

Purify Me NBC Chapel Oct. 26, 2010

“TRUE BLUE Identity” Colossians 3:1-11

A **snake and a rabbit** were racing along a pair of intersecting forest pathways one day, when they collided at the intersection. They immediately began to argue with one another as to who was at fault for the mishap.

When the snake remarked that he had been blind since birth, and thus should be given additional leeway, the rabbit said that he, too, had been blind since birth. The two animals then forgot about the collision and began commiserating concerning the problems of being blind.

The snake said that his greatest regret was the loss of his identity. He had never been able to see his reflection in the water, and for that reason did not know exactly what he looked like, or even what he was. The rabbit declared that he had the same problem. Seeing a way that they could help each other, they decided to try to describe what the other animal was.

The snake agreed, and started by winding himself around the rabbit. After a few moments, he announced, "You've got very soft, fuzzy fur, long ears, big back feet, and a little fuzzy ball for a tail. I think that you must be a bunny rabbit!"

The rabbit was much relieved to find his identity, and proceeded to return the favor to the snake. After feeling about the snake's body for a few minutes, he said, "Well, you're scaly, you're slimy, you've got beady little eyes, you squirm and slither all the time, and you've got a forked tongue. I think you're a lawyer!" (<http://www.ahajokes.com/law015.html>)

Identity is a Powerful Issue in our Culture. In fact, identity is something we try very hard to protect! People spend a lot of money and take great precautions to protect their identity. And – I try to shred documents and do the responsible things to protect my identity – but believe me – I don't know why anyone would want to be me! No ones gonna buy an **RV** with my identity – maybe a used VCR – but no RV...

And while we do try to protect our identity from 'would be' Thieves it seems like – **our culture is experiencing a kind of identity crisis**... People go to great lengths to try and protect and even 'produce' identity. **Blank Slide** Last year alone there was over 10mil Elective Plastic surgeries and procedures here in America. We are constantly trying to 're-image' ourselves, to 'improve' ourselves – to become closer to 'Perfect' and to better understand how we can be identified.

In fact, in pop culture many identify themselves with a song (students these days will say what's your 'anthem') a song that best describes or motivates them, or maybe it's a fav. Movie, movie stars, sports star

etc... And it's a never-ending cycle of trying to be identified with fame, success, or whatever is desirable. So it's no wonder that our culture has a crisis of identity!

And while we see this in 'pop culture' we see identity issues among adults as well. We've heard about 'mid-life crisis' –causing people to act strangely... Take this **guy** for example: "I don't care how young it makes you feel. You work here, you can carry a briefcase."

Another man who was entering a Mid-life Crisis wrote: **Blank Slide**

"When I was married 25 years, I took a look at my wife one day and said:

"Honey, 25 years ago we had a cheap apartment, a cheap car, slept on a sofa bed and watched a 10-inch black and white TV, but I got to sleep every night with a hot 25-year-old blonde.

"Now we have a nice house, nice car, big bed and plasma screen TV, but I'm sleeping with a 50-year-old woman. It seems to me that you are not holding up your side of things."

My wife is a very reasonable woman. (He said)

She told me to go out and find a hot 25-year-old blonde, and she would make sure that I would once again be living in a cheap apartment, driving a cheap car, sleeping on a sofa-bed and watching a 10-inch black and white TV." :o)

He concludes: Aren't older women great? They really know how to solve your mid life crisis."

Friends, Issues of Identity is no Respector of Age. We will constantly be confronted with: 'Who We Are!' As young people, middle age, and advanced in age. **Blank Slide**

In fact, there's a senior citizen who only recently discovered that he had been adopted as a baby. He never knew that he was adopted by his parents – in fact, they went to the grave with this secret. The reason I know about this is because that 'senior' is my dad.

You know, One day you think you know who you are – and the next

day you wonder... who am I?

Friends, 'who we believe ourselves to be' – determines how we live our lives! And if we don't know 'who we are', the way we live our lives, is up for grabs...

Well, **Blank Slide** In our Life Shaping – Potentially Life Altering Story today from God's Good Word, The Writer of Colossians tells us who we really are by reminding us of who Jesus is! Let's take a look together: Colossians chapter 3.

1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **2**Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3**For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. **4**When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. **6**Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. **7**You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

8But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **9**Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices **10**and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. **11**Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Talking about getting called out on the carpet! I mean we, as a culture, try very hard to obtain this illusive 'perfection'. But the truth is: Perfection is illusive; it is at best a façade! **Blank Slide** I know some incredibly wonderful people – but if you're expecting perfection in the 'purest sense of the word' from anyone – prepare for disappointment!

I had a pastor that I served with, who 'in a former life' refereed professional wrestling. And one of the guys he most admired was the

Amazing Andre the Giant! He told me that most of the wrestlers were very friendly – they'd hang out and tell stories – but when my friend introduced himself to Andre – he was as rude and 'hateful' as a person could be. Was probably a 'bad moment' – it's very possible that he was just having an Off Day! But my friend was so disappointed – and it forever changed his Perception of the Great wrestler Andre the Giant.

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Friends, the closer we get to a person - the more we get to know them – the more 'real' they become. Much like the person we all know best: **ourselves**...

Friends, **All of our personal pursuits of perfection are, at best, a façade.** Or as the writer of Colossians says a "Shadow"...

It's interesting that these early Christians were struggling with identity much like people struggle with Identity today.

But, it's important for us to clearly see that This Very Descriptive message to the Church isn't a call on the Carpet for bad behavior – it **isn't a judgmental: 'look in the mirror at all your flaws'.** It is a message to: **Look @ Christ!**

Look at vs. 3 **3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**

Our lives are hidden with Christ in God! The only One who has lived a perfect life is Jesus and His Resurrection Power takes 'that which is imperfect' and Hides – Covers it with His Perfection! So when we look in the mirror – **we see the Power of Christ!** Made available to us!

So, **Blank Slide** in regards to 'perfection', were off the Hook right?! Jesus' grace is sufficient – right? Yes, but friends – This is a Grace that is not 'limited' in this Colossal Power Message we have before us today!

Look again @ : **1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand**

of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

And in verse: 5 **5** Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

And in vs. **7** You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

Vs. **8** ...you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. **9** Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

See friends, the Colossal Writer recognizes that none of this is possible in our own Personal Pursuits – it's only made possible in Christ alone! But, we must also acknowledge a 'Grace to Live in this Grace' of God! Not by our Own Pursuits! Look at the Grace Filled message in vs. 10! Not only are we Hidden – like sweeping the dirt under the rug kinda thing – but **10** having put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. The Imago Dei!

You see Friends, God is transforming us – Renewing us in the very Image of our Creator! The One who is perfect! And God provides the Grace to 'Put to Death' the Old Self and to 'Put On' this New Self!

Well let's bring Application to this today:
A Lesson from Lighting McQueen...

What we come to recognize is that God Graciously Covers and Hides our Imperfections by God's Good Grace – but we also Recognize this 'Resurrection Power' at Work with in us! We are being transformed into the Image of our Creator! Grace to live in this Glorious, Transforming Grace!

So God's Word for us today: Put to Death that which produces Death! Not by our own resolve to do so. Not with in our own capacity – but by Being Hidden and Renewed so that our Identity is found in Christ Alone!

Put on the New Self!