

We've been talking identity and how we form it

- The age-old question of **"Who am I?"**
- This question is **important because** who we believe ourselves to be will shape and inform the way that we **think, feel and act**
- How we live with and toward—each other and (most importantly) God
- We all live out of our identity (self-understanding)

Identity is complex. We are a lot of things. There is much that is true about us.

- But what we are endeavoring to discover is **what is most true about us** (dominant in shaping how we think, feel and act)

Ways we usually form identity:

- **What we do** (excel or fail)
 - "I'm an expert" or "I'm a screw up"
- **What we have** (or don't have)
 - What we can attain
 - Possessions are not just possessions
 - We look to find ourselves in them
- **What we want** (or don't want)
 - How we feel
 - What we are attracted to
 - Alcoholic, gay

Several of these things may be true (in different combinations)

- You may be an talented, low income, gay
- You may be a screw up, wealthy, alcoholic
- (Do, have, desire)
- These are **lesser ways** to answer the question of **"Who am I?"**

What must be asked is who does God say I am, in light of what Christ has done for me?

- That is how we discover what is **most true** about us
- Identity (think, feel, act)

The reason we must ask who God (in and through Christ) says we are is because **we are creatures**

- We are created beings
- Created beings are **contingent** or **dependent on** God
- We only **exist** because God made us and we only **continue to exist** because He so wills it

Colossians 1:16-17

Through Christ **God created everything** in the heavenly realms and on earth.

He made the things we can see and the things we can't see...

Everything was created **through him** and **for him**.

He existed before anything else, and he **holds all creation together**.

Since we only exist and continue to exist because of God's work through Christ, we must **look to** God's work through Christ to understand who we are!

- We are creatures—contingent and dependent
- The challenge we face is our proclivity to look **inward** or **outward** to form identity
 - Who I am in light of what I, myself **do, have** or **desire** (**inward**)
 - Who I am in light of what others **do, have**, or **desire** from me (**outward**)

What we must do to answer the question “Who am I?” is look **upward**

- As contingent, dependent, creatures
- What has God **done** for me; **have** for me; **desire** for me?
- **Ephesians 1:3-8**
 - If you are a Christian, this is what is most true about you (though you are wicked)
 - To summarize, what is **most true** about you is that you are **loved by God** (The Beloved)
 - = Identity (Who you are)

As I said earlier, we live out of our identities

- The **process of Christian life** is to begin to live out of being the beloved of God
- Cf. **Ephesians 4:1 & 5:1** (Cf. **Phil 2:12-13** where “work out” = **cultivate**)

What that does is transition us to **the question that always follows “Who am I?”**

- **“Why am I here?”**
 - What is the meaning and purpose of life? What am I supposed to do, accomplish, and contribute?

This is the question answered by **verse 9** (read)

As creatures, we are not only contingent and dependent—**we are also subordinate**

- The creation is always **less than** the creator
- To see it any other way is to be an **idolater**

Verse 9 tells us that even though God has **done, and has, and desires** wonderful things for us—it is **not about us**

- It is a **plan regarding Christ** (details next week)
- **A plan to fulfill His own good pleasure**
 - **All things were created by Him and for Him** (Col 1:16)
 - We exist for **God's pleasure** and **God's glory** and not our own

Failing to realize this is precisely where everything has gone wrong

- We try to live for our pleasure and our glory
- It can never be right because we are creatures! (**contingent, dependent, subordinate**)
 - We are less than
 - We were not made for ourselves

This is why we have been calling our study of Ephesians 1:1-14, **Identity Issues | God's Glory in Us Thru Christ's work for Us**

- Once we settle our **identity issues** and stop forming our self understanding according to:
 - What we **do well**, or where we **fail**
 - What we **have**, or **don't have**
 - What we **desire**, or don't **desire**

- And base it on what God in Christ has **done for us**, and **has for us** and **desires for us**
- Then we start to live for **God's glory**
- **Because the only thing salient about us (apart from Christ's work for us) is that we are desperate, broken rebels and sinners**
- But because of Who God is, and what Christ has done for us, we are:
 - **Loved** and **Chosen** (v. 4)
 - **Holy** and **Adopted** (vv. 4 & 5)
 - **Redeemed** and **Forgiven** (v. 7)
 - **Blessed** and **Graced** (v. 3 & 6)

Why?

