##  Who Are You?

Text: Acts 19:15:

And the Evil Spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, Paul I know, but who are ye?

This passage of scripture was talking about those who profess power in the name of Jesus but did not have a relationship with Him. Are we known by our identity? How do others see us? Is there enough of God in our lives for us to be counted on as a Christian? Someone once said, “If you were arrested for being a Christian, would they find enough evidence to convict you?” It is something to think about.

We have three identities in our lifetime. The first one comes in at birth. I am the son of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. No matter how much I have liked it or not, the facts are the facts. I could try to change my identity to another family like, Bro. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and be a part of his family but in truth, I wasn't born into that family nor do I have anything much in common with them. The facts are the facts, I am the son of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. No matter how good or bad our parents were, we cannot get away from the fact of the ones who brought us into this world. And as a male, I also bear the last name of my father. No matter how much we may want to change it, our first identity is through them.

The second identity comes to us almost as fast as the first. We are born in a sinful world. We all basically existed to satisfy our own pleasures and self. One of the problems that the church has painted itself is that we are perceived so much better than anyone else. We are righteous and others are not. We are better than others. Let me ask you, are there any good people in this world that have not come into the realization they need Christ as their savior? Are there any good people in this world? The answer is “yes”. You see, the world just views us as people—ordinary people. They are not familiar with Christ and to tell you the truth, the church many times has basically done a poor job in explaining that we are no different than anyone else—we are just forgiven! We may preach “fire and brimstone” , which there is nothing wrong with that at times, but people are wanting to see real people that really care and has something different about them that they need. We are not better than anyone else, we have just crossed over to another identity, of which, we do not want to ever go back to.

Which leads us to the third identity. That is when we are born again. We accepted Jesus Christ as our personal savior and asked Him to forgive us of all unrighteousness. We have changed our identity through Christ Jesus! I want to talk to you about this identity, what does it look like? We all call ourselves Christians, but what does that mean? Is it asking for Jesus to come into your life and then going back to your old lifestyle or is it a life-changing, on-going experience through Him? God expects us to have a higher standard than the worlds. If I can be a little critical, too many times, the churches are full of people claiming one thing while living something different altogether.

I was born in New Jersey and lived there for only one month. I have lived in this state for over 50 years. When someone asks me where I am from, I tell them that I am from this state. But I know of someone who live their first two years in Texas and lived over 40 years in another state, and when someone asks him where he is from, he says, “Texas”. Isn't that absurd and crazy? How can anyone say that? But there are people who live in a state of Christianity but soon return to their old state of things. I am not trying to judge them, but how could they ever believe that?

But people in all communities look at the church and can point out weaknesses or exceptions. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:20, 21, “In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver; but also wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” Unfortunately, the church is this way, some people of honor and unfortunately some of dishonor.

Let me give you some examples. One of the most embarrassing times I have been in was when I was getting tires for my car. I saw a church member there and we were joking and kidding around. Afterward the owner of the tire shop came up to me and asked me, “do you know that person?” I said, “yes, he goes to my church”. The owner states, “you have to be kidding. He gives us fits. He is one of the rudest and most obnoxious customers we have!” All I could says was, “I guess he is a work in progress.” Another example is when my daughter worked at a restaurant and sometimes she had to work on Wednesday nights. She did not like working then because she missed the youth group and the other reason is that the “Christians were coming”. She says, they were some of the rudest, most obnoxious, and worst tippers that they had. How did she know they were Christians? By the way they dressed and prayed over their meal but then gave the waitresses fits. She couldn't get any other waitress to come to church. Finally, one of her waitress friends said to her, “look, I know I am bad but I am better that they are!” Wow, what a testimony!!! But if you asked those people, they would overwhelmingly state that they are Christians but were they Christ-like? Are we ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of truth?

Being a Christian holds us to a higher standard because we should have let our old habits or worldly habits to die off and continue to replace it with the characteristics of Christ. The Bible says, “old things are passed away, behold all things become new”. It says for us not to be conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God. How many wants God's perfect will for your life? Then we need to live by the scriptures.

The second part of 2 Timothy 2:21 says, “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel of honor, sanctified, and useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.” God expects to grow in his word and change daily. He doesn't want us to be like Hebrews 5:12, “When you ought to be teachers, you need to have someone teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, you have need of milk and not strong meat.” God expects us to grow in His word and with our prayer life. Many Christians are good at loving the things God loves but does a lousy job of hating the things that God hates!

