

Ghost Stories

John 8:10-47

October 19, 2025

Peter Hiett

Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/ghost-stories/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please email us at transcripts@thesanctuarydowntown.org. Thank you!

Message

About 30 years ago, on a Friday around 4pm, I was getting ready to go home. I was the only person in our old church building in the mountains. I heard a voice and walked out of my office to see a young man. His hair was wild; his eyes were distant. His clothes didn't match. Actually, he had no pants. Fortunately, he did have underwear. I asked him what he needed. He said, "A pair of pants would be nice." I then asked him what had happened. He looked at me in utter seriousness and said, "Do you want the truth, or do you want a lie?" I said, "Ahh, well, let's go with the truth." He said, "I drove out here from Michigan. I parked my car on Lookout Mountain Road. I had a religious experience, so I took off all my clothes and wandered in the woods for two days." And then he said, "You know how it is." I said, "kinda", I guess." He continued, "When I got back someone had taken my pants with my keys and all my stuff, and I'm locked out." I asked him what we could do for him. And he said, "A pair of pants would be nice." And that was it.

It's interesting that the first thing Adam and Eve seek, after obtaining knowledge of Good and evil, is a pair of pants, to hide their secrets, their privates. I drove this guy over to the Evergreen Outreach where he got some free pants and shoes, and nothing else. I kept asking him questions, trying to figure out who he was, where he was from (other than Michigan), and how I could help. But there was no logic, no light connecting my world to his world. He would just look away, evade my questions, and ramble. On the way back, I was inquiring as to his apparent need for further assistance, when he suddenly turned to me, put his finger to his lips, and went, "Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh. You ask too many questions."

That wasn't the first time I had heard that voice, and it wouldn't be the last. Ironically, I've heard it most from religious folks—folks who think that faith is wishful thinking or believing something that you know is not true. "Shhhhhh. You ask too many questions. Just have faith." "Have faith in what?!" "Have faith in Jesus. Jesus the Truth." So, who has more faith in Jesus? An honest agnostic asking questions or a Christian who says "shhhhhh, you ask too many questions, just have faith"? If Jesus is the Truth he's the objective Truth regardless of me. But I could never know the Truth if the Truth is not also the truth in me—subjective truth, faith in truth; that's called honesty.

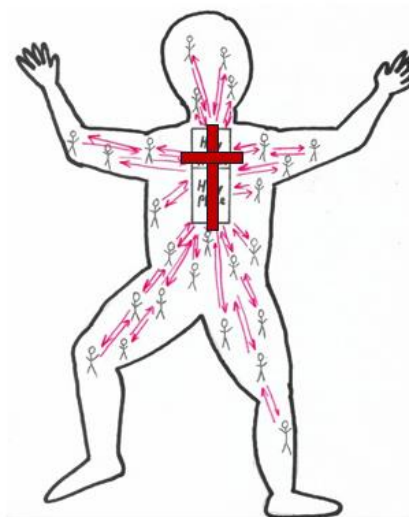
What if – in a moment – you could see the Truth, but the Truth revealed that all your rights, (your grievances, your judgments against your enemies) were all wrong and you actually had no rights, but only wrongs. What if you saw that all your accomplishments were simply an illusion.

- that all your good deeds were as filthy rags, like Isaiah and St. Paul say.
- that all your work came from envy of your neighbor, as Solomon says.
- that all your possessions, all your “goods,” were stolen goods, including your life, which was never your own, but actually belonged to another.

What if the Truth revealed that, would you want to see that, or just keep that hidden in the dark, a secret, hidden from everyone, including yourself. Would you lie to yourself or be honest? Like I was saying, the man with no pants, who now had pants, turned to me and said, “Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, you ask too many questions.” And, at that, I realized that I couldn’t reach him. He was alone. “It’s not good that the Adam would be alone,” said God in a garden. I dropped him off at his car, as if I had never met anyone at all. He was like a ghost, a phantom, an empty skin vessel, an “*ob*” in Hebrew. In one sense, he was utterly free, so free that he constructed his very own reality. He was free from the Truth. And yet when I dropped him off, I felt like I dropped him off in hell. There is no greater bondage than freedom from the Truth. “Shhhhhh, you ask too many questions. Turn off the light.”

Let’s Pray: Jesus, you are the Light, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Would you reveal yourself to us? Would you even be the faith within us: The desire to look.

If you’re new, it’s important to know that we’ve been preaching our way through the Gospel of John. This is our 22nd sermon, and John is not haphazard in his presentation but extremely methodical. So, we’re building on what we’ve learned so far. In John 7 and 8 Jesus is at The Feast of Tabernacles which depicts the close of the age, when we all shed our individual tabernacles—our bodies of flesh—and are joined as one Living Temple: The Body of Christ. In the Gospel of John, that’s the 7th sign that is the substance, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” says Jesus.



The Last (eschatos) Thing
The 7th Sign that is the Substance

"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."

