**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, August 31, 2020**

Good afternoon!

As a youth minister many years ago, for a fun event I lined up 7 chairs in a single row. I said to the teens that I wanted to test their skills, physically and spiritually. I explained that on the count of 3 they could all race to the chairs and whoever got the front chair would get the biggest reward, and then smaller rewards would all follow all the way down to the rear chair in the row. As I figured, after I said go, there was a mad scramble along with some pushing and shoving to get into the first few chairs. As I stood in front of the first chair, I displayed the contrast in rewards for their physical effort. Then I said, but first and more importantly is the spiritual lesson. I walked to the back of the row behind the 7th seat and asked all of the teens to rise and spin their chairs around now making the last chair the first and the first chair last! Then I read Matthew 20:16 “the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.” There were lots of groans, but they got the point!

In today’s climate it seems like putting others first has become a mostly forgotten virtue! From in our cities across the country, to the media networks on TV and even all the way to the halls of congress what we mainly see is a mad rushing to the first chair at all cost! We are witnessing a fighting for being first no matter what it takes! It’s all about winning over others rather than in any way honoring another! It comes down to who’s attitude you decide to adopt. The attitude of the physical world we live in or the spiritual attitude of the Christ. Philippians 2: 3-8 “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Did you catch it? The key element of considering others more important than ourselves is humility. What squashes honoring others first is the opposite, pride! Did you know that the #1 sin noted in all of scripture is pride! I bet if you listed what you would call the top 5 sins of the world, that pride would not make the list. Obadiah 1:3 says “the pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefs of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, who can bring me down to the ground?”

Two Keys to honoring one another better:

1. God can best rule and reign in the hearts of those who honor others above themselves!

Let me ask you, when you see a group picture of you and your family or a group of friends at a wedding or special gathering, who do you look for first in the photo? What makes it a good or bad photo? Is it mostly about how you look in the picture? Sometimes personal pride can be subtle. Romans 12:10 says “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.” If you are a parent of school age kids and have been to an awards assembly you may have witnessed this verse in action! When the teacher begins to read off the names of the kids who made the honor roll, as they are called to the front to receive their reward, it’s not unusual to see a parent rush forward to take 15 pictures of their child receiving their certificate of honor! What motivated the showing of such attention and honor? Love! When we are first devoted to brotherly love, honor naturally follows! We could use a big dose of this these days! When the love of God rules our hearts, we will honor others above ourselves!

2. Die to self – Experience true and real self-surrender!

One time my wife Margie, on a hot summer day, thought it would be funny to throw cold water on me while I wasn’t watching as a joke! After she did it, I got up and ran after her with some cold water of my own. Just before I was going to throw it on her, she yelled out, I surrender, please don’t! I held back and sat back down. A few minutes later she threw cold water on me again! You want to know why? She faked her surrender! Folks there are some Christians who have faked their surrender. They have not truly died to themselves. They said it with their mouths but in action the old self is still alive and well! The apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” When we truly die to ourselves God will rule our hearts and use us to honor others above ourselves!

In His service,

Mike