- It has everything to do with **who God is** and **what God wants** (a plan to fulfill His own good pleasure)
- Because there is nothing good about us as sinners without Christ (and nothing we could do!)
- Deuteronomy 9:4-6

After the Lord your God has done this for you, don't say in your hearts, 'The Lord has given us this land because we are such good people!' No... It is not because you are so good or have such integrity... You must recognize that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land because you are good, **for you are not**—you are a stubborn people.

- Scripture tells we are it is God's plan regarding Christ, because only through Christ are we:
 - **Loved**. Because we were **unlovely** in our **rebellion**
 - **Chosen**. Because we were **rejected** and **condemned**
 - **Holy**. Because we were **evil** and **dirty**
 - **Adopted**. Because we were **lost** and **abandoned**
 - **Redeemed**. Because we were **slaves** to **sin**
 - **Forgiven**. Because we were **guilty** before God
 - **Blessed**. Because we were **cursed**
 - **Graced**. Because we were **undeserving**

God did all of this **for us**...

- In and through Christ's work (**mysterious plan regarding Christ**)
- **For His own glory and pleasure**

Isaiah 43:7

Bring all who claim me as their God,
for I have made them **for my glory**.
It was I who **created** them.

Therefore, we live out of this new identity (see above) for **God's glory and pleasure!**

- Because that is why we are **created** and **sustained**

The question of "Why am I here?" is answered in this statement:

- **To glorify God and fully enjoy Him forever.** –The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 1
 - To begin to live out of this identity of beloved child of God
 - **If** we were created for God's pleasure and glory **then we should** please God and not grieve God

Ephesians 4:30

Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own...

1 Corinthians 10:31

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all **for the glory of God**.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You **do not belong to** yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must **honor God** with your body.

Matthew 5:16

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father** who is in heaven.

John 15:8

When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great **glory to my Father**.

Colossians 3:23

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working **for the Lord** rather than for people.

= So as grateful and **dependent** creatures, we can live for **God's good pleasure** and **glory**

But doing this does not only consist of doing the right things and refraining from the bad

- To glorify God and **fully enjoy Him forever**.
- **Enjoy Jesus!!! (Mantra)**

Existing as God's **beloved children** for **God's pleasure** and **glory does not mean** that we are to live lives **void of pleasure**

- God is not a **cosmic killjoy** or a **heavenly Scrooge**: He actually wants us to be **content and happy**
- (But not to exalt the pursuit of those things over and above the pursuit of Him and His glory)
 - **We remain as creatures**

Once we stop looking for meaning in what we **do**, what we **have**, and what we **want**

- And we find meaning in what **God has done** in Christ, what we **have in Christ**, and what **God wants** for us in Christ
- Once we **stop looking inward** to discover who we are
- And **look upward** (as creatures) to who God is
- Then we can begin to **enjoy things more** and **need them less** (content in Christ)

1 Timothy 6:17

God... richly gives us all we need **for our enjoyment**.

God actually want you to enjoy Him by enjoying His gifts

- God desires that His creatures be happy as well as holy
- Satisfaction as well as sanctification (Cf parents to kids)

James 1:17

Every **good and perfect gift** is from above, coming down from the Father

Some of us have a sense that glorifying God means denying ourselves material things

Others of us, on the other hand, think that life consists of material things and the enjoyment of them

But the Gospel (identity) brings us to the conclusion that we have been reconciled to God who is a radical Giver (**John 3:16**) and can now enjoy Him

- One of the ways we enjoy the Giver is by enjoying His gifts
 - **Is there a greater way to love the Giver than to delight in His gifts?**
- Foremost of all—Christ! Enjoy Jesus (**Scripture, prayer and community will help you**)
 - He **sees to it that** we can never be actually content and happy apart from Him
 - **We were created for Him and our hearts are joyless until they find joy in Him**

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 (almost 3,00 years ago)

A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for **without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?**

A poem (about 500 years ago):

Just these two words He spoke
changed my life,

"Enjoy Me."

What a burden I thought I was to carry -
a crucifix, as did He.

Love once said to me, "I know a song,
would you like to hear it?"

And laughter came from every brick in the street
and from every pore
in the sky.

After a night of prayer, He
changed my life when
He sang,

"Enjoy Me."

If God has saved us through Christ for His good pleasure and for His glory

- Then he enjoys us (in Christ)
- Then it pleases and glorifies God when we enjoy Him through Christ
- **I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. – Song of Solomon 6:3**

Maybe you have been looking for meaning in what you do, what you have, what you desire

- Now you have heard that you will only find ultimate meaning in what God has done for you , what God has for you and what God desires for you... in and through Jesus!
- Come to Him!
- Repentance and faith