

Sermon 4- 30-17 Who are we? I Peter 1:17-25

Dear Born-Again:

How would you describe yourself? Where would you begin? How would you identify yourself to someone you had never met before?

- Would you begin with your age?
- Would you begin with your occupation?
- Would you begin with your family...married...with children, etc.
- Would you begin with where you live?
- Would you begin with a particular hobby...fishing, bowling, etc.?

Who are you? How would you describe yourself?

I suppose it would depend upon with whom you were talking to.

Who are we? Consider this.

Consider a patchwork quilt like the ones that our ladies work on throughout the year and adorn our sanctuary every October-November.

A patchwork quilt that is made up of...

- A variety of different colors
- A variety of different patterns
- A variety of different shapes and lines

In a sense our identity is like a patchwork quilt...our identity may be defined in different ways by our...

- Relationships
- Occupations
- Interests and hobbies
- Experiences

We all have a variety of experiences and influences in our lives that have made us who we are. Our...

- Parents have formed our identity
- Experiences have formed our identity
- Relationships with friends have formed our identity

Our identity one could say resembles a patchwork quilt.

Born-Again

Does God have anything to do with our identity? He sure does.

- How does God identify us?
- How does God see us?
- What does God call us?

The Apostle Peter identifies all those who call Jesus their Lord and Savior in our reading today. Peter identifies believers in Jesus as people who have been “born-again”. V23

Peter says we have been “born-again” not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.

The Bible says those who come to saving faith and are baptized by water and the Word are “born-again”. John 3:5

At our baptism our identity was changed. We went from condemned sinners to being forgiven sinner/saints in Christ Jesus.

When we became “born-again” our lives became bound to Jesus Christ. In Christ we have a new life.

- We have a new identity
- Our identity is in our baptism into the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Ro 6:1ff
 - We didn't pay for this identity
 - We did not earn this identity
 - This identity was given to us through the blood and righteousness of Jesus
 - We are “born-again” through the living and enduring Word of God

Because we are “born-again” we know God as our Father.

- We have a reverent fear of God
- We have a healthy respect for God
- We don't ignore Him or His Word

Because we are “born-again” we have freedom from sin and death. Galatians 3:13

- We have been bought back from bondage by the payment of blood v18

- Christ not only paid the ransom he became the object of God's wrath in our place on Good Friday
- Christ's sacrifice for our sins was not some afterthought of God after things in this world got out of control in the Garden of Eden
- This plan of salvation was set in motion long before the world was created v20

Think for a moment just what type of life we were saved from?

- A life devoid of truth
- A life that was useless
- A life leading nowhere but hell
- A life of nothingness
- A life with no hope and no future

We were redeemed that is bought back. In Peter's day a slave's family could buy his freedom with silver or gold. That doesn't work for our souls. Only that which is pure and holy...Jesus' blood could have bought our freedom from sin and death.

This new identity changes the way we live with others. God's love and forgiveness frees us to take our eyes off ourselves and to meet the needs of others.

Peter says in v22 "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."

Only people who have had their identity changed by Jesus are able to love "one another deeply"

- We have been "purified" by the Lord through His Word
- His word is calling us to love one another "deeply"

"Love one another deeply"

To "love one another deeply" means to "stretch to the limits" our love for others. This love will "meet others" at their point of need...The Bible describes this type of love by saying...

- Show proper respect to everyone I Pt 2:17
- Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic I Pt 3:8
- Love covers over a multitude of sins I Pt 4:8
- Honor one another above yourselves Ro 12:10
- Keep on loving each other Heb 13:1

God's love and forgiveness frees us to take our eyes off ourselves to love "one another deeply"
God loves you...personally...powerfully...passionately...with an unfailing love...with a love worth giving.

Remember what Jesus' love did for us... "He humbled Himself"

- He went from commanding angels to sleeping in the straw
 - From holding stars to clutching Mary's finger
 - The palm that held the universe took the nail of a soldier
- A Love Worth Giving p. 46

God is calling us to love others because he has loved us

- We love because God loved us first
- We forgive because God has forgiven us first
- We are patient with others, because God is patient with us
- We are kind because God is kind to us

Loving people isn't easy....especially when those around us have been the source of our heartaches, headaches and loneliness.

When it is hard to love, remember God's love for you...His unconditional love which is not based on our performance or lack of...

- God loves you simply because He has chosen to love you
- He loves you when you don't feel lovely
- He loves you when no one else loves you
- Jeremiah 31:3 "I have love you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."

Loving-Kindness.... is a key word in the Bible. It describes God's love for us as great...excellent...good...marvellous...everlasting...merciful...better than life itself...never taken from us...will hold us up in affliction.

As God's children "born-again" by His Word we don't manufacture love for others.

- That's the Holy Spirit's work in our lives
- The love we show is the "fruit of the Spirit" in us
- Love is the fruit of the Spirit of God
 - Gal 5:22 The fruit of the Spirit is love
 - Jn 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches...remain in Me

- God's work in us bears the fruit. He produces the fruit through us
- "The more tightly we are attached to Jesus, the more purely His love can pass through us."

Who am I to love? Jesus said: **"Love your neighbor as yourself?"** Who is my neighbor? Our neighbor is anyone we come across who needs our help. Luke 10

How well do we know our neighbors? The people in our everyday lives?

- Do we know their names?
- Do we know their needs?
- Do we care about them?
- Do we pray for their souls?

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."
Phil 2:4

Our identity in Christ is constantly threatened. Our sinful culture says to us daily..

- Look out for yourself
- Us four and no more

Peter reminds us that this old world is passing away like the flowers. V25

- Nothing in this world will last
- Everything in this life will fade away sooner or later
- The only thing that will last is that which is of God
 - His word His work
 - His love His people

As born-again children of God may we focus on the eternal...

- Eternal life
- Eternal love
- Eternal Lord

We are a community that comes together...

- Around the Word
- To love one another
- To love our neighbor as ourself

Who are we?

- Forgiven saints
- Forgiven servants
- Forgiven born-again children

We are really born-again strangers in this world because we have a...

- Different God than unbelievers
- Different origin than unbelievers
- Different purpose
- Different destination

For us, the best is yet to come! - And we want others to know, too!