have seen one of those before, or at least I have seen them on TV shows like Scooby Doo or other shows. The mirrors distort the image to either make you look super tall or super wide or have a big head or big feet. It is pretty fun to see yourself in different shapes and sizes.

But on a more serious note, when you look at yourself in the mirror what do you see? Do you see all your flaws? Maybe you think your nose is too big or your hair is always just a little off. What might seem worse is if you had a full body picture of yourself. You would think you are too skinny, or too fat, or just shaped in the wrong way.

This kind of daily examination is what has led some to anorexia, Bulimia, plastic surgery, tanning booths, a hair color change, and the list goes on. Unhealthy ways of trying to change our appearance are all over the place.

We haven't even begun to talk about how we view ourselves on the inside. We might wish we could change our personality, our selfishness, our lack of abilities, our bad habits, our apathy, and again the list goes on.

Even spiritually we can see that we are less than perfect and we never will be perfect. We can always show more kindness, more patience, more love toward our neighbor, like Jesus says. We easily become frustrated with our sinful nature, knowing the things we should do, yet still failing to do them.

No level of obedience could ever bring us to the point where we would be happy with ourselves. In our own eyes we tend to see the glass in half empty, or maybe it looks almost completely empty. Negative thoughts surround our minds, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Then God reminds with water that we are baptized. He floods us with thoughts of his view of who we are. He created you. He formed you. He says to you, "I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, I you are mine. And I will be with you."

God isn't just talking about the nation of Israel in general. He is talking about you specifically. He knows you by name. He knows you unique flaws and gifts. He knows everything about you because he is the one who made you and formed you into who you are. Not only did he physically have in mind what you would look like. He formed experiences in your life so that you would become who you are today, both on the outside and the inside.

Up to this point God has been your Savior. He has recreated you through the death of his son. He has wiped away all your sin and you are perfect in his sight. His actions in the past remind us that he will be the Savior in our future.

In Israel's time they remembered some of the times God saved them. He had led his precious people through the Red Sea as he empowered Moses to part the waters. He had led the people through the desert and through the Jordan River as those waters were parted and people were led into the promised land. He led people through fire who didn't get burned, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

For the people during Isaiah's day these events would have seemed as distant as they do to us today. Just as Jesus crucifixion seems in the distant past. But that is our perception. In God's view it was just like yesterday that he led the people out of Egypt. To him it was just like yesterday that Jesus died on the cross. To him a thousand years is like a day. So I guess

technically it would be like two days ago, and less than a week ago he led the people out of Egypt.

And now Jesus coming is only a day away, or like it says in the scripture, only an hour away to God. God's perception goes beyond time, so that it is as if Jesus died and rose at the very moment you were baptized. You were baptized into his death, and now just as Jesus is risen from the dead you to may live a new life.

You can live your new life with God's perception, understanding that you are precious in his sight. When examining ourselves we often fall into the trap of the comparison game. We look at ourselves, feeling less valuable than others.

In the Isaiah passage today it is as if God says, "Fine I'll play your game, I'll compare you to other people. I will gladly exchange other people for you. I'll give up Egypt and all its riches and power for you, I'll give up Cush and Seba for you." In today's terms Jesus would exchange supermodels for you. Jesus would exchange famous athletes for you. He would exchange the most brilliant inventor for someone like you."

I am slightly embarrassed that this is the second time I will use the tv show the suite life of Zach and Cody as an illustration. The First time was in Confirmation class when I explained that each person is uniquely made, even twins. On the show it explains how identical twins like Zach and Cody have different fingerprints.

Another show I was watching showed to of the girl characters, London and _____, being criticized for how they look. London was accused of having a large bottom, and _____

as having skinny chicken legs. They look in the mirror and see those characteristics exaggerated. They think it's true and so they go on intense diets to try to change their figure. As with most sitcoms, they come to realize that they should be happy just the way they are and that they shouldn't listen to what other people say about them.

The same thing is happening to us everyday. We look in the mirror, paranoid what other people think, what flaws we have, and what terrible people we are. But then we recognize our Baptism and what God thinks of us. He sees us as we are. His forgiven perfect children.

The value of something either depends on how much it costs or who owns it. The basketball player Arenas who got suspended for having a gun in his locker loses 147,000 dollars for every game he misses. I would say he is a pretty valuable player. A dirty pair of basketball sneakers, soaked with sweat, and almost unwearable is worth thousands of dollars, if it is owned by Michael Jordan.

"You are mine," God says, which makes you worth more than anything. You are his because of the cost of Jesus life on the cross. God didn't give a supermodel, an athlete, or a inventor in exchange for you. He gave his Son.

And Jesus gave his life for you. In catechism we talked about Jesus's divine qualities. The fact that he could do miracles and calm the storm and raise the dead. Peter tells Jesus, he says, Lord you know all things. It makes you wonder if Jesus, as he was dying on the cross, used his divine power and picture you in the future. As he died he may have said you name under his breath. He may have seen your face, so he could remind himself why he was doing this.

That's not to make us feel guilty for not living a better life. It is to make us feel precious and loved in God's sight.

God reminds us at the end of this passage that he will gather people from the ends of the earth. He will gather his sons and his daughters no matter how far away they are. God might seem like he is on the other side of the world, because of the way your life is going. He might seem light years away as you wait for him to come into your life. But don't forget, God will find you, he will come to you, and he is your Savior because you are precious in his sight.

So when you get up in the morning and look at yourself in the mirror, you might notice some things you don't like. But before you go off to work or school or whatever it is you do, do something for me, take another look.