At the beginning of chapter 8 and, apparently, during the feast, a group of religious men throw a woman into the dust, at the feet of Jesus, in the courtyard of the temple, demanding judgment. She's very likely naked, for as they say, she's been caught in the very act of adultery. Imagine that, you can, can't you? Think about your secrets: your private parts and private desires; think about your longing for pleasure ("Eden" is how you'd say that in Hebrew), think about your longing for communion. And now think about a time you attempted to fulfill that longing in a way that felt shameful. You know: a way that you'd like to keep secret, a way that revealed that you are not the image you project in church. Imagine being caught, drug to church naked, thrown on the floor in the middle of the Sanctuary as religious people condemn you. That would be the worst, wouldn't it? It would be the death of your ego. And now imagine that God suddenly appeared in the midst of that sanctuary—God, in whose light your own dark deeds become even more apparent. Imagine him bending down, looking you in the eye, and saying, "I do not condemn you, and if I don't condemn you, who is left to condemn?" He speaks to you, utterly stripped of pretense, self-righteousness, and ego. He sees you as if you were a newborn baby, lying in the dust. Imagine. I have a newborn grandson living with me. All his needs, desires, and urges are utterly apparent to me and sometimes I change his dirty diapers. But when I see him lying there in his own filth, I never condemn him, I usually congratulate him, and he's even started to giggle at me. He knows me.

Last time we saw that Jesus didn't condemn the woman and he didn't condemn those Pharisees, although they appear to have condemned themselves. I mean they dropped their stones and left the temple; they left the garden, they left the vineyard, they literally ran from the judgment of God. Last time we said that Jesus doesn't condemn us, but He does condemn our condemnation of ourselves and others. It is actually our fear of condemnation, of being buried alive in a box, which creates the box in which we are all buried, the coffin in which we all hide. Last time we read that He doesn't even judge us, and yet He—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is our Judgment, the Judgment of unconditional Love. At this point, it would be easy to assume, that Jesus is a

theological liberal, soft on sin, and ignorant of the malignant and pervasive spread of evil. But if that is what you assume, you obviously haven't read the rest of John Chapter 8. BUCKLE UP! And please remember—I didn't write the Bible!

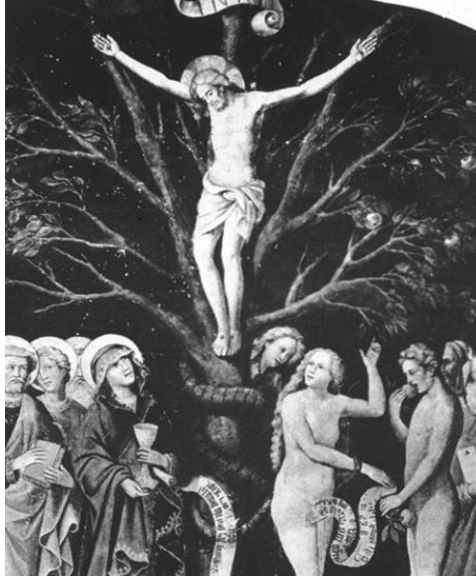
John 8:10-12a:

Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from [the] now ~~on~~ sin no more.” ¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am [*ego eimi*] the light of the world.

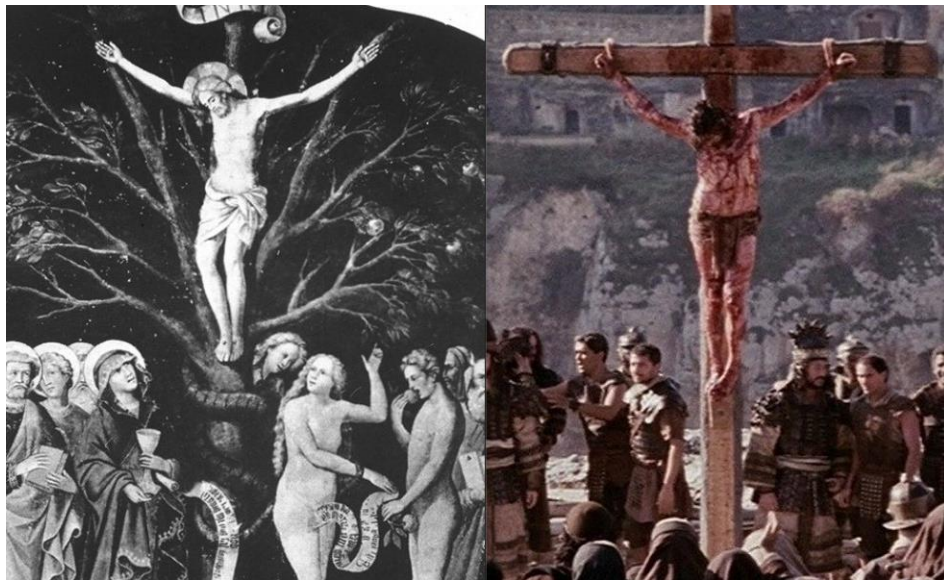
At the Feast, the Jews had an elaborate water ceremony. On the great day of the feast (John 7:37) Jesus proclaimed that he was “the fountain,” like the fountain that came from the Rock in the wilderness. They also had a spectacular light display, during which, the holy men would dance all night long in the light of a giant menorah. And Jesus just claimed to be “the Light,” like the pillar of fire the Israelites followed in the dark. Jesus is the Life that flows in the blood through every member of the body. And Jesus is the Light, the Truth, the Wisdom, the Logic, the Word that coordinates every member of the body in the dance of Love which is life.

