

An Identity Crisis

“He didn't know who he was and he dreamed all the wrong dreams.”

Epitaph spoken at the graveside of Willie Loman.

If we take time to reflect, we can ask some profound questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Am I ready for the future, both for time and eternity? Why is the world in such a mess? Where is God in all this? The very fact that we can ask such questions about ourselves, sets us apart from other life forms. No other species wonders about the meaning of existence or the complexity of the universe.

In Arthur Miller's far-famed play, The Death of a Salesman, we see Willie Loman swaggering his way through a shabby life of second-rate illusions about everything – especially himself. In the closing scene, Biff, the eldest son, stands with his mother and brother, at the graveside of his father and utters this epitaph: “A man who never quite grasped reality. He didn't know who he was and he dreamed all the wrong dreams!”

I must confess that these words were like an arrow to my heart the first time I heard them. I can identify with them as they in part, sum up the predicament of modern humanity. We don't know who we are because we have forsaken the only Person in the entire universe who can give identity and meaning to life! Man will always be a mysterious riddle if we try to explain him in strictly naturalistic terms and omit the spiritual dimension of his personhood.

William James, one of the fathers of modern psychology, put it this way: “We and God have business with each other.” Made to have fellowship with God, we don't reach our full potential until we do. Not right with God, we can never be right with others, and certainly not right with ourselves. We remain maladjusted, lost and alone – like fish on land, or birds in cages, never knowing the reason why we were created! Our hearts have an appetite the size of eternity and only Someone greater can satisfy the hunger. No matter what we achieve in life, we always wonder – is there something more?

But, no matter who you are, what you have done or what has been done to you, the fact that God loves you and Christ died for you, and he wants to live within you by his Spirit in a meaningful relationship, makes you incredibly valuable.

“God does not love us because we are so valuable; rather we are so valuable because God loves us.” Hulmut Thielicke