

Sermon Summary – Sunday 8 January 2023

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY – About my Father's business (Calven Celliers)

Read Luke 2: 43 & 44 – In only account in the Gospels of Jesus' childhood, we read that after travelling for one day, Mary and Joseph realised that 12-year-old Jesus was not around. Folk often travelled in caravans in those days, large groups of family and friends gathered together, and Joseph probably thought Jesus was with Mary, and Mary probably thought he was with Joseph, but either way, Jesus had been left in Jerusalem, and so they had to go back to look for him. That took another day. And then in Jerusalem, they spent another day looking for him. **Read Luke 2: 46 – 50.**

Do you understand what Jesus meant? Jesus tells Mary that *He had to be in His Father's house*. The NKJV says that Jesus replied *"I must be about My Father's business"*

This reply reveals an important lesson for us today. Jesus tells Mary that He is concerned with His Father's business. And, He was not referring to his earthly father, Joseph. He wasn't talking about carpentry. He was referring to His heavenly Father. He knows whose He is. Even at the tender age of 12, Jesus was secure in His identity, not just as a son of Joseph and Mary, but as the Son of *El Shaddai*, Almighty God.

Our identity as Christians should impact the way we live out our faith. We are in a living relationship with Jesus; at the heart of what it means to be a Christian is to receive a new identity. In Jesus, we do not lose our true selves; we become our true selves.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14 – 17. Our lives are no longer worldly; they are now spiritual. The *'death'* that Paul speaks of is that of the old sin nature which was nailed to the cross with Christ. It was buried with Him, and just as He was raised up by the Father, so are we raised up to *"walk in newness of life."* New identity, new potential, new purpose!

How should that affect the presence of sin in a born-again Christian's life? Because as born-again believers we all know that we still struggle with sin. **Read Romans 6:1 & 2.** There is a difference between continuing to sin and continuing to live in sin. No one reaches sinless perfection in this life, but the redeemed Christian (*the new self*) is being sanctified (*made holy*) day by day, sinning less and hating it more each time he/she fails. Yes, we still sin, but unwillingly and less and less frequently as we mature. Our new self, hates the sin that still has a hold on us. The difference is that the new creation is no longer a slave to sin, as we formerly were. **Read Ephesians 4:22 & 23.** By the presence of the abiding Spirit of God within us, we as born-again believers are empowered to live new lives. But we have to consecrate ourselves to Him. Our new identity in Christ is more than just behaviour modification, it's more than just conformity to a moral code, it's more than being a good person. It means yielding all of you to all of Him; yielding yourself to God's presence within. It's dethroning yourself and enthroning Jesus as Lord of your life. It's that simple, and that difficult.

Let us to briefly consider a few ways that understanding our true identity in Christ can greatly impact the way we live our lives this year.

Firstly, walking in your true identity as a Christian means **we no longer chase after the desires of our flesh but instead seek to bring God glory in all areas of our life.**

Read 1 John 2: 15 – 17. Our lives should no longer be centred around the things of this world; our lives, desires, priorities should be centred around the Kingdom (Read Matthew 6:33). If we are not seeking to find our identity in Christ alone, then we are seeking it in something else.

“If you aren’t hungry for God, that means you are full of yourself.” (Mark Batterson)

You cannot be full of yourself and a new creation at the same time. You cannot be full of yourself, and be all about your heavenly Father’s business at the same time. It is only when we are totally yielded to Christ’s lordship that we are freed from sin and it no longer has power over us – **Read Romans 6:4, 6 & 7.** That’s our identity in Christ.

When our identity is in Christ, we will not be crushed by our failures and weaknesses, fall into pride from worldly success, or despair over disappointments. We won’t get lost seeking the attractive but empty things the world offers because Christ gives us a stable and eternal hope in a world of unstable hopelessness. We have been set free from the power of sin, redeemed, bought at a price, saved, filled with Spirit, made new, and consecrated, set apart, for Him.

Read **Galatians 2:20.** That is probably the best way of defining Christian identity – it’s no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me!

Secondly, walking in your true identity as a Christian means **we no longer fear the future.** I know not what this year holds; but praise God I know Him, and He holds this year. Our identity in Christ has given us direct access to our Heavenly Father, who we can call on with confidence and complete trust. **Read Romans 8: 14 & 15.** We can trust that He will provide us with everything that we need in this life. If we have peace with God, and stand secure in who we are in Him, then we have nothing to fear on this earth. Our eternities are secure as adopted sons and daughters of Christ, which means we don’t need to fear for our finances, our careers, our health, our relationships, or even our very lives. Of course, when things go awry in any of these areas, and believe you me they will go awry, it isn’t easy or painless, but we can have confidence that our Heavenly Father is sovereign over every moment of our life and will equip us for every single thing He ordains. Everything that happens in your life is Father filtered. It’s part of your identity as a born-again believer.

Thirdly, walking in your true identity as a Christian means **we have no need to judge or compare ourselves to others.** Our identity is hidden in Christ alone. Comparing ourselves to those around us or judging the decisions that others make can suck the joy right out of life. Don’t ever feel condemned by others opinions, and don’t ever be suckered into thinking you’re better than anyone else.

“Live for an audience of one!” (R.T. Kendall)

Are you more concerned about what other people think or what God thinks? The apostle Paul makes one thing very clear; you are responsible for YOU! **Read Romans 14:12.** In the whole sawdust & plank illustration (**Read Matthew 7: 1 – 5**) Jesus makes one thing very clear, *‘judge not! The measure with which you judge others will be measured to you!’*

And then lastly, walking in your true identity as a Christian means **we should not be surprised when suffering comes, but we can be confident that it will produce things of eternal value.** Sadly, the way to glory is often via present suffering. NHCF a more mature congregation, and with age often comes challenges. But there is no good that comes from suffering if we are apart from Christ. As born-again believers, suffering gradually changes our earthly perspective into an eternal one. Just as Jesus’ sufferings were not hopeless and wasted, neither will ours be. What happens outwardly in your life is not as important as what happens inside you. Your circumstances are temporary, but your character will last forever – **Read 2 Corinthians 4: 16 – 18.** Our identity in Christ must influence not only how we live, but also die. May we always be about our Father’s business!