John 8:12b-21a:

Whoever follows me [“The one following me”] will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of [the] life.” ¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, “You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.” ¹⁴ Jesus answered, “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I ~~am going~~ [*hypago*: go], but you do not know where I come from or where I ~~am going~~ [*hypago*: go]. ¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, ~~for it is not I alone who judge~~ [because I am not alone], but I and the Father who sent me. ¹⁷ In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸ I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.” ¹⁹ They said to him therefore, “Where is your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” ²⁰ These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. ²¹ So he said to them again, “I ~~am going away~~, and you will seek me, and you will die in your [the] sin [of you all].



“The sin (singular) of you all.” What the heck is that? Well, if you’ve been around The Sanctuary, you know. “You all” is Adam, that is, humanity. “The Sin” is the original sin at the root of all sin which we all have committed.



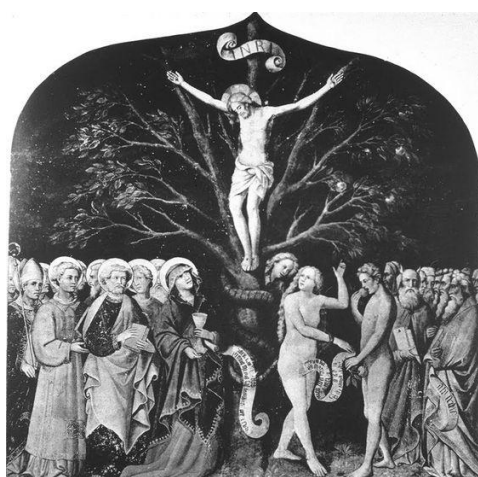
Every time we sin, we take knowledge of the Good, which is also the life of the Good, in order to make ourselves Good, which only reveals that we have not been Good for we have just crucified the LIFE to feed our own ego. Jealous of Jesus we all try to make ourselves Jesus—the very judgment of God. That’s the sin. But what would it mean to die in it? Well, the sin is our judgment, and with our judgment we each think we create ourselves, but we only create a lie about ourselves, a false self. So, maybe to die in your sin would be to die in yourself, unwilling to lose your ‘self’ that you might find yourself in Jesus.

John 8:21b-26:

Where ~~I am going~~ [I go], you ~~cannot~~ [are not able to] come.”²² So the Jews said [were saying], “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where ~~I am going~~ [I go], you cannot come’?” [The predominant belief was that suicides went to the lowest levels of Sheol in the depths of the earth]²³ He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that [*hoti*: for, because, since] I am [*ego eimi*] ~~he~~ you will die in your sins.”²⁵ So they said [were saying] to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you: ~~from~~ the beginning [“From” is added by the translator. “I am the beginning and the end,” says Jesus in his Revelation to John].²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to judge.



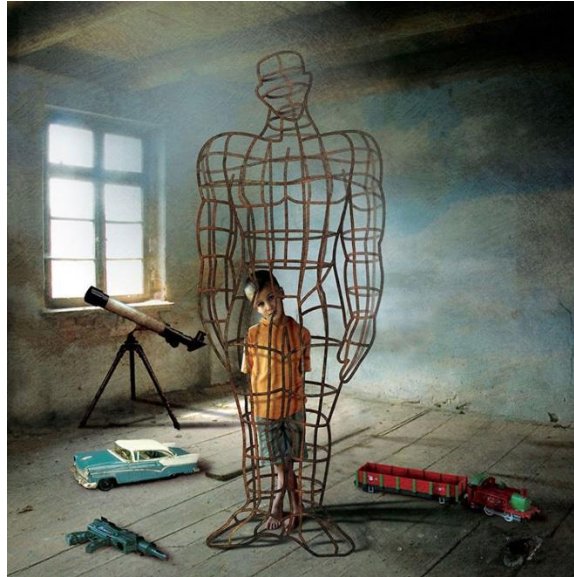
In Acts 17:31, Paul tells the Athenians that God has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man and that he has given faith to all by raising him from the dead.



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

You see, the man on the tree is your judgment; He is your righteousness. If you think he is simply a way for you to make yourself right, you will take knowledge of him, and try to make

yourself him, and only make an imitation of him—in Greek that’s an *antichristos*, an anti-christ, an imitation Christ.



Actually, that’s what you do, whenever you “should on yourself.” If I say to myself “I should have faith,” I’m simultaneously acknowledging that I don’t have faith, and so I’ll pretend that I do have faith—I’ll become an act. If I say to myself “I should love,” I simultaneously admit that I don’t love, and so I’ll try to love because I don’t actually love love—I become an act, an appearance, an apparition, in Greek: a *phantasma*, in English: a phantom. You see the distance between who “I should be” and who “I am” is who “I am NOT,” that is a false self, and empty shell, in Hebrew, an “*ob*” usually translated “Ghost” or “Phantasm” or “Shade.” To die in your sin is to be trapped in a ghost, kind of like a kernel of Truth trapped in a lie, kind of like being buried alive in a box. And according to John, until we have faith in the Truth, we’re already dead. “The day you eat of it, dying you will die,” said God in the Garden.



