

Fear of Rejection

On Sunday, we continued our sermon series called “Fear Less” by exploring how to best manage our fear of rejection.

1. Warm up question: In *Toy Story*, Buzz Lightyear found his sense of worth when he realized how much the little boy who owned him cherished him, despite his limitations. When you were a kid, what was one of your most cherished toys?
2. Rejection is a potent, painful feeling. Fear of rejection can be so powerful it can produce a constant sense of anxiety – Do people like me? – and can cause us to twist ourselves into something we aren’t just to try to please people.
 - a. Remember back to times in school when teams were being chosen on the playground. How did that feel to you?
 - b. When in your life have you felt that you most belonged?
 - c. When in your life have you felt the sting of rejection most poignantly?
 - d. When you feel rejected, how do you tend to respond? How do manage to cope?
3. Most of us were probably surprised to learn that Jesus himself experienced rejection on a very painful human level. Near the start of his ministry, after much initial success, Jesus returned to his hometown for a visit. As he was entering the village, before he could even get to his family’s house, he got waylaid by someone who insisted on serving him dinner. As word spread that Jesus was back, a huge crowd gathered at that house. Read Mark 3:19b-22 and 31-35.
 - a. Verse 21 tells us that many people were saying that, “Jesus has gone out of his mind.” Take a look at the following verses, then see if you can come up with a theory as to why people were saying Jesus had lost his mind. Mark 1:14-18, Mark 2:5-7, Mark 2:23-28 (especially vs. 28), Mark 3:11-12.
 - b. Verse 21 says Jesus’ family came out “to restrain him.” Later we’re told more specifically that it was his “mother and brothers” who came out to do this. What do you they intended to do – restrain him how? Why were they doing this?
 - c. How do you think Jesus felt when he learned his mother and brothers felt the need to “restrain” him? Has your family ever felt the need to “restrain” you?
 - d. What do you think was going on in Mary’s head? Did she not believe in Jesus?
 - e. Verse 22 says the religious leaders accused Jesus of being demon possessed. How do you think that made Jesus feel? Have religious leaders ever made accusations against you?

4. Re-read how Jesus responded to all this in verses 31-35. Jeff suggested we can draw two key clues from how Jesus responded that can guide us when we face rejection. First, Jesus seemed to be reminding himself that his core identity was not based on being part of Mary and Joseph's family, but being part of God's family, so that how Jesus felt about himself turned primarily on how God felt about him, not humans.
 - a. Some of us tend to think of ourselves primarily as children of our earthly parents. Others of us tend to think of ourselves primarily in terms of our talents and gifts and things we can do to earn the favor of those around us. We invest our sense of self in how smart we are, how we look, our athleticism, our competence, how much money or stuff we have, how great our personality is, how many Facebook friends we have, etc., etc. When you're at your worst, what are you most tempted to invest your core identity in? Why is that identity vulnerable?
 - b. At his baptism, Jesus heard God saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Mt. 3:17. In other words, Jesus knew God delighted in him, even when the people around him didn't. On a typical day, do you carry a deep sense that God is well pleased with you and delights in you? Why or why not?
 - c. Read Romans 8:15-17. What does it mean? Who does it say you are?
 - d. Can you say that your core identity is as "a son or daughter of God in whom God is well pleased?" Why or why not?
5. Because Jesus core identity was as a child of God, he believed he had a great, overriding purpose for being here on earth – he was part of the "family business." He had to be about his "Father's business" (Luke 2:49). From this great sense of purpose, he drew courage to defy human expectations – to be what he felt God called him to be even if everyone else denounced him.
 - a. Jeff said, "Great acts of courage – overcoming fear of rejection or disapproval – are almost always motivated by a love/passion/calling to be part of something greater than ourselves – to do something important for God." Florence Nightingale is an example of this principle at work. When in your life has "courage of purpose" given you the strength to withstand criticism by others?
 - b. Bishop Claude Alexander says, "There is a purpose for you being here. You are meant to answer something, solve something, provide something, lead something, discover something, compose something, write something, say something, translate something, interpret something, sing something, create something, teach something, preach something, bear something, overcome something, and in doing so, you improve the lives of others under the power of God, for the glory of God." What phrase in this quote most speaks to you?
 - c. Do you believe you're on a special mission for God? If so, how would you define that mission if explaining it to someone else? What is your overriding purpose?