

JOHN GILLESPIE

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake

Will find it. (Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:39)

Dear Friends,

An acquaintance of mine is currently in the process of having his gender changed. He is, at surface level, “becoming a woman”. Currently he is wearing women’s clothing and taking a range of hormone therapy. He is due soon to have an operation to make the change final.

Most of the people I know who know him, view him as a bit of a hero. They see him as being “true to himself”. He has a wife and two children, so they see him as being “true to himself” at “great personal cost”. It is really quite something to behold the accolades he receives.

Now, I like this bloke, finding him to be a friendly fellow. We have some interests in common, and can engage readily in warm conversation. I think I do a good job at looking beyond his surface appearance (the mascara and such) and towards his heart. Furthermore, I think I am truly sensitive to whatever pain and trauma may have taken place in his life which has brought him to this place and to this decision. I think I can fairly say that I care about him.

But I think that what he is doing is profoundly selfish.

Sorry, but I do.

I do not look upon him as a hero.

Sorry again.

I also think that what he is doing really sums up the spirit of our age.

Sorry, but that is my considered opinion.

The spirit of our age, so well exemplified in my friend, demands that I be “true to myself” no matter what. It screams that I have a “right to happiness”, no matter what pain I may inflict upon others in my pursuit of that happiness.

A man was once considered noble who, no matter what cost to himself, was faithful to his vows, and duty, and what was right. Now a man is considered so who pursues his dream no matter what it may cost others. Golfers who win tournaments at the expense of their families are now “brave” and couples are deemed “heroic” when they make the “hard choice” to abort their child for the sake of their careers or lifestyles.

Now this spirit is exactly the opposite of the Spirit that was in Christ, and diametrically opposed to the call of Christ to a life of discipleship. This modern spirit refuses to deal with the fact that my “self” is flawed by sin and polluted. It closes its eyes to the fact that I am what is wrong with the world, and that Christ is not calling me to “fulfil” myself, but to deny myself.

To put it bluntly, if I were “true to myself” as a life-principle, I would probably be divorced, bankrupt, and in prison by now. My “self” is my problem.

Look at the words of Jesus at the top of this page. They are foundational to Christian living. They are cognizant of a sinful nature, and of the need for Christ to impart new life in the heart. They are revolutionary.

They warn me, and my gender-confused friend, that life is not found by seeking self-fulfilment, but by radically denying sinful self and treasuring Christ above what I see as my “rights” and “privileges”. But right here is where Jesus makes all the difference and provides the miracle. For even as we say “no” to our self-will, God is saying “Yes”, a Divine “Yes”, to His greater will for us. It is as we lay down our lives, that He raises up our lives, and imparts His Divine “Life” to us. He aims not to extinguish, but to inflame us.*

CS Lewis says it better than I can:

It is when I turn to Christ, when I give myself up to His Personality that I first begin to have a real personality of my own...Look for yourself and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.

My concern for my friend is that he will in fact discover in “discovering himself” “only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin and decay”. I am sure that, for all the pain, heartache, and tears cried in battle over self, he would find Life in losing his life, for the sake of Christ and others (wife and children). That’s the old-fashioned way, but it is also the way of the Kingdom which is coming.

Yours for Christ, His Gospel and His Kingdom,

John Gillespie

* The Christian understanding of denying self is not in the same category as, say, the Hindu view of “extinguishing” all desire. It is not our goal to desire “nothing”, but “something”, that being, to know Jesus and in so doing, to become all that He has purposed us to be.