Jesus said you must become like a little child to enter the kingdom.

John 8:26-28a:

I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.”²⁷ They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of [the] Man...

Jesus keeps calling himself “Son of Man” and nobody seems to listen. If God is his Father, that means that Man (humanity) is his Mother, which means that you are pregnant with Jesus, who is who it is that you—in some weird way—truly are. And that’s why Paul wrote “It’s no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me,” and why he wrote to the Galatians saying, “How I am in travail with you until Christ be formed in you,” and why Jesus said “Whoever does the will of my Father is my mom.”

John 8:28b-30:

then you will know ~~that~~ [hoti: for, because, since] I am [ego eimi] ~~he~~, and ~~that~~ I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught [teaches] me.²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.”³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

John 1:12, “To... the one believing in his name, he gave *exuosia* the authority to become children of God... begotten of God.” John 3:36, “The one believing in the Son has eternal life.” John 5:24, “Truly Truly... the one... believing him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.”

John 8:31-32:

So Jesus ~~said~~ [was saying] to the Jews who had believed him, [another word for these guys might be, “Christians”] “If you abide [meno] in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Not “you will know about the truth” as if the truth were an object hanging on a tree BUT “you will know the truth” as if the Truth were a man who could know you and set you free. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. [free from what?]

John 8:33-44a:

They answered him, “We are offspring [*sperma*: seed] of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?” [They think they are free.... that they are free wills.]³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone ~~who practices~~ [all the one doing the] sin is a slave to [of] [the] sin.³⁵ The slave does not remain [*meno*: abide] in the house ~~forever~~ [into the age]; the son remains [abides] ~~forever~~ [into the age].³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.³⁷ I know that you are offspring [*sperma*; seed] of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word [logos] finds no place in you.³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”³⁹ They [the Jews who had believed in him] answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s childrenⁱ,

you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God [That was a shock to them. Is it a shock to you? He died for your sins. So, every time you lie, you crucify the Truth, and that is Him]. **This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born [begotten] of sexual immorality [*porneia*: fornication, prostitution] ⁱⁱ. We have one Father—even God.” ⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love [be loving] me, for I came from [*ek*: out of] God and I am here. I came not of my ~~own accord~~ [self], but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear [are not able] to hear my word [logos].** [Darkness cannot bear the light; lies cannot bear truth; illusion cannot bear reality. Chaos cannot bear logos... Jesus isn’t angry with them; It’s just a matter of fact. He grieves for them.] ^{v44} **You are of your father the devil...**

I hope this raises some questions.

1. What does it mean to “die in the sin of y’all?” Is it endless torture?
2. How could Jesus say to “the Jews who had believed in him,” “you are of your Father the devil?”

In 1 John, John tells us that anyone sinning is “of the devil,” perhaps even “a child of the devil.” Yet, “if we say we have no sin, the Truth is not in us.” ⁱⁱⁱ

John 8:44-47:

You are of your father the devil and your will is to do your father’s desires. [That’s not “free will;” that’s a will enslaved to the devil]. **He was a murderer from the beginning** [What murder did the devil commit in the beginning?], **and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God** [The one being out of God] **hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”**

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.” – That’s John 1:1. So, what is “not of God?” Nothing! So, Jesus is saying to the Jews who had believed in him, you are of your father the devil; you are nothing—like a nightmare, a shadow, a lie, a ghost. Satan isn’t the father of people—real people or real children. Jesus, the Truth, just said it, “He’s the father of lies.” “There is no truth in him,” which means “there is no light in him.” He’s the Father of lies and the Father of Shadows.

[Quick video of something dark flying through a sanctuary]

Fifteen years ago, Robert Galinas, my old friend and the pastor of Colorado Community Church in Aurora, took that cell phone video of the building we used to rent on 30th and Vallejo. He sent

the video to me asking me what I thought it was. I showed it to my friend Ben, the film maker, and he said, “I can’t explain it.” The following Sunday, I was talking to a new couple at church, and the woman asked, “Do people ever see things in your church?” And I said, “I suppose.” She said, “Last Sunday, as worship started, I saw a black shadow come out of that corner and fly across the room. My husband and I, both, saw it.” I said, “Wow? It must’ve disliked worship” and then “I think we have a video.” I showed her the video. She said, “That’s what I saw!” and “My name is Heidi Hemmat and I’m an investigative reporter for Fox 31 News, could I do a story?” I said, “uh yeah, I guess... just don’t make it silly.”

