

Title: “Identity”

Chris Ryan

John 14:18

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Service Readings: 1 Peter 3:13-22, John 14:1-7, 18-24

We are connected to God, through Jesus. Our family identity is found through him. And because we are part of God's family, he calls us to him; he invites us home.

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

What are your plans for tomorrow? For many of you, it will include a gathering of people under one roof – a people that you call family. There will be no strangers or orphans, and no one will be excluded from the banquet feast. As you gather around the table you might be reminded of the tradition of your family's Thanksgivings, a tradition that connects you directly to your parents, and grandparents, and great grandparents, and probably even further back. Every year for far longer than you have been alive, this ritual was repeated and passed down – from generation to generation – and this year it repeats itself once again. And this year, like years past, you participate in it. And in that act, you connect yourself to a family identity that extends far beyond the lives of those that participate with you at the table. This is your family. It is what you were made a part of at your birth and it is what gives you your earthly identity. What comfort there is in knowing who you are and from where you came!

In our Gospel passage this evening we find a description of another family identity. An identity that reaches even farther back than our earthly family. It is one that connects us all the way back to our church fathers, the disciples of Jesus, and further back to the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. But the connection doesn't stop there! It extends to Noah and back to Adam. But even that is not where our identity finds its origin! You see, unlike our earthly family, this one transcends time. Its roots are found in the one who created time itself. We were connected, even before creation, our identity was connected by God to himself.

Listen again to part of the passage and keep in the forefront of your mind this identity that we have by God.

14 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

We are connected to God, through Jesus. Our family identity is found through him. And because we are part of God's family, he calls us to him; he invites us home. What comfort there is in knowing who we are and from where we came!

<pause>

But for those who did not come from a stable home it may be hard to comprehend or even believe in the peace that this passage offers. That image may simply be foreign to you, unimaginable, even. And if it is, I have a message of comfort for you because your identity is not dependent on you; it is not dependent on what you can imagine or what you can believe. It is completely dependent on God, and God alone. He is the one that gives you an identity. He is the one that adopts you into his family and calls you his own. He is the one that connects you all the back before time itself.

He emphasizes that in verse 18: “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” Jesus comes to us. We are connected to him and because of this he will not forsake us, not abandon us, but will lead us home. We are his adopted.

Think about adoption and how it works. The parents select a child and extend grace to her. They pour out their love on her, they bring her into their home and attach their identity to her. And at no time does the child actively participate in that process. She just receives the benefits of it. So too is it with us.

But our adoption came at great cost to God. Verse 19: “¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.” While we were still enemies, while our identity was found in the things of this world, Jesus pursued us. On the cross he experienced abandonment by the Father so that we could experience adoption. He didn’t leave us as orphans but suffered on the cross to claim us. And claim us he did. Verse 20:”²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”

This is the Gospel message of our identity in Jesus! It is a message of our connectedness to God. He created. He saved. He adopted. And he extended his identity to us! And he will come again to take us to a home that he has prepared for us.

And we can trust in that promise, we can rest in the knowledge that we are heirs to his kingdom because, just like our identity, that promise is found in God himself. In the garden, after the fall, he made a promise to Adam and Eve. And he kept that promise to their descendants: to Noah, and Moses, and Israel. They all trusted in God’s promise. And he kept his promise in the suffering and death of Jesus. And in Christ’s resurrection he showed us the benefits: death was defeated and salvation was won. And we can take comfort in knowing that his victory has been imputed to us – granted to us – because we have been adopted into the family of God; because he has extended to us in our baptism his identity. He has claimed us as his child.

And as his child we keep his commandments, not out of obligation but out of love. When Jesus says “²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” it is not a message of Law. It is not a warning to those who take hold of the promises of God. Instead, it is a message of hope, a message of promise, a message of joy. It is reaffirmation that we have been attached to God through the work of Jesus. That we have been adopted into his family. That we find our identity in him. It is confirmation that we can continue to trust in his promise of everlasting life and look forward to the time when we will enjoy a banquet in heaven. A Thanksgiving feast not in

celebration of earth's blessings but in celebration of God's. And that is a feast that I am looking forward to. What about you?

Please pray with me. From 1 Peter 1:3-5

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Amen.