

Becoming Praise: How Our Identity Leads to His Glory

Ephesians 1:12

Today we return to our KINGDOM preaching series.

We're using Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church as a backdrop to examine God's Kingdom.

This study of God's Kingdom is divided into 3 parts:

- Kingdom Kids
- Kingdom Family
- Kingdom Come

Paul explains these things to the Christians in Ephesus by writing a letter about Jesus.

- **The first 12 verses make it obvious that this is not a letter about us.**

As we learn about, respond to, enjoy and grow in the glory and work of Jesus, we will discover the truth about **who we are** in Christ.

- **It is only in Christ that we will see ourselves rightly as KINGDOM KIDS.**

Ephesians 1:3-12 (CSB)

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. 5 He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One.

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ 10 as a plan for the right time—to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him.

11 In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, 12 so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.

***Man with amnesia news story

This sort of general amnesia is very rare, however there is a form of amnesia that affects many Christians—***we can forget who we really are in Christ.***

Thank God Paul wrote this first part of Ephesians because we can so easily jam through life forgetting who we REALLY are in Christ.

- **We can forget who we are—We can forget why we are here.**
- **We can forget who we are and WHOSE we are.**

When we put our faith in Jesus for salvation and forgiveness of sins, our identities CHANGE.

- We are given a new identity.
- We are no longer the same people we once were.
- We no longer have the same life goals as we once did.

Some Christians remember God's salvation but forget about God's transformation.

- It's not unlike the well-loved, well-educated, well-travelled, wealthy man waking up w/ amnesia...

And so Paul starts this thing off by pointing us to Jesus.

- *Because everything happens IN JESUS—Paul points to Jesus 10 times in the first 12 verses!*
 - It is IN JESUS where we discover our true purpose and identity.
 - It is IN JESUS where we discover how we are to think, feel and live as Christians.
 - **To be a Christian is to have our identity wrapped up in the person and work of Jesus.**

Our Father—The KING—sent His son to save us.

- The Father has sent His firstborn son—the true and rightful heir of the Father...
- The older son has been sent by the Father to bring us—orphans—into the Father's house.
- The Father's love strips us of rebellion and adopts us AS HIS OWN CHILDREN!

We now spend our lives walking as children of the King—KINGDOM KIDS!

- The KING is our Father—there is great PRIVILEGE that comes with that!
- As Kingdom Kids we are given EVERY good thing.
 - As Kingdom Kids we are given FULL ACCESS to our Father—the King!
 - As Kingdom Kids we are invited into the passions and pursuits of our Father.

God is not like our earthly fathers—even those of us with GREAT dads.

- He's NEVER distracted or tired.
- He's NEVER frustrated with us.
- He's NEVER out of town or too busy to invest in us.

God is a good father—we never need to beg for His attention or His provision.

- We have been given EVERYTHING in Christ—EVERYTHING!
- He doesn't hold ANYTHING back from us.

This is the foundation of our identity—this idea that God has withheld NOTHING from us.

Our identity as Christians is that we are generously-loved children of God

- **This is who we are.**
- **THIS is the place where our identity is formed.**
- **THIS is the place where our confidence and our hope comes from.**

With this in mind, here is the big paradigm shift for us as we re-enter Ephesians...

- We must take our eyes and hearts off of what we have done and are capable of doing...
- We must fix our eyes and hearts on Jesus and discover our place—our identity—in Him.
- Because it's not about what we do—it's about what Jesus has already done.

The KING has chosen us!

- God has ADOPTED US into His family—we are the king's own children!

As Kingdom kids, our Father has given us all of the love and blessing imaginable.

In Jesus we lack nothing.

- We are loved, valued, accepted, forgiven, renewed, empowered...

As Kingdom kids our lives are not spent begging God for more of Himself, but by us yielding more of ourselves to Him.

What is true of us is that we are well-loved children of God.

- APPROVED, LOVED & FAVORED children...

My 5 kids—Each of my kids were FULLY MY CHILDREN the day they arrived into our family.

- NONE OF THEM had to earn my love.