After the service, I grabbed my wife, we took communion and started praying through that old building, built in 1890 just before the turn of the century. In the northeast tower, Susan kept hearing a voice; It kept saying “Shhhhhh... Shhhhhh... shhhhhh,” just like the man with no pants “shhhhh..., shhhh..., shshsh.” Finally, I said, “I bind you in the name of Jesus and under the authority of his blood and I command you to reveal your name.” And Susan heard, “Secrets.” We went to the southeast tower above the corner where the black thing had been; I started praying, binding, commanding in Jesus’ name and stuff. Susan said, “I hear all these voices. They want to know who you are.” I said stuff like “I’m a minister of the Gospel of Jesus the Christ, yada yada yada.” Susan said, “OK this is weird. (You see, for whatever reason, Susan and I have prayed for some folks afflicted with demonic spirits and demonic spirits react violently to prayer and the name of Jesus.) Susan said, “OK this is weird but they’re not so much angry; they’re like genuinely confused and they want to know if you own the building and this land.” And so, I said something like, “Um... we’re renting.” Then Susan said, “It has something to do with the Masons!” I thought, “Oh sure, everybody blames the Masons.” And yet, I had been learning about the Masons: they bind up their members with secret oaths as they try to progress the 32nd degree. I had prayed, extensively, with a friend who had been ritually abused by her father and his fellow masons. They bound up her psyche in such a way that she had hidden herself in a coffin of mental illness and secrets, hidden herself from herself.^{iv} Well, I didn’t know what to do once the voices started asking me about the real estate arrangements and Susan said, “They just want to be left alone.” I can’t remember what I told them at that point, but I think we encountered some of them later on. And I’ll tell you about that next week.

When Heidi Hemmat came back to interview me, she said, “I did some research: Did you know that this church was built on an old masonic cemetery?” I said, “No!” And I thought “Wow, imagine that? Susan was right.”

[Video trailer for the investigative story plays. “What is this darkness caught on tape? Thursday on Fox 31 News at 9.”]

Now that does seem kind of silly, but I’m showing it to you and telling you the story in the hope that you’ll believe what happened next that day and, actually, in the two years that followed. That day, Susan said, “It’s something about the masons.” I thought, “oh sure, everybody blames the masons,” then we went to the bottom of the northeast stairwell, praying and sprinkling communion wine on stuff, telling stuff that it could no longer hide, when all of a sudden Susan said, “Someone’s here. It’s an Old Lady.” Understand, I’m already freaked out. And so, I started in, “I take authority over you, in the name of Jesus; you may not lie, you may not hide. You must reveal your name and why are you here... yada yada yada.” And once again Susan stopped me

and said, “Peter it’s not like that. She’s confused and frightened. She doesn’t know why she’s here. I don’t think she’s a demon; she’s a terrified little old lady. Her name is Elise.”

Well, demons lie but I had bound this thing, and I thought, “What if?” In that moment, I thought of “Secrets.” AND members of our prayer team had told me that they thought people had been abused in that old building. I thought of secrets, and how cults, and religions, trap people in rituals and lies, including the lie that traps us all, that God is not good, God is not Grace. And so, I said, “Elise, you need to go to Jesus. He’s not like those bad men that did all those things to you; He’s not like the others.” And then I said this—I wondered if I should say it—but then I said it. “Elise, Jesus loves you; he doesn’t condemn you You need to go to Jesus.” Then Susan said, “She’s gone.” And I thought, “That was weird. Jesus can I go now? Please? I just want to go home and watch football.”

So back to our questions.

1. What does it mean to “die in the sin of y’all?”
2. How can a person be a child of God and spawn of the devil?
3. How can I be real and not a phantom, that is a ghost?”

What am “I”? As soon as I think about “I,” I am no longer I, but me: a thing in space and time. Phenomenologists, like George Herbert Mead, have argued that every person is two things: an “I” and a “me.”

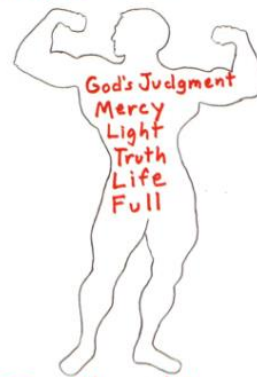
1. I am “me,” a me, a self that can be observed in space and time.

That would include my physical body: both the one that God gave me through my mother and father, and the one that I grew by eating life and excreting death. And it would include my psychic body: my judgments, my thoughts, my feelings & accomplishments, as well as God’s judgments, thoughts, feelings and accomplishments in me—He is the Love and Righteousness in me. This psychic body is what Scripture refers to as my soul, my psyche, and sometimes, my life—God breathed his breath into the Adamah, and the Adam became a living soul, a nephesh, a person, a self, a “me.” But

2. I am also an “I” that observes “me.” I am conscious of me, but not “me,” for I am observing “me.”

And “I” don’t seem to change. Although “me” is constantly changing, I am who I am, unchanging—I am the same “I” as in second grade. “I” cannot be located in space or time: “I” can only observe when and where I have been and postulate when and where I will be, which then isn’t I but me. “I” exist only now, which has disappeared the moment I observe it—now is the infinitely small point when and where eternity touches time. Philosophers, and now physicists, refer to this as “the hard problem of consciousness.” The “I” that is conscious of “me” is not of this world. And yet, strangely “I” tend to think that “I” am created by “me,” that is, by what “I” have done in this world of cause and effect. I think Scripture refers to “I” as the breath of God in “me,” the Spirit in “me.” And as we’ve seen, Scripture also reveals that I have two “me’s.”

