

Sermon August 9, 2020 The Meaning of Life: Part 2 - Who Are We? (cont'd)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Part One of the series we started last week we left off at the point where we have been created in the image of God, very good, but by one very bad choice not so good, with the capability of doing both good and evil. The good takes some work and usually requires favorable circumstances. Evil just comes naturally and requires no effort whatsoever. This results in this life being labeled as a veil of tears, a life of sorrows, I could go on, but it isn't profitable to start Part 2 out all depressed because the message today is a positive one. This positive message eludes most people and is the conundrum that challenges both philosophers and the simple, rich and poor, young and old, good and evil. Here it is;

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. 2 Cor 5:19

Most people know there is more to life than what we find on the surface and we seem to have a desire to attain to something more, but what and how? If you paid attention in Sunday School or Confirmation classes, you know that all people die because of that evil part. It's that simple. God's desire was and is that people would have his moral goodness and live in it forever. For that to happen, he needed to make a new way for us. Jesus is that way back into the goodness of God and his eternal nature. It is as God says here in Paul's letter to the church in Corinth;

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Cor 5:17

In the beginning it says God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them including human beings. Here it says God picked up his tools again and did some more creative work – creating a new type of human person – a new creation. This new creation happens when people are re-connected to their creator in Jesus. In Jesus people are created new again. Back in God's first creation, he made man in his image – with consciousness, reason, and imagination. We all still have that image, corrupted as it may be. This second time around, God takes our tainted image and transforms it into something new;

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, ... Romans 8:29

In Christ God has given us a new image. When God first made us, he would look at us and see something of himself in us, like us looking at our children or when we see the resemblance of other children to their parents. Now when our Father looks at us, he sees his son Jesus. St. Paul explains this phenomenon in his letter to the church in Galatia;

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Galatians 3:27

So we have put on Christ. That sounds like quite a thing! And it is. After all, we have a new identity through all this. Today I'll cover a little more about the change that has already taken in who we are in this world, and then hopefully over the next two weeks we'll look at what that means we are to be doing with this new identity we have now that we have put on Christ.

There is that saying we use when someone burns the toast or leaves their coffee on the roof of the car while they drive away - "Nobody is perfect." The angels may well use that phrase about us as they follow us through the day, joking with one another after work about who has charge of the greater fool. But what about God? God says otherwise. He says we are perfect. It says so right here in Hebrews chapter 10;

For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. Hebrews 10:14

Through the one sacrifice of Jesus, the lamb of God, upon the wood of the cross we have been made perfect. Back in that passage from 2 Corinthians it said God was reconciling us to himself and not counting our sins against us. When the evil we do is not counted against us, it means we have a clean slate. It reminds me of playing a board game with a young child. You don't want them to get frustrated, so whenever they get a bad spin, we tell them to spin again until the pointer lands on a good spot. As for us, we get credit for the good we do, but the evil that slips into our lives never gets written down on our score card. The evil we do is certainly counted very carefully, but the judgement against us is taken off our and placed on Christ's as he bore that judgement for all on Calvary. We are now free from judgement and declared to be perfect. We are in the best position anyone could ever possibly be in terms of our relationship to God our Father. Just to be sure everyone gets this point, which is something to grasp and hold on to forever with dear life, let's hear it again in chapter 12 where it talks about coming into the presence of God;

You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, Hebrews 12:23

Those "spirits of the righteous made perfect" include all those God has redeemed, both those here on earth and those now with God in paradise. And, of course, it means you. In God's righteous judgement, you are declared to be perfect. We can all take heart in that joyful truth, but let's not let it go to our heads!

Who are we? We are people who have been brought back into the good graces of God, recreated as new beings, given the image of God in Jesus Christ, and a status of "perfect" in the eyes of God. Wow. There is a bit more we could get into, but I think the one other item that should not be missed is the subject of how God has adopted us as his children whereby we now call him our Father. Here is a wonderful passage in Romans that speaks to this truth;

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15

As far as this work of God goes, if I asked how many of you here are adopted you would all raise your hand. We're all adopted. Adopted by God our Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. This ties in perfectly well with God's design of reconciling us to himself. He had this plan to adopt us in mind all along as it says here in the letter to the church in Ephesus;

He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. Ephesians 1:5

Our identity with God is not as a house guest or foster children. Rather, we are legal, permanent members of his family and bear his name. This is all because of the reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ that brought us back to God, recreated us in the image of Christ, and adopted us as his perfect children.

That is a lot to take in and digest. It makes a day and night difference in who we are. It also completely changes our purpose in this life and reinterprets the reason we are now living on this earth. In Parts 3 and 4 I hope to cover what God our Father instructs us to do now that we belong to him as his children, and the marching orders he has given us to follow. Until then, the peace of God rule and guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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