

Series: Shalom

August 21, 2016

Title: Selfie?

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Text: Genesis 2:9, 18-25

Not Good!

The customized "self"

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For 150 years the only way to take a picture was to stand *in back* of the camera. At first you put a black cloth over your head and looked right through the lens. Eventually you could look through a viewfinder to compose your picture. If you wanted to be in the picture you were taking, you had to put the camera on a tripod or other firm surface, set the timer, then run around to the front of the camera and pose until you heard the shutter click.

But all of that went away with the dinosaurs when the smartphone came along. Instead of having to look through a viewfinder, we can see the picture we want to take on the screen. And there is a camera on both sides of the phone, allowing us to pose for our own picture – the ubiquitous "selfie."

A camera that points *at you* is a symbol of a society that glorifies the individual *Self*. No longer are we defined by our relatedness to others. No longer are we defined as members of a particular community. Our society now entices us to believe that we create our own identity, our own humanness, according to how we see ourselves.

We are our own Selfie.

"Not good!"

What a contrast to the first glimpse the Bible gives us of what it means to be fully human! With the world up and running, and a human being placed in God's Garden to tend and guard it, we are suddenly presented with a shocking evaluation.

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Genesis 2:18a NIV

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone."

Not good? Didn't God say *seven times* in Genesis One that what He had created *was good*? And didn't He say that when it came to humans, His creation was *very good*? Why the negative evaluation?

It turns out that this negative evaluation comes in between the creation of the man and the woman. It comes when there was but one Self in the picture. And One Self is not enough. And even the presence of God Himself does not change the equation. There is still creation work to be done.

A suitable helper:

The solution to the problem launches a quest:

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Genesis 2:18b NIV

"I will make a suitable helper for him."

So what's a *suitable helper*? Notice first of all, that God does not say, "I will make a suitable helper like him." No, this other person will be his complement – assisting in the fulfillment of the work of carrying forward God's good Creation.

Secondly, the word "helper" does not suggest inferiority. The same word is used most often in the Bible to describe God as our Helper. Moses tells Israel:

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Deuteronomy 33:29 NIV

Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword.

Clearly, the *helper* provides something that the person being helped cannot do for himself.

But just what kind of helper does Adam need?

The Quest

Naming the Creatures:

The quest for the suitable helper begins with God having Adam explore and define the natural world around him:

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Genesis 2:19-20a NIV

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

In a sense, beginning the quest for the helper by looking at the animals was a good place to start. The Hebrew word "Adam" is derived from the Hebrew word for "ground" – "adamah." Both Adam and the animals come from the *Adamah*. Both are living creatures, given the breath of life by the Creator.

No suitable helper:

But Adam soon discovers that his relationship with the animals is not one of equality or complementarity. He is given the assignment of naming the animals. To give something a name showed that you had dominion over it. You defined it, made it real. The animals could not do that.

So this stage of the quest for a helper ends with the words:

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Genesis 2:20b NIV

But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

One rabbi has written that God brought the animals to Adam two by two, showing Adam that he was as yet incomplete.

Adam's verdict:

The quest began with God pronouncing that One Self alone "is not good." Now it is the human who renders the same verdict. He looked at all of the animals and came to the same conclusion.

Think of it: God delegated to a human being the right to render a verdict on Creation! Up until now, God has announced what was good or not good. But now the focus shifts to the man. He does the looking; he doesn't find what he is looking for. He announces that this arrangement "is not good."

Perfection!

A Deep Sleep:

Adam knew that something – someone – was missing. He had come to see that a Society of One was no society at all. But he was powerless to change his predicament. And that is when the Creator steps in once more to finish the making of humans in His image:

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Genesis 2:21-22 NIV

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The Society of One is brought to an end. Adam's deep sleep is a symbolic death to his previous identity. When he wakes up, he finds himself in a brand new world.

"One Flesh"

When he meets the woman that God has made, he renders the verdict on God's Creation:

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Genesis 2:23-24 NIV

The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Here at last is a *person, another human being*. To say that she comes out of him doesn't mean that she is in any sense inferior or derived from him. Remember, he was in a coma when she was made. Instead, the two of them have a *shared identity*. They are *suitable helpers to each other*.

Adam describes his new-found wife as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." This is the language of the kinship group, meaning that they are of the same family. They share the closest and most intimate ties possible between two human beings. They are "one flesh."

Perfection:

A Society of One offers the illusion of freedom and power. It tells you that you can define yourself any way you wish, and you can compel others to agree with you, even if your self-definition defies reality. Is it any wonder that the dark spiritual forces determined to destroy people made in God's image have targeted the most precious of all human relationships: marriage? Is it any wonder that those same forces are now attacking the very notion of gender? The very survival of the Society of One is at stake.

But God has something better for us. He is the One who first said that it was *not good* for men or women to be alone. He is the One – the only One – who can fulfill the quest for a "suitable helper." He does not negate our gender or our biology. He does not create a fantasy identity for us. Where we are broken and wounded, He brings healing. When we put our trust in Him, we die to our old Self and wake up to a whole new world – one in which we are no longer alone.

Just as He did with Adam, He allows us to see His world and discover for ourselves that the Society of One is no society at all. And when we trust ourselves to His care, He brings those people into our lives who complement us and stand beside us. He brings us into His family where we are all one in Christ. And sometimes He even brings us that greatest gift of all: the person with whom we share our whole life journey.

Perfection!