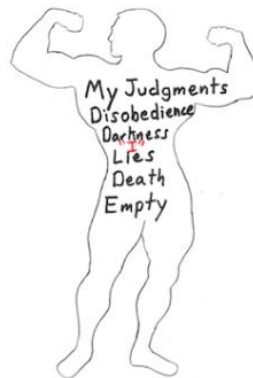
The "Me" that GOD creates



The New Adam

I have One "Me" that God has created with his judgment to create me, save me and redeem me—his judgment of Love. My true and eternal self

The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

And I have a self that I think I have created, for I have believed a lie—that I can make myself in the image of God using knowledge I have taken from the tree. I have a self that I think I have created with my judgments in space and time and apart from God. But Scripture tells me that apart from God "I" can do nothing.^v

The "Me" that I create



The Old Adam

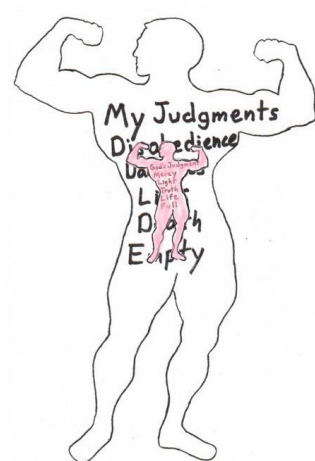
So, one "me" is who I am not, it's a false self, an apparition, an empty vessel, a ghost. It's the man I think I'm supposed to be, but I am not. In the End, it is my own condemnation of me; it is my absence of faith in I AM.

The "Me" that GOD creates

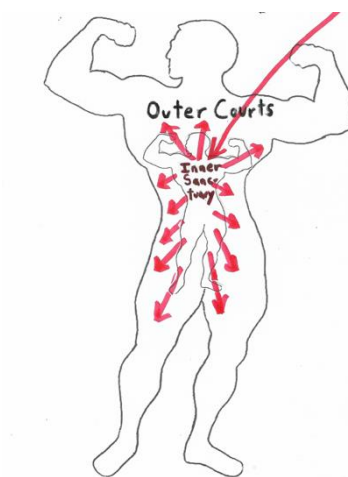


The New Adam

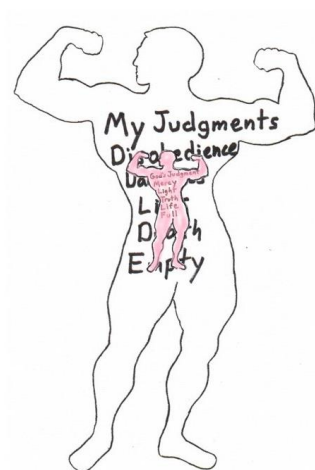
And I have a man who has been created in Christ Jesus but is being revealed in space and time, for where sin increased, Grace abounded all the more. This Man, this me, is who I truly AM. This man is I AM in me—the forever NEW me, the eternal me.



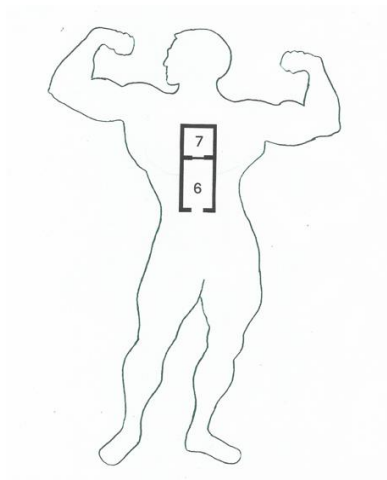
I'm actually pregnant with him which is somehow Christ in me.



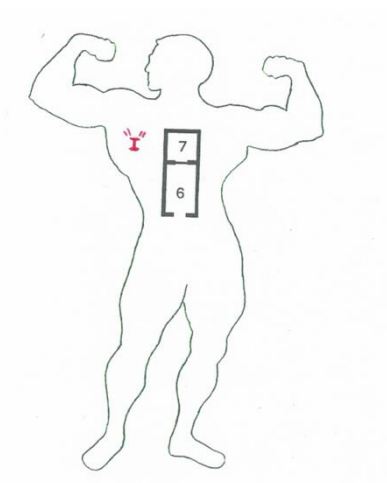
And once I believe His Word, I discover that he's growing in me, such that as I lose myself, I find myself in him, and him in me. I am we.



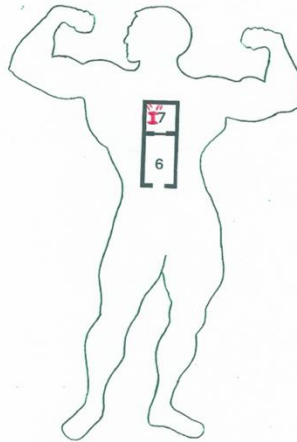
So, I hope you see that this picture, is a lot like this picture from last time.



I'm a temple... We're a temple, and yet, each one of us is a temple. My true self, (the eternal man), exists in my false self, (the temporal man), just as the Holy of Holies was found in the old stone temple made by men.



“I,” my consciousness, can abide in my temporal and false self where “I” believe I am what I have done and will do—that, I am my resume.



Or “I,” my consciousness, can abide in the inner man, I can abide in Christ, in who it is that I truly am, the Beloved.