GOD brought my kids into my family and God brings kids into HIS family as well.

We are brought BY GOD into the the Kingdom of God—God’s Family.

• **In Christ, we are Kingdom Kids.**

THIS is who we are—THIS is our true identity.

Each of us functions from a place of our identity—that is...

- We act and react to life based on who we think we are—who we perceive ourselves to be...
- Our sense of identity—or how we understand ourself—affects EVERYTHING.

Our sense of identity affects the way we think and act

- It affects the way we interact with one another—our identity defines our relationships.
- Identity affects how we deal with guilt and shame
- It affects our sense of belonging or sense of exclusion & withdrawal.
- Our sense of identity can affect whether we have hope or a sense of despair in life.

We all—each of us—have an identity that helps form our perspectives and decisions in life.

We often base our sense of identity on several factors—for many its POSITIVE things:

- Finances.
- Appearance & what we wear.
- Our career, position, influence...
- Talents...
- Achievements...
- Or friends and relationships—who loves us or who no longer loves us...
- Or parenting, or how we school our kids...

There are an endless number of influences in our lives that help form our sense of identity.

- *And these are often good things!!*

- Often these are positive things.
- These can be things we’ve worked hard for and earned...
- They’re things we’re proud of...

But what happens when we’ve formed our identity around these things, and these things change—or go away?

- What happens when we lose the job or career or paycheck?
- What happens when the bank account shrinks?
- What happens when the marriage fails or the spouse dies?
- What happens when the kids move out of the house?
- What happens when age catches up and our looks change?

We’re on shaky ground and unstable when our identity is based on anything other than Jesus.

- Because everything is undermined when the good things in life change or go away.

If we are not careful then life’s inevitable changes will leave us wondering who we REALLY are.

- If our identity is built on anything that can change...

If our identities are anchored on people or money or circumstances, we can be disillusioned and even crushed once the people, money or circumstances change or go away.

If we are not careful, we might spend an entire life trying to maintain the good things that give us our identity.

- Clinging to the past...
- Clinging to our youth or our looks...
- Clutching our finances...

And when our world starts to fall apart our identity starts to crumble and we panic...

What we draw identity from eventually becomes so important to us that we do whatever it takes to hold on to it because without it we don't know who we are.

- We become desperate...
 - And so we deify these things in our lives—we exalt them.

These things were all given by God as a blessing to us.

- But, none of these good things were given to us to be our God!
- **And so none of these good things are able to help us form a right identify.**

Many of us do have this tendency to form our identity on good things in life...BUT

It's ALSO true that others do the opposite—we form our identity on what we DON'T have.

- **See themselves as “less-than”**
 - Maybe they don't have money, or they are not good looking
 - Or they don't have influence or any position of honor in life.
 - These people build identities on the fact that they don't have talents or special gifts...

These people identify as UNWORTHY or UNWANTED or UNABLE or NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

- Only see their weaknesses...
- Only feel mediocre at best...
- Only see their shortcomings and unworthiness...

We know this isn't true...

The Bible sees every Christian as “God's holy people”—we are ALL saints if we're in Christ.

- But we don't believe this when our identity is based on what we have earned for ourselves in life and NOT based on who we are in Christ.

That is the central issue with both ways we tend to find our identity—we fail to grasp WHO WE ARE.

- Some of us cling to the successes and blessings for identity...
- Others of us find our identity in the low places in life...

BOTH of these identities are false—as Christians, our identity is IN JESUS

WHO we are flows from WHOSE we are.

Paul jumps up and down to help us understand that who we are flows from whose we are.

And then in verse 12 Paul connects our identity—WHO WE ARE—to our PURPOSE:

Kingdom Kids's lives are a reflection of the King.

Ephesians 1:12 (CSB)

...we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.

The challenge of our lives in Christ is to live FROM this place of identity as God's child.

- It is a process to start living from a place of being FULLY LOVED.
- It is a process to start to live from a place of APPROVAL—no need to prove yourself.
- It is a process to start to live from a place of FULL ACCEPTANCE.
- It is a process to start to live from a place of FULL GRACE—never earning the love or approval.

