

I spoke about having an inner self that we live from in a previous sermon.

We are all born at peace and at one with our inner self. As a toddler, you had feelings and drives that you just acted on without thinking. Because of that, you hit other kids, had tantrums, threw things, wet your pants and basically just did what you felt like doing. Which is normal for a toddler.

But in order to help you live in society, your parents began to guide you. You were told off for biting other kids, or for taking things that weren't your own. And so you gradually became aware that acting the way you feel on the inside doesn't always go well. So you learned to watch yourself, to be self aware, and you learned that some behaviours got praised more than others.

And so your social self was developed- again, completely normal and important for a child to develop a self that is acceptable to society. As I mentioned last time, you are at an age where you are creating an identity. This identity is complicated; part of it comes from who you feel you are on the inside, and part of it comes from who you feel free to be, or what is most likely to be deemed acceptable or a 'success' in society. Here are a few that I see around school regularly: The Bloke, The Rebel, The Pretty Boy, The Class Clown.

The point I made last week is that none of these identities are who we really are. But we often take one of these identities to be our self, and we tend to run with that for most of our lives.

While all of this is a common and important part of the journey of becoming an adult, it's also not the complete story. Because something usually gets lost in this process. Somewhere along the line we become more concerned with how we are doing in other people's eyes, than what our inner voice is saying to us. And at some point, around the middle of your life, you may realise that you have completely lost touch with your inner self, and that somehow you have ended on a path that is not true to who you really feel you are.

This is what is called the 'mid-life' crisis. I am sure many of you will have one.

But you don't have to. While developing an identity is important and necessary, you can also keep in touch with that inner voice as you grow and mature. It is a very subtle thing. And it actually takes a lot of courage to be true to it.

Let me give you some examples of what it looks like. You are hanging out at a house with friends, and they suggest you watch a film together. You start watching and you have an emotional reaction to what you are seeing. It could be any number of things: it might be a horror film and you feel disturbed by what you are seeing; it could be an emotional movie and you feel moved to the point of tears by what you are seeing; it could be that it's a comedy but you really don't find it funny at all; it could be an action movie, but you are really bored. Now here is a fine line, that most of us get wrong in one way or another. If you are a toddler with a completely undeveloped sense of a social self, then you will probably stand up and turn off the TV if you don't like what you are seeing. But that is of course self-centred and unaware of those around you. Most teenagers I know will do what they

think everyone is going to do: they will ignore their disgust, push down their feelings, laugh along loudly with everyone else, or pretend to be as into it as everyone else. When we do this, we begin to lose touch with ourselves.

How can we navigate a path between these extremes? Maybe we quietly remove ourselves, and say we are hungry or need a drink. Maybe we let the tears flow quietly and we admit that we felt really moved by what we saw if anyone asks us about it. Maybe we don't laugh, but don't mind that others do. Maybe we just quietly read something on our phone or go and do something else if we are bored.

This is the challenge of being a human being. We need to find a way to be in the world that is true to ourselves and allows us to fit into the society we live in. The challenge is, most of us lose touch with our inner self in some way when we fit in with the world around us.

But as Jesus said – what can you give in exchange for your soul. You may be the most successful person in the world, but if you lose your inner self in the process, it is worth nothing to you at all. Let me finish with the words of a religious teacher called Osho:

“Listen to your being. It is continuously giving you hints; it is a still, small voice. It does not shout at you, that is true. And if you are a little silent you will start feeling your way. Be the person you are. Never try to be another, and you will become mature. Maturity is accepting the responsibility of being oneself, whatsoever the cost. Risking all to be oneself, that's what maturity is all about.”