

## Sunday 16 November 2008 - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

### **Who do you think you are?**

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#### Intro

It felt right to address issues of identity across this Autumn term. You may remember 'Who do you say I am?' – incorrect images of God, we discussed them and I think it impacted a number of people.

Today – 'Who do you think you are?' – First look at our identity, according to the bible, before and after we become committed followers of Jesus.

Have you seen the TV show 'Who do you think you are'? – Fascinating watching famous people from different areas of life unpack their family history, their line, with the help of historians and old archives. Some who are famous and successful today realised their ancestors were poor labourers (made Jeremy Paxman cry, which is quite something!), others like Patsy Kensit realised their predecessors were gangsters.

- The issue of our identity – who you are, and who you THINK you are, is absolutely key to how we all live our human lives.
  - If you think you're a prince, you're going to act like a prince.
  - If you think you're not worth anything in life, you're more likely to act like it
  - If you think you're a failure, you won't be motivated to try and succeed.
  - If you think you're a servant, you'll serve others and not worry about how they view you
- This is why I address issues of mindset with us again & again.
  - If we can grasp the Covenant truth of our identity in Christ, and grasp the Kingdom mindset that calls us into a rampaging war of the liberation of humankind on behalf of Christ... then we will be the world-changers that we are designed to be.

The good news is that the bible is very clear about the nature of who we are, our identity and our nature, both before and after we become Christians. So today we're going to spend time unpacking a bible passage together, and discussing it together, to build up a picture. Going to look at the bible's two fundamental pictures of identity before and after we become Christians - what it is to be lost and what it means to be found.

And I'm going to ask you to think & share what difference it should make to you in normal life.

READING – Ephesians 1 to 2:10

#### Our pre-Christian state – What it is to be 'lost'

SHORT CLIP FROM Lost clip – 2.57 minutes – 5 minutes

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=ilaKS1sZHaM&feature=related>

POINT = these people are clueless, directionless, at the mercy of other forces. Lost, like sheep without a shepherd.

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Let's investigate first what this book has to say about our nature, our state, our identity, our reality, before people become friends and family of God, before they believe and choose to follow Him.

## 2 aspects – LOST & ?CONSEQUENCES/EFFECTS

### 1. We talk in the Christian world about ‘the lost’. (Jesus did too)

What does it mean to be lost? In Christian terms, it means people who mistake their direction in life.

- Usually when you are lost, you don’t know it for a while. You keep going in the wrong direction happily thinking everything is OK, until you realise. And it can sometimes take something serious to happen before you do realise.
  - Nick Example – driving north away from Madrid not south towards it = consequence was extra day car hire
- People think and act as if they are God – they want to be in control, at the centre of life.
  - So they head off in what is actually the wrong direction, and end up in the wrong place

### READ OUT VERSES TOGETHER

IMAGE – on bricks or powerpoint – build up a ‘wall’

Read Eph 2:1-3 and 2:13, 17-19

Also Eph 4:17-19

- ◆ Followed ways and ruler of kingdom of air – *Eph 2:2*
- ◆ Separated from the life of God – *Eph 2:12, Eph 4:18*
- ◆ Foreigners and aliens – *Eph 2:19*
- ◆ Far away from God – *Eph 2:13*
- ◆ Excluded from God’s citizenship and covenant promises – *Eph 2:12* + Without hope – *Eph 2:12*
- ◆ Darkness – *Eph 5:8, Eph 4:18, Col 1:13*
- ◆ Futile thinking on earthly things – *Eph 4:17, Phil 3:19*

### OTHER OPTIONAL VERSES:

- ◆ Did not know God – *Gal 4:8*
- ◆ Alienated from God – *Col 1:21*
- ◆ Enemies of the cross of Christ – *Phil 3:18, Col 1:21*
- ◆ Captive to hollow and deceptive philosophy – *Col 2:8*

2. So before we understand about God, Jesus, the HS and a life in friendship and obedience to their way of doing things, we are heading in the wrong direction. What does the bible say are some of the consequences of this?

### READ OUT VERSES TOGETHER–

*SOME – LOOK AGAIN AT Eph 2:1-3*

### OTHERS:

- ◆ Dead in our sins – *Eph 2:1, Col 2:13*
- ◆ Gratify cravings of sinful nature – *Eph 2:3*
- ◆ Fruitless deeds of darkness – *Eph 5:11*
- ◆ Lost all sensitivity – *Eph 4:19*

### OPTIONAL OTHER:

- ◆ Slaves to other gods – *Gal 4:8*
- ◆ Enemies of the cross of Christ – *Phil 3:18, Col 1:21*
- ◆ Destined for destruction – *Phil 3:19*
- ◆ Idolise their sensual desires – *Phil 3:19*
- ◆ Captive to hollow and deceptive philosophy – *Col 2:8*

People's lives, our impact on the cosmos, is effectively 'fruitless' (Fruitless deeds – *Eph 5:11*). We are sowing in the wrong way – based on the wrong information (Captive to hollow and deceptive philosophy – *Col 2:8*) and therefore we reap not life in all its fullness (John 10:10) but ultimately, things which in God's perspective at the very least, don't matter, and at worst, are downright evil and harmful. (Destined for destruction – *Phil 3:19*)

- *EXAMPLE – 'New' magazine front cover*

Why? Because humans without a knowledge of the true God, make other things in life their gods. Money, performance, image, possessions, other philosophies, family, things which please our senses and give a short-term fix – you name it!