When “the Jews” in John 8 believed, they were in the inner man, The Holy of Holies so to speak; they were looking at Jesus and listening to Jesus in the Now, Face to face, an unveiled face. But when Jesus said that the Truth would set them free, they got offended at the Truth and began appealing to their religion, their race, and their accomplishments in space and time. They were no longer abiding in the Truth, in Jesus, the Word of their Father. And, you see. I can only know “I AM THAT I AM,” my Father, in the NOW.

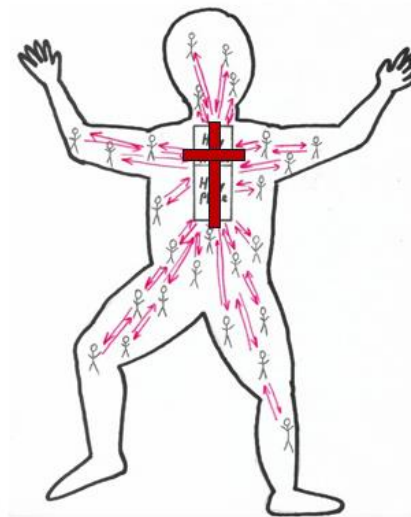


My grandson James is three months old; he’s at this amazing stage, where he’ll stare at me for a few seconds, then suddenly smile, stick out his tongue, then I’ll stick out my tongue, and we’ll stick out our tongues together. He knows “me”, or I should say “I,” and I don’t think he could ever please me more than he does in that moment--It’s “I” contact; It’s Life. He knows me, but one day, he’ll try to hide himself from me in order to impress me with who he thinks I want him to be. I think that happens to every Adam, and with every Adam. But, God our father makes a judgment and a promise like the one I find myself making with James. That promise is this:

“When you get lost in yourself, I will remember who you are and I will come find you, for I am you and you are me.” The name “Elise” actually means “promise of God.”

Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher and theologian, wrote that we have only two kinds of relationships: “I-it” and “I-thou.” I-It relationships are those in which I relate to objects in space and time, or people as if they were simply objects in space and time. When you judge yourself and condemn yourself you are relating to yourself as an object in space and time. I-thou relationships are those in which I relate to another I in the now. I can know about a person in space and time, but I can only come to truly know another person in “the NOW.”

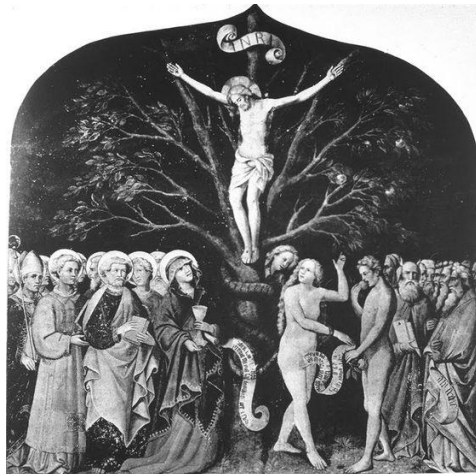
- Everyone of us is an “I” that is hidden in an “it”
- Everyone of us is the “breath of God,” hidden in a jar of clay.
- Everyone of us is a “new man,” hidden in an old man
- Everyone of us is a “true self,” hidden in a false self, and yet destined to be revealed.
- I have to lose my sense of self as my own creation in space and time.
- I have to lose myself for the sake Christ in order to find myself—actually that same self—find myself in Christ, but now filled with the eternal life of God.
- I have to lose everything in order to find everything filled with God and therefore new and always new.



The Last (eschatos) Thing
The 7th Sign that is the Substance

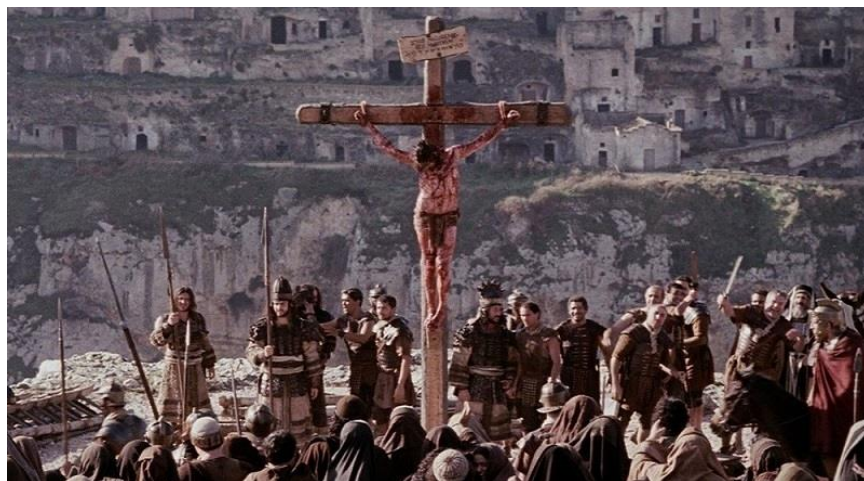
“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”

Salvation is losing that false self and finding my new self in Jesus, the Truth.



