

Sermon 2010 Lent Midweek 2
2-24-10
Text: 1 Peter 1:22-25
Theme: "True to Me"

Identification. There was a time when it was almost an afterthought and now we need it constantly: at the airport, when you use a credit card, when you buy cold medicine. Identification is immensely important nowadays. Think about how important your identity is. Your identity distinguishes you from the other 6 billion people on this earth. So the question to consider tonight is "Who are you and how do you know?"

People like to say,

"I'm being true to myself!" How can you be true to yourself if you don't know your true identity? How can you be true to God if you're not sure about your identity? When Jesus was on the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." But I wonder if he could have just as well said, Father forgive them for they know not who they are?

Maybe you say that you know who you are: you're a Christian! That's what we expect, sitting here in church doing Christian stuff. But let's push that a bit. How many of you still wonder about a purpose for

your life? How many are still searching for your true place in life?

Those of you who are 50 or older grew up in times of far less media.

You probably got a newspaper, had a radio, and maybe a TV. Today it's different. We are constantly bombarded from every direction. All the media messages, the commercials, the pundits, the self-help programs, the life-style magazines... They all undermine a sure sense of identity.

How many of you have your own Facebook pages? Is that who you really are? We can literally create our identity, projecting what we want people to perceive of us! How about your values and morality? Even the "best" Christians pick and choose parts of the Bible we would like to live by.

Some of us end up thinking of our identities as a patchwork quilt; a bunch of very different colored patches sewn together. The patches of our lives come through a variety of ways; relationships, education, occupations, past experiences. Then we fabricate our own realities like assembling a patchwork quilt. We take a little from our parents, a little from our experiences, a little from work, a little from the media, a little from the Bible, a little here and a little there. We think,

"I'm being true to myself!" Our lives are crafted from whatever we consider is best for us.

"Father, forgive us for we know not what we do." When we try to construct our lives like that, we don't know who we are and we've lost sight of our true identity. It is those times that we've let the ways of the world influence who we are, what we believe, and how we behave. I ask you again to consider the question, "Who are you?" But this time, look at yourself from God's perspective.

"How does God see you?" To answer that question we need not look any further than God's Word. Our true identity is found in only one place, in only one man, Jesus. 1 Peter 1 says,

"You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God."

"You have been born again." Think of baptism. Because you are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, your identity is changed and you are given a new identity. Your identity as a condemned sinner is changed to an identity of forgiveness from Jesus Christ. Your identity of trusting no one but yourself is changed into an

identity of trusting our heavenly Father who has given us an eternal salvation.

We are in God's witness protection program. We have been taken out of our life as a condemned sinner and given a new life which we begin living now but which goes on for eternity. Last week we talked about life being better in God's hands than in our own and this week we ask the question, who am I in God's hands?

This new you isn't like that driver's license picture you hate so much. By ourselves, we are unsure of who we are but God gives us identity in his Son Jesus. We are the children of the creator and ruler of the universe and we are immortal! All the faults and foibles that we carry around with us are just dross that is being consumed even as we speak. The baptismal waters are washing it away and the Lord's Supper is fortifying us. We are always growing in Christ.

And that is good because our identity in Christ is constantly threatened. Our lives are bombarded with messages about who the world wants us to be. And those messages change almost daily as Satan constantly shifts to find something to tempt us. It seems like the only constant in this world is change. But, do you let the changes

of life change who you are? Do you let the world's purposes take you away from your purpose? Peter quotes the prophet Isaiah,

"All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." Like grass, human life on this earth is temporary and fleeting. Peter tells us that two things are constant: Worldly change and God's word.

God's Word never changes, but engages our ever-changing lives so that we can live and grow into the identity to which we've been given in baptism. Our lives are marked with constant change, but God's Word is our anchor that holds us fast in the storms of this world. We cling to who we know we are regardless of what Satan and the world may try to tell us.

The Father heard the Son's words,

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and he has forgiven you and through his Word continues to forgive you. As God considers you, He does not see a poorly crafted patchwork quilt. Instead, he sees the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. That's our identity. That's who we are in God's hands. Amen.