- If you make something created (of this world) your idol, your god, then you are following something without life (because the Trinity is the source of life). If you're not following & receiving life, you are following and receiving the opposite – 'spiritual death', the results can only be death & sin & evil (those things which are NOT the Trinity's nature).

Ultimately, the lost are heading, without realising it, away from God. The ultimate destination is hell – eternal detachment from the love of God, and future with Him

- Dead In our sins – *Eph 2:1, Col 2:13*
- By nature, objects of wrath – *Eph 2:3*

It's not an easy thing to stomach is it? In today's world of political correctness, of rights & opportunities for all, where we aren't supposed to discriminate against people... It's kind of hard to stomach that the bible says before we follow God in obedience, by nature we are "objects of wrath". (*Eph 2:3*)

But that is the reality of human's identity, their condition, until we are restored to relationship and life, through Jesus Christ. And that offer is available to everyone, at any point! That's the good news, the gospel, of Jesus.

In this life, being LOST means being unfulfilled, not living the purpose and life you were created to live.

- It's a very serious thing to be 'lost' in this life!
- That's why it's the mission of Jesus and us to 'seek and save the lost' (Luke 19:10)
- That's the true identity of hundreds of thousands of people in South Yorkshire!
- That's why we are committed to ordering this church to be as effective as possible in reaching out with God's transforming love and power in everyday life to the people around us.

### Our identity after we become Christians

Let's turn to our identity after we become Christians. What does Ephesians have to say?

If we used to be 'lost' what are we now?

- ◆ Saved – *Eph 2:5, 8*
- ◆ Brought near to God (through Jesus' blood) – *Eph 2:13, Heb 4:16*
- ◆ have access to Father – *Eph 2:18*
- ◆ may approach God with freedom and confidence: *Eph 3:12*
- ◆ Light in the Lord – *Eph 5:8*, Children of light – *Eph 5:8*, Christ shines on you – *Eph 5:14*

OPTIONAL OTHERS:

- ◆ Reconciled to God – *Col 1:20*

- ◆ We are known by God – *Gal 4:9* and know Him *Phil 3:8*
- ◆ Set free – *Gal 5:1, 5:13* –

If we used to be following fruitless, hollow paths and false ways of thinking... what is our condition now?

- ◆ Alive in Christ – *Eph 2:5, Col 2:13*
- ◆ Means through which God's wisdom and truth made known to spiritual realms – *Eph 2:7, 3:10*
  - So rather than heading down the wrong path in our worldview, now WE are the means by which the world and the spiritual realms can come to understand the truth about God!

If the consequences of our pre-Christian nature were separation from God and heading into evil, the grip of sin, and ultimately, death..... What is our condition now?

- ◆ Crucified the sinful 'nature' – *Gal 5:24, 17* [alive in Christ *Eph 2:5*], *Col 2:11-12*  
'and the world' – *Gal 6:14*
- ◆ Holy and blameless & without blemish in God's sight – *Eph 1:4, Col 1:22, 1:2*
- ◆ Given the fullness of Christ – *Col 2:10*

What this means for us? How ought we to respond?

#### OUTLOUD BRAINSTORM - HIGHER ORDER QUESTIONS

- Does it matter that some people are lost, but don't realise it anyway – so they feel fine?
- Is talking about Hell taboo and un-PC? Does it matter?
- In light of your true identity as a Christian– What should you be doing or thinking differently?
  - As a free, holy, blameless, friend and child of God...

Conclusion – Who do you think you are?

So – who do you think you are?

- Perhaps today you're very aware that you haven't yet chosen to obey and follow God the Trinity – Father, Son & HS in life. It's a stark truth that you are facing up to – I've been heading in the wrong direction, even without knowing it most of my life.
- But now you've seen the signpost – His name is Jesus and the Cross is the signpost to life in all its fullness, heading into an eternal future with our loving God
  - CALL TO BECOME CHRISTIANS
- Do you have a false view of yourself? Still holding to the old nature, the old identity, the old guilt, shame, web of behaviour and thought patterns?
  - Repent & believe
    - Admit it, acknowledge it – ask for God's help to counteract it.
    - If you're not convinced, ask for God's Spirit to change your mind into line with His
    - Put-on the mindset of the bible
    - Seek prayer & restoration from experienced Christians
    - Start acting differently, and watch when God confirms it and comes through for you!
      - Sometimes, new actions create new mindsets
      - Sometimes, new mindsets create new actions

- Others will know some of the truths of our identity in Christ, some people will have walked a fair way on that journey of reforming our minds and lives in line with who we really are.
  - Are you fully living it? If you really follow the path of where these truths lead – are you living like it?
    - Stepping out in boldness, confidence, freedom
    - Heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, preach the good news, lifestyles of justice, mercy & humility
  - What's next for you?
  - What Would Jesus Do?

Closing benediction (HERE OR AFTER COMMUNION) – Eph 3:16-21 (Paul's prayer for Ephesians)

*? end with communion (using Hebrews 10 – reminder of the judgement of NOT being in communion with God as well as the benefits)*

*Hebrews 10*

- V1 –
- V10, 15-18
- V19-23
- V29-31
- V35-36, 39