

Each time I saw her she was gasping for breath. Sometimes oxygen was coming to her through a tube, or through a mask, sometimes not, but always speaking was difficult, costly.

One day as I talked to her I thought a very obvious thought about her. I thought, she is a person like me. I was startled by that thought. For I ~~real~~ realized that all along as I talked to her I had been seeing the sufferer, the gasper, the connected to tubes and apparatus one, but not the person. I had been seeing all the external things that seemed so significant to me, and I had not look~~ed~~ for the feeling and loving and fearing and rejoicing part of her, the person.

Sunday yesterday he had the job today he is unemployed. He seems different, a very different. He is a person like me. I was startled by that thought. For I realized that all along as I talked to her I had been seeing the sufferer, the gasper, the connected to tubes and apparatus one, but not the person. I had been seeing all the external things that seemed so significant to me, and I had not looked for the feeling and loving and fearing and rejoicing part of her, the person.
Bankrupt. That was a word that was spoken oftenduring the last years I was in North Dakota. When I saw Donnie, when I saw Dorwin, when I saw Merle, that word shouted more loudly in my mind than all the other words ~~ix~~ about them. They were different, stay~~d~~ away from the church, the cafe. Or was it that we were all different once we had heard that word applied to them.

his name is Donnie and that's what I see. Everything he does and says because what are whose chair is that. Donnie says, a little of that in my heart, my heart is not empty that is why I must say that that's what I see.
Father, how many times he is a stranger to those who call him that. Fahter. Children grow up seeing the st~~er~~ness, the authority, the providing Only as adults ~~do~~ we begin to see the person behind the title, father. Not always strong, not always having the answer, not always there, father we learn is very much like the person that ~~ix~~ I know in me.

Divorced, wealthy, principal, Afro-American, Pastor, criminal, Irish. Lawyer, doctor, mother, mother-in law, Aids victim, Senoir citizen, child, with every word come images, ideas, catorgorizations.

St. Paul, writing to the Galatians, said, "For as many of you as were baptized in~~ct~~ Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neighter slave nor free, there is neither male not female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul is not talkeing about how things might be ar should be, but how they are. ~~There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.~~ Ask me me who I am, I might tell you many things: I am a husband, I am a father, I am a pastor. I am

an American, I am self supporting, I am a golfer, I am a ~~saxke~~ high school and college and seminary graduate. I am a good citizen, I vote, ~~I pray to God~~, ^{pray to Jesus} ~~I pray to God~~. But Paul is saying here that there is only one significant thing to say: I belong to Jesus Christ. All the rest is part of a world that is passing away. All the rest is temporary, for a time. And all the rest divides.

Jews are divided from Greeks, slaves from the free, males from females.

But in Christ, there are no divisions, only persons.

He was dying of cancer. He had been mayor of our small town. Popular with everyone. And at first when the cancer was diagnosed, everyone had shown their concern. But as the days and weeks passed so all the people passed by his house and no longer stopped in. No longer was he so much Tom, he was now cancer victim. Different.

So many who get sick and don't get better soon tell me this is one of the hardest parts of their disease. Pain and weakness and loss of opportunity, yes these are terrible, but being treated differently, ^{and the cancer is the most important thing what you want,} that is the hardest. The person is the same, but friends and neighbors, even family may lose sight of that and see only the afflictions.

People who are disabled tell the same story. Blindness, deafness, legs that no longer work do not change the person who is inside. That person still needs love and consideration and laughter. To be touched. To be known.

Our Lord Jesus did that. He did not walk by ^{those afflicted by} ~~the~~ suffering, as if they were not ~~that~~ there. He did not shun sinners. He did not turn away from foreigners. For each and everyone was a person first for him. A person who feels, and cares and needs. Whether young or strong or man or woman, Roman or Galileean, a person.

In Christ only one thing matters, that we are persons. In Christ I a ~~man~~ white man, can be loved and forgiven and treated as family by ~~any~~ native American, or a wealthy person, or a woman, or a child. For in Christ we are persons. All of those things that are external, color, health, status, power, all of them are overcome, only the person for whom Christ died remains.

Who are you? You may be many things. But know this, most important of all, most truly, you are a child of God, baptized into Christ. Everything else in your life will change, but your belonging to Christ will never change. Remeber that about yourself# and you will never forget it about your brothers and sisters in Christ.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Amen.