

No Comparisons with Each Other

‘Coming upon a white leather football the farmer’s son had brought into the yard, the rooster called his hens around him. “Now, ladies, I don’t want to appear ungrateful, but I do want you to see what’s being done in other yards”.’ // The situation set up by that joke is so wrong on so many levels, where to begin! It is a classic metaphor of the follies of comparing one’s self with another. Here, the rooster sees a huge egg. Without realizing that it’s not an egg at all, he immediately proclaims it a wondrous, massive egg. How wonderful! And then he compounds his wanton ignorance by suggesting to “his” hens that they need to step up to the plate and start producing bigger eggs, and bigger on the order of a football! Someone with only a trifle more intelligence could easily discern that hens could never lay eggs that were as nearly as big as their entire bodies, no matter how hard they might try. Assuming the hens were as clueless as their rooster, they might actually think the football was a real egg, and that it must have been laid by an especially large and strong hen. An extraordinary hen. Therefore, they must try, hope beyond hope, to produce something approaching the size of the fake, football egg.

But what about the role of the rooster himself? He could have refrained from mentioning seeing the other “egg”. He could

have resisted the temptation to covet ever larger eggs. If he had, he would have had no impetus to talk about having seen the other wondrous egg. He wouldn't have "gossiped" about the giant egg. Consequently, he wouldn't have made *all* the hens feel poorly about themselves when all would eventually conclude, and rightly so, that it would simply be impossible for any of them to produce such a huge egg, no matter how hard they wanted to please their rooster. Or it could be a source of pride, if one of them could actually rise to the occasion and produce a similarly gigantic egg. If any could, well they would rise in rank, prestige and respect. Why, they'd become their rooster's favorite, and become the "*first* hen of the farmyard". And little chicks would come running over to wonder and worship their awesome rooster! Why that successful hen would enjoy fame and fortune as the highest ranked of all hens, not only in that barnyard but maybe even of all the world!

This is a tendency we all have—to compare ourselves with others. But the way it manifests in us reflects its origin in the sinful ways of this world. We forget who we are. We forget where we live. We forget what this world is. We forget our place. We structure our entire lives by the world's expectations. From our earliest life experiences, we "learn" that in order to survive, and prosper, be successful, we must somehow be better, more remarkable, more involved, more noticeable, have more social media followers, more of this, more of that. At some point, when we've gotten enough "mores", the world tells us that we will have

“arrived”, achieved true success, fame, fortune, and from then, live happily ever after. Problem is, or rather, the blessing is, those assessments and expectations of the world are not worth a second thought, or even a first one. For the world is full of lies. This world is currently under the illegal hegemony of the devil, the father of lies. And everything in this world that constantly shouts at us is desperately trying to distract us from discovering the truth of God just long enough that the devil can completely blind us and ensnare us so that we will never know any better, and in the final seconds of our life, willingly consign ourselves to the same lake of fire that the devil will ultimately spend unending eternities in.

We read today from the Gospel According to John. This book is almost certainly the last book of the Bible to be written. In other words, it’s “newer” even than the Book of Revelation, which was also written by the same John the Apostle, probably only a few months after the Revelation. That’s why John’s Gospel is so distinct from the other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Those other three Gospels were written not too many years after Christ Jesus’ ascension back in to Heaven. Those momentous events had to be recorded, written down, so the throngs of new believers would be able to study and learn about their new Savior and Lord. The first three Gospels preserve the historical facts of the Lord’s life and ministry. But the Gospel of John takes a wholly different tack. For it was after a lifetime of following the Lord via Holy Spirit, that John was taught for many decades, and the awe-

some ministry of the Lord became ever more wondrous to behold as John grew older and lived the very words of Christ. Over the many decades, he gained an in-depth, “mind- and heart-altering” understanding of what the Lord actually came to do and accomplished on this earth. His magnum opus, the Gospel According to John, is the crowning achievement of his life of service to the Kingdom of Heaven. So much of what had gone unnoticed, misunderstood, during the time the Lord physically walked this earth, that it was only after the many years of spiritually walking with the Lord that John gained the insight and understanding of so much more of what the Lord had actually effected on the earth and on mankind. Only after all those years could he finally realize what had been done, and what much of it actually means.

In the final verses of John’s Gospel, an almost bittersweet, and oh so poignant exchange between the Risen Lord and the designated leader of the early apostles, Peter, is recorded by John, and by no one else. The Lord graciously heals Peter’s wounded soul. Peter’s triple denial of even knowing the Lord on the night of His betrayal left scars in Peter’s heart so deep that even Peter himself could not fathom them, and how they would grievously harm his future. Peter could never bring himself to fully forgive himself for his unconscionable betrayal, especially since he had all but sworn that he would do no such thing under no circumstances. The Lord administered the soul healing remedy. Drawing forth from Peter three heartfelt, painful by the end, vows

of unconditional love. And these from him who had mindlessly insisted that he would never forsake the Lord. On that night, Peter found out just where his human limits were. Turns out that we can do nothing for the Lord, absolutely nothing, even love the Lord, without Holy Spirit of the Lord graciously empowering us to do those very things. We owe utterly and totally everything to the grace of God. It's not called "amazing grace" for nothing!

Receiving the Lord Jesus' gracious healing by the Lord's implantation of divine love into Peter, Peter could then return that same love back to Him. And this time, it would not, ever, fail! Because it was the Lord's, Father God's very love. Now Peter was fully restored. How like the Apostle John to record this. At first it might seem embarrassing for Peter. But in reality, it was a high honor to him who would become the first leader of the soon-to-be born Church of Christ. The stupendous signs and miracle wonders that Holy Spirit effected through Peter evidenced his anointing as the original leader of the disciples, who became apostles.

But Peter didn't stop being Peter. God works through us, imperfect and worse, human beings that we are. And Peter, after being given a glimpse of his future old age by the Lord, falls once again into the all-too-human compulsion to compare one's self with others. Peter compares himself with John, asking the Lord how it will go with John, how his end will come. The Lord could have said something about John's future, but He did not. Purposely not. In fact, He reprimands Peter for even asking. It is not

for us to compare ourselves to others. We are not the same. We are each unique. We are not to determine our self worth by how we “measure up” to our conception of others. The Lord knows each of us perfectly. After all, He is the One Who made us. Like no two sets of fingerprints are the same, no two people are the same. Not even identical twins have the same DNA. No two creatures, no two of anything are identical. The Lord God is the Master Creator. He never repeats Himself! No two of us have the same purpose or life paths. That’s as it should be. It’s of no concern to us. At least it shouldn’t be. As Lord Jesus taught Peter by asking, “what concern is that of yours?”, we must not concern ourselves with how we measure up against each other. Rather, we must encourage each other to keep on following the Lord. The Lord was clear to Peter, “you must keep on following Me!”

We can neither rely on anyone else’s faith to lead us to the Lord, or “chart” our supposed progress by seeing how we compare to another’s walk of faith. We’re in this together, because we’re part of God’s great family. But at the same time, we’re each individuals who will answer individually for every act, every word, every thought we have. Since we’re so unreliable in ourselves, we must, and were designed from the beginning to, always rely totally on, to forever lean, on Holy Spirit to keep Lord Jesus’ resurrected, forever life force flowing into and through us. Only then can we minimize the sin that separates us from Him. He loves you. He really and totally does. So love Him back!