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

We all thought that the Truth was a thing that we could use to justify ourselves and so we trapped our ‘selves’ in a world of illusion and shame. But the Truth is our Lord who has always justified us and now finds us and knows us and speaks his word to us, “I do not condemn you.”



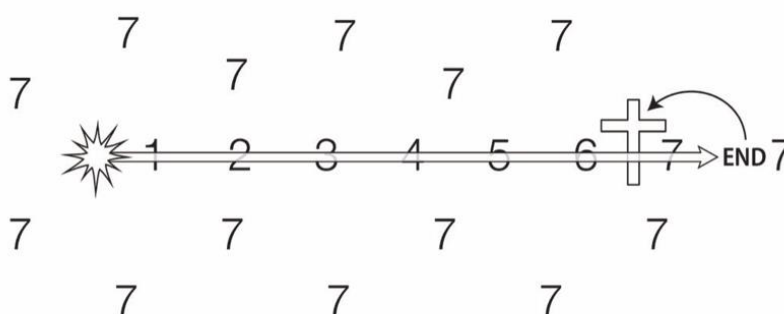
Gibson, Mel (Director). (2004). The Passion of the Christ [Motion picture]. USA: Icon Productions.

And that’s the greatest gift for once I have come to know who it is that I am NOT, I will be eternally grateful for who it is that I actually AM—The beloved... And who it is that I Am That I Am is: Perfect Love. But until then, I feel “lost,” for I have agreed with the devil—“devil” means accuser—I have condemned myself and everyone around me. I’m Lost, until I remember to abide in him, in the Holy place, in the inner man, in the now, where I can hear the voice of my father spoken over his son: “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.”

I don’t know who Elise was, but I would imagine that she was something like the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. By that, I mean that people had condemned her, she believed those people, and so, she condemned herself and therefore wanted to hide herself from God. Like Adam and eve who condemned themselves and hid themselves from God and from each other.

Like the man with no pants who hid himself from me and everyone else saying Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, you ask to many questions.” Like each one of us who hides himself or herself, even from our own self, in an image, an act, who we should be but are not, a false self, a ghost.

You see, if you don’t give up the ghost before your physical body dies, you can get trapped in that ghost for a time. But the Word of God, who is the End of Time, descends even into Sheol in order to set the captives free and fill all things with himself. I preached the Gospel to Elise, I can’t remember exactly what I said, but I know that somehow, I said something like this: “Elise, He doesn’t condemn you. He died for you, because he loves you, he likes you—the real you, he adores you, right now even here in the dust. You need to go to Jesus.” And Susan said, “she’s gone.”



It was like she disappeared from the timeline. I went to my office to grab my stuff, go home, and watch football. When I came back into the Sanctuary to get Susan, I found her standing in the middle of the room with this stunned look on her face. She said, “I just heard Jesus, clear as a bell. He said, Welcome home Elise.” “And I just heard Elise answer. She said, “I was lost.”

Communion

When we were all lost, Jesus took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you.” And he took the cup saying, “This is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of me.”

It’s not OK to excuse yourself as if you had never sinned. And it’s not OK to condemn yourself as if you are what you have done. You are NOT what you have done; You are NOT a Ghost Story. You are what God has done and is doing; You are the Love Story. You are the Beloved.

So, tear off a piece of bread, dip it in the cup, and ingest the Truth. In other words, right now, Be honest. “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself,” said Jesus, the Light of the World.

Endnotes

ⁱ Children are fertilized seed... we are all conceived, begotten, by the Word.

ⁱⁱ Jews accused Mary of being unfaithful to Joseph with a Roman named “panthera.” P.28 Barclay

ⁱⁱⁱ

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” – 1 John 1:8 NRSV

⁶ No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

⁹ Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God’s seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. – 1 John 3:6-9 NRSV

“All the one in him staying not sins. All the one sinning has not seen him and has not known him. Little children let no one deceive you, the one doing the righteousness is right, just as the one doing the sin is of the devil, The one doing the sin is out of the devil, because from beginning the devil sins. For this the son of God was manifested that he might loose the works of the devil – 1 John 3:6-8 McReynolds English Interlinear

It would seem that everyone who is doing the sin is a “child of the devil.” Is Jesus condemning them? No but they are condemning themselves... He condemns our condemnation; We drop their stones and leave. We leave the garden, We leave the vineyard, We love darkness more than light. Will Jesus destroy the work of the Devil? Yes, he destroys the old man and makes him the New. The High Priest eats the sin offering and the sin offering becomes the body of the High Priest. Jesus is the scapegoat who bears the old adam in from the outer darkness and make him himself the body of the High Priest. We lose our dead and lonely selves and find them in the body of I Am.

^{iv} This is one of my friend who was literally placed in a coffin with a corpse. She literally hid from herself with a dissociative identity disorder... But Jesus is putting hre back together and he took her out of the box.

^v I’m like a breath (“*hebel*,” breath, vapor, vanity, in Ecclesiastes) that’s been breathed but is no longer being breathed... I can do nothing but instead must be done: Someone must breathe me. In fear, we all hold our breath and then that breath is no longer life, but death. Jesus came to help us expire that we would be inspired and expired and inspired, that we would be the breath constantly breathed, that we would live the Life of God.