This is the process of living the Christian life—to BE who God has saved you to BE.

- NOT to be the “best version of myself”
- NOT to be the best you can be.

****Paul HAD IT ALL and DID IT ALL—really well!!! And he said that his best efforts were GARBAGE compared to his true identity as God’s child in Christ!**

God created you to BE HIS CHILD—apart from this, nothing you do in life will ever matter.

- Remember, the foundation of identity is: we were made BY God, FOR God to live WITH God.
- All other identities are nothing if this foundation is not in place.

****This is COUNTER-CULTURE!!**

Our culture tells us that our identity is defined by what we do.

- Culture would say that “Doing is being”

The Gospel tells us that what we do is defined by who we are.

- The Gospel says that “Being is doing”

Your identity should NOT defined by your vocation—you are defined by God.

- You were made to BE STILL and know that God is God
- You were made to enjoy and savor the love & approval & goodness & presence of your Father.

Psalm 46:10 (NLT)

“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.”

A life that honors God requires stillness and not striving—STOP DOING AND SIMPLY BE.

- Being who God saved us to be is what brings God glory.

WHO we are flows from WHOSE we are, and WHOSE we are defines HOW we live.

- YES, God has DONE wonderful things FOR us...
- YES, God HAS wonderful things in store FOR us...
- YES, God desires wonderful things FOR us...

But even though God has done will do AMAZING things for us...

- His plans and purposes are not primarily about us but about Jesus!

Colossians 1:15-17

**He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation.**

**For everything was created by him,
in heaven and on earth,
the visible and the invisible,
whether thrones or dominions
or rulers or authorities—
all things have been created through him and for him.**

**He is before all things,
and by him all things hold together.**

We exist for God’s pleasure and for God’s glory—NOT for our own.

- Finding our identity and purpose in Jesus brings God glory.
- Putting our hope in Christ brings glory to God.

THIS is what it means to live life for God’s glory.

God’s plans, God’s pleasure, and God’s purposes do not revolve around us, but around Jesus.

Our failure to live from our identity in Christ leads us to live for OUR pleasure and for OUR glory.

- **This will never work out for us!**
 - We were made for GOD'S glory—for God's plans.
 - We were NOT made for ours
 - We were not made for ourselves...

We were created FOR God and only experience fulfillment when we live life WITH God.

- We are DEPENDENT upon God for our identity.
- We are DEPENDENT on God for our fulfillment.
- We are DEPENDENT on God for our joy.

Today God is challenging us to know who we are and to BE who we were saved to be. Christian, God has set you apart and adopted you as His own family!

- **We are KINGDOM KIDS!**

And as Kingdom Kids—look at what Paul says is true:

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NLT)

And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

If you don't know Jesus, you don't know the Father's love and you don't have His Holy Spirit.

- You need to hear that you have a GOOD FATHER who loves you.
- You need to hear that God has done EVERYTHING necessary to adopt you into His family.
- Listen, today the Father is inviting you in!!
- Today the Father is inviting you to receive His love and acceptance and adoption!!

As we continue in Ephesians you will hear all about this amazing gift of salvation and new life offered to us through Jesus.

IF you DO know Jesus, you HAVE the Holy Spirit.

- Let this be a season to form or reform your identity as a child of God—Kingdom Kid.
- Let this be a season to PRESS IN and KNOW JESUS and bring HIM glory!

We must know God's glory before we can praise it.

And then once we actually know God's glory, we can't help but praise it.

- God's glory is an all-consuming obsession.
 - God's glory is far more vast and valuable than anything we can achieve or create.
 - God's glory is far more satisfying and joy-giving than anything we can plan or experience.
 - God's glory is infinitely more intimate and personal than the best marriage or friendship.

As we worship now, SIT in the presence—the GLORY—of God.

- Let the Lord remind you of who you are.

Christian, sit and just BE who God has saved you to BE...

Your acceptance, enjoyment and praise as God's child brings praise to God's glory!