

The Question of Identity



Big Idea Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Matt 6:1-18



Big Idea

We are not what we do. We are not what people say about us. We are not what we possess. Our identity is simply this: We are the beloved children of a Loving and Sovereign good God..

Surpassing the Scribes and Pharisees

We have a tendency to validate ourselves based on our own acts of righteousness, yet the righteousness that exceeds the scribes and pharisees is not simply about the act but about the motives/reason behind the actions. Said in another manner, the righteousness Jesus advocates for is more about who you are becoming, and the end goal is becoming more and more Christlike.

The Praise of Men

As a people, we care so much about what others think about us. We strive and work hard to present an image that represents us in the best light possible. We ravenously hunger for the praise of men. It is a malady that affects both young and old. It is both a weight and a sin that clings so easily. It is one of Satan's primary attack weapons. The challenge with the praise of men is that we have a great capacity for self deception. The power of self deception is that we are truly deceived and thus, we think we are serving God when what we are really after is the praise of men

The real issue though is that of identity, and this is where Satan attacks us. Primarily, the enemy seeks to subvert our identity for if he can do this, he can make us move to his every whim. In the 3 subsequent examples in the text Matt 6:1-18, we see Satan corrupting the desire to please God and turning that into the desire to receive the praise of men

My Public Relations Department

What is evident in these verses is that we see the thirst to be recognized for our efforts. What more, we know the praise of men is very much dependent on "what have you done for me lately." And so we are caught in a rat race, always looking to produce so that we are recognized. This thirst for a stellar reputation and recognition is not a reward, it is a curse. It is a curse because we become are under its burden and yoke.

What Christ calls us to is a reorientation to God as the one we seek to please. He is the centerpiece of our lives and our frame of reference. In essence our identity is based on him. Our identity is simply this: we are the beloved children of the Most High God

Owning My Identity

Interwoven into our text are 3 directives from Christ (Prayer, Forgiveness and Secrecy). Our focus will be on Secrecy. To help tame our hunger for the praise of men, fame or justification, we abstain from causing our good deeds & qualities to be known. We allow *him* to decide when our deeds will be known and when our light will be noticed. The uncertainty of recognition that comes with secrecy is a means of grace. For the uncertainty and powerlessness in secrecy becomes a platform for God to display his power and grace hence the word "my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in your weaknesses"



Homework

- Where is your need for acceptance or fear of rejection compromising your beliefs and values?
- Do you hunger for recognition? Do you have a need to be right? What might be beneath that? Sit with God (and/or trusted friends) and talk through this
- Where can you begin to practice secrecy in your life?