Example of a little girl and her cat: There was a little girl who had a precious little cat. This cat was with her at all times, she was either holding it or it was following her. The sat together, read together, ate together and even slept together. But one day, this cat died. The little girl and her father went in the back yard to bury her cat but the little girl said to her father, “father, let me do this by myself, she was my cat.” So the father let her. But there was one peculiar thing about this, she buried most of the cat but left the tail sticking up right out of the ground. Her father asked her, “honey, why did you bury your cat this way?” She stated, “I did this so that anytime I missed her, I could go out to stroke it.” That is the way many of us bury our past (sin), we often go back to something familiar, such as our lifestyle, anger, or other traits that are of this world. But God wants us to fully bury everything and live for Him!

That's why the Lacodicean church was called “lukewarm” in Revelations chapter 3. God stated that I wish you were either hot or cold than be lukewarm. They are good for nothing. One translation stated that he would vomit them out of His mouth! What is this message all about this morning? It is for us to know who we are in Christ Jesus and to walk the way we talk.

There are people in every church who really needs to examine their relationship with the Lord. There are things in their life that they know are not pleasing to God. But we still, nevertheless hang onto it, often stroking it just like the little girl's cat. There is no place for anger, jealousy, strife, envy, gossip, pornography, haughtiness, etc. The Bible even says it is a shame to even talk about them.

There are over 3,500 people a day leave the church in America! We are talking about people who state this is my church, but somehow became hurt or wounded by our own! Revivals are pretty much a thing in the past because our church membership doesn't want it. The number one reason why pastors leave the church is that the pastors believe they have a direction for the church that God has given them but the church isn't willing to go there! We get involved in church problems with church boards and other people and when we asked them if they have prayed about this situation, they always state, “No, I don't have to because I know what to do!”

Where has the church gone? Are we so caught up in ourselves that we even leave God out? I am not talking about all churches and all Christians but many times, we have seen a pattern that is filtering down in the church of being lukewarm or conforming to this world. Either we are holy or we are not. It is as simple as that! We quote, “resist the devil and he will flee from thee” but it says for us to “submit yourselves therefore unto God, resist the devil and he will flee from thee.” We have to do something, we have to submit or turn everything over to God. Not just 10%, 20%, etc. but as close to 100% as possible! If we call ourselves Christians, how much of Christ do we have in us? What measure of Christ do you have?

Paul prayed for us in Ephesians chapter 3 for us to be rooted grounded in love, that we can comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and dept, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. God wants us to be doers of the Word! He wants us to walk in His fullness. When we do that, then He can do exceedingly abundantly more we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us .” It is the power that worketh in us that makes the difference. I knew a man who was on his deathbed. He had served in church leadership for probably 40 years but he often ruled by his own emotions rather than seeking God's direction. While he was on his deathbed, he said, “you know, the things that I thought was very important in life, really aren't important at all.” What a waste of his lifetime! He could have done things differently that would have brought glory to God but instead showed his frailties of being driven by his own nature.

This is a message of hope and encouragement, for us to be reminded each day for us to live Christ-like to everyone we see, which means that we must die out to self and other worldly things, and be the person that God wants us to be. If everyone in this church would live by the Word of God daily, this church couldn't hold the people. You want to know how to have revival or pack this place—live by the Word. People will see the difference and want to know more. This world looks at the church poorly because we have not done a good job of just living by the Word.

Today, I wonder if there will be those who would be honest with yourself and to God, there are some things in my life you know that are not pleasing to Him and we need to bury a few things. It doesn't mean you are not a Christian, but there are things that hinder you from being the person who you say you are or what people perceive a Christian should be.

Lets bow our heads. So many times, it is the little foxes that spoil the vine. If we don't guard ourselves, we'll get so busy “doing things” that we could revert back to our “old identity” allowing our actions rather than God's characteristics to outwardly show or rule. Most of the church problems are really petty in nature but they often explode into major problems because we may be driven by our “old nature” and not turned everything over to God.

With heads bowed and no one looking around, I wonder if there would be honest this morning and say there are some things in my life that are not pleasing to God and I need prayer. I'm not going to embarrass you, I just want to remember you in prayer. It may be jealousy, anger, envy, gossip, unforgiveness, strive. Or it may be a sin issue, such as pornography or an addiction. Could I see your hands, who wants me to pray for them?