



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Col. 2:8-15, 1 Cor. 15:20-22, Phil. 3:2-16, Gal. 3:26-29

KEY POINT: Being in Christ changes how we see our ourselves, God, and others.

FOR LEADERS

- Spring 2020 Season: The Spring 2020 Season will run for a total of 7 weeks, ending the week of Sunday, May 31st. We'll be spending 2 weeks in mini-series entitled "Alive & Free" before jumping into the book of Proverbs.
Zoom Training!: If you would like help learning how to use Zoom to facilitate your group meetings each week, please reach out to your Campus Coordinator, or e-mail our pastor of Discipleship at Alex.Houser@emergencenj.org!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video: Watch this week's community extras video!
[2] Icebreaker: Name a random useless talent or skill that you have!
[3] Opener: What was one takeaway you had from the sermon this week?

IN CHRIST

The Alive & Free mini-series we're studying through together is all about the significance of Jesus' resurrection, and this week we look at what it means to be "in Christ." In the sermon this week, we learned that the term "Christian" only appears three times in the New Testament (ref. Acts 11:26, 26:28, 1 Pet. 4:16), and followers of Jesus are more often referred to as being "in Him." When Christians refer to themselves as being "in Jesus" they are speaking of a unity with Christ in the strongest way possible.

[1] In your own words, how would you describe to someone what it means to be "in Jesus?"

Ask for a volunteer to read Ephesians 1:3-14.

[2] Looking at this passage in Ephesians, what are some things that happen as a result of being in Christ?

This week Ryan shared that if we understand what it means to be in Christ, it will change how we view ourselves, our relationship with God, and our relationship with others. Let's take a look at each of these in turn:

HOW I VIEW MYSELF

- [3] How is the concept of "identity" viewed and used in our culture? Name some ways that we often define our identity today.
[4] What are some ways that you, personally, have defined your own identify (perhaps apart from Christ), either now or in the past?
[5] What are some common pitfalls with our culture's current notion of "looking inward" to discover our own identity? Why is this such a poor idea? Have you ever seen this before?

In the sermon, Ryan spoke of how even our own godly ambitions may be a poor way to try and determine our identity, giving an example of a someone shipwrecking his true calling in his ambition and pursuit of becoming a good Bible teacher.



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[6] Why do you think it’s so important to root our identity in who God has called us to *be*, rather than things He calls us to *do* (even if they are good)?

Ask for a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

This passage teaches us that there are no “free agents,” meaning that we are all either “in Adam” or “in Christ.” (ref. Romans 6:15-23)

[7] Why do you think that people today so often confuse being “in Adam” or, in other words, being in bondage to sin, with freedom?

Ask for a volunteer to read Colossians 2:12.

[8] The last passage mentioned a future hope of being made alive in Jesus, and this verse speaks of resurrected life as a *present* reality for believers. What does it mean for both of these things to be true?

HOW I VIEW MY WALK WITH GOD

Living life as a Christian is all about understanding the balance between what we are now and what we expect to one day be. Ryan observed that all who are in Christ have a glorified future, and that we are constantly trying to bring that future version of ourselves into the present.

Ask for a volunteer to read Philippians 3:2-16.

[9] According to this passage, how does Paul balance his past, present and future?

[10] Consider the way you view your own past, present and future...which one do you have the hardest time keeping in its proper place?

[11] What have been some of your own biggest sinful impulses, and how can realizing your identity in Christ transform them?

Ask for a volunteer to read Galatians 3:26-29.

[12] What do you think might have compelled Paul to write verse 28, given what he says in 26-27?

[14] What are some ways in which the Church could improve to better live up to the vision Pauls sets for us here in these verses? What can you do, personally, to help make this a reality?

PRAYER

[1] Pray that God would help you to find your identity in Christ, and that you’d be able to bring more of your future self in Christ into the present.

[2] Pray that the Church would live out the vision of unity that we all have in Christ.



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LEADER'S COMMENTARY

- Remember that the idea of being in Christ is not only present when we find that exact wording (“in Christ,” “in him,” “in Jesus”). It is also present conceptually all over the place. Take Colossians 2:8–15, for example. In verse 11, Paul says that “in him” we have been “circumcised with a circumcision made without hands,” and goes on to explain that this happened through our baptism, which symbolizes that we have been buried “with him” and “also raised with him”/“made alive together with him.” All these ideas, both grammatically and conceptually, are tied to what it means to be in Christ.
- First Corinthians 15:22 is a common verse cited by those who wish to find a universalist tendency in Paul’s writings—that is, an affirmation that all will, in the end, be saved. However, this is clearly not what he means, especially in light of his teachings elsewhere. Consider, for example, 2 Thessalonians, 1:5–12. We cannot read this verse in isolation from the rest of the teachings of Scripture, even the rest of 1 Corinthians. Therefore, when Paul says that “in Christ *all* shall be made alive,” he means that all who are *in* him are made alive.