

ALL ABOUT ME

All four gospel writers include the story of Jesus' saying at the Last Supper that one of the twelve would betray Him. In Matthew's account, Judas' identity as the betrayer is revealed only to Judas himself (Matt. 26:25). In Mark's account, the identity of the betrayer is not revealed at all (Mark 14:20). John reports that Peter asked him to ask Jesus who it was, and Jesus gave Judas a piece of bread (John 13:26).

Luke's account struck me as interesting. The identity of the betrayer is not revealed; Jesus is not asked who it is. The disciples begin to discuss among themselves who it might be and the discussion quickly devolves into a dispute as to which of *them* is the greatest. Not only do they not "get" what is about to happen, but they are so self-absorbed they can only think of their own pecking order. I can see the events recorded in Matthew and John as occurring in the midst of all the chest-thumping with barely anyone other than the principal characters noticing.

It seems to me the biggest result of the fall is our self-awareness; suddenly everything is all about me. The very first response of Adam and Eve after their disobedience was self-consciousness; they realized they were naked. We can assume that, prior to the fall, nakedness was not an issue because their focus was on God. Now the focus was themselves.

There are a few notable characters in Scripture who seem not to be so affected in this way. Moses was said to be the most humble man on the earth (Num. 12:3). Humility may be described as a lack of self-consciousness, a willingness to lay down one's own goals or desires in order to accommodate another. That David was called a man after God's own heart indicates that his focus was on God rather than himself. Daniel's devotion to the Lord is clear, first in that he ruled over all Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar's mental illness and then returned the kingdom to him when he recovered and, second, in that God rescued him from the lion's den.

These musings lead me to give new meaning to Jesus' oft-repeated warning: "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt. 16:25). Our natural inclination is to self-focus. We will never be able to embrace the self-denial Jesus calls for as long as our focus is inward. It isn't all about me; it *is* all about God. It is only as we see and appreciate His greatness, acknowledge and receive His grace and forgiveness, and commit ourselves fully to His will and His kingdom that self will shrink enough in comparison so as to be negligible.

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all the heart, soul, and mind, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:36-39). Notice God is first, neighbor is second, and self is last. I have heard it said that we can't really love our neighbor if we don't love ourselves. That may be true in some sense, but until God is so big that self is so small, our love for others will be tainted with impure motives.