

The Great and Powerful Me

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a hunter. His father was a god. His mother was a nymph. Due to his supernatural pedigree, Narcissus was strikingly handsome. Men wanted to be like him. Women swooned in his presence. Yet for all his outward beauty, inside Narcissus was a rotting corpse of pride and vanity. He only cared about himself. He hurt others. Eventually Nemesis, the Greek god of revenge, lured Narcissus to a pool where he became so enamoured of his own reflection he couldn't look away. In time, Narcissus realised his reflection would never requite his love. He despaired and took his own life

Narcissism is defined as *“a state in which one interprets or regards everything in relationship to oneself and not to other people or things.”* Narcissism manifests itself in pride, vanity and selfishness.

In a world dominated by selfie sticks and photobombs, narcissism reigns. Young people post selfies on Facebook and Instagram, judging their self-worth by how many likes and comments they get. Bloggers post articles and podcasts hoping to hear how smart or insightful or hip they are. Voters vote for politicians who tell them what they want to hear, who agree with their point of view, who tell them that they are not the problem. The problem is those who disagree with them. The other party is the cause of all the evils in our society today.

Church shoppers look for churches which fit them. The music needs be appropriate to their tastes. The preaching has to apply to their lives. They want churches who teach what they believe. In a narcissistic world, ‘Salad Bar Christianity’ is the ideal. You can pick and choose what you want to believe.

As we decry the narcissism of our world, however, we need to look more closely at our own warped reflection in the pool. Deep down, every one of us is a narcissist. All sin is narcissism because all sin is selfishness. All sin is the idolatry of self, worshipping the great and powerful ‘me.’ Sin is all about me and what I want instead of what God wants. And just as Narcissus’ love of self led him to disillusionment and despair, our vain worship of self is a lie. It ends in the pit of hell.

Yet our God did something amazing. He didn't leave us to vainly waste away staring at our own reflection. He selflessly sacrificed everything, suffering our pain and our punishment, so we could live with Him forever in Paradise.

He lovingly and firmly turned our eyes from our own warped view of self so we could see His cross and sacrifice and love. He turns our thoughts away from ourselves and to Him. He helps us to see that church is about Him and not about the great and powerful me. He leads us to temper our political zeal with love and respect for others. He uses us to build up and serve our neighbour.

But watch out. Until the day you die, the devil will try to lure you to the pool. Our world will encourage you to make everything about you. A part of you will always yearn to stare at your own reflection. So keep your eyes on the cross. See your Saviour's sacrifice. Follow His example of selflessness.