

SERMON FOR APRIL 30, 2023

TEXT: 1 PETER 2: 19-25

THEME: A NEW IDENTITY

19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. **20** For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. **21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.** **22** He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25** For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

In the name of Jesus:

Last week the Columbus Dispatch wrote an article asking what was the identity of the city of Columbus, now and going forward. For years many people considered Columbus a cow town, a city surrounded by acres of farmland. But things have changed. Columbus is now the largest city in the state of Ohio, it is the 14th most populated city in the nation, and the second most populated city in the Midwest after Chicago, Illinois. And yet, as Doug Buchanan, the vice president of the Columbus Metropolitan Club suggests, its time for Columbus to undergo a rebranding. And as Niel Jurist from the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission has stated, it is even time to redefine

Central Ohio, to have a new identity. So what will it look like, this new identity? There are ideas that have been thrown out there for discussion, Diversity, Growth, the new Silicon Valley of the Midwest due to Intel moving into Licking County. There are all sorts of ideas floating out there as to what the identity of our region will look like. What will people think of now, and in the future, when they hear about Columbus Ohio and Central Ohio?

As Christians, we already have an identity, given to us by God. That is what the Apostle Peter tells us in our text for today. And seeing as we have this new identity, what exactly does that look like?

The Apostle Peter tells us that you have been given a God given identity, an identity that is different from the identity of the rest of the world. This identity can never be changed nor can it ever be stolen. It is yours as a free gift of God's grace in Jesus Christ. How did this happen? Peter says that we as Christians have been repossessed by God. Now why do we need to be repossessed by God? Because from our conception and birth, we have been enemies of God. Peter earlier in chapter two says that we were born in darkness, that we were not God's people, and that we didn't have the mercy of God. What did we have? We were born with hearts darkened by sin, alienated from God because of our sin. We were a people who were under

God's wrath and judgment. To put it another way, we were on the one way road to Hell because of our sinfulness. We were enemies of God.

But God changed things, He changed our relationship with Him and gave to each of us a new identity because of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We who have been spiritually sick and dead in sin have been forgiven and healed, given new life in Jesus just as Peter says: **22** He, Jesus, committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23** When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

So now you have this new identity as a child of God, as a believer in Jesus Christ. It has been given to you in Baptism. If this is who we are, then what are our priorities and how do we live within this present world as a follower of Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit?

Peter answers those questions by telling us that we have been repossessed by God, purchased and won by the precious blood of Jesus shed on the cross. You have been chosen by God, specifically called out of the darkness of the world to live by His marvelous light. Just as the people of God were called out of Egypt in the Exodus to leave the ways and culture of idolatry

in order to live as the people of God, so too now God has called you out of the present world to live according to His will. That means that you leave the evils of this world behind to live according to God's will. You are called from the evils of racism, sexism, elitism, classism, and now you belong to a new group of people in Baptism, a group of people who are now God's people. Just as God is impartial to all and loves all, we too are called to love all people, regardless of wealth, class, status, or demographic. We leave the darkness of division and judgment and we now follow the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are who we are because of Jesus. Our lives are defined by Jesus, our priorities are changed because of Jesus. Our hope for the present and for the future doesn't rest in a political party or politician, it is rooted in Jesus, who really is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. For Jesus is the One who lived, died and rose again defeating sin, death, and hell for each of us.

You have been made holy in the blood of the Lamb. In Baptism you are now God's new creation. The Holy Spirit has been given to you in Baptism and He comes to you today in Word and Sacrament to forgive you and to change you into the person God has called you to be. And the Holy Spirit has placed you in the various situations and stations you find yourself in your life so that you can share the love of Christ in real ways among real people everyday of your life.

In a couple of weeks we will witness the coronation of King Charles of England. In that coronation, which will be telecast around the world, the people of Great Britain swear their allegiance to Charles and will promise to serve him. Yet King Charles and any earthly leader have feet made of clay. They are imperfect leaders who are still sinners and who will eventually die as a result of the human condition.

You and I, indeed all Christians, serve a Greater Master, the King of Kings, Jesus, born, crucified, and risen again. We are called to honor our King Jesus through our worship and praise. We give Him allegiance by obeying the Spirit of God given in Baptism. We learn of His will and we follow His ways as He guides us in Holy Scripture. His priorities of loving the Lord above all things and loving our neighbor as ourselves become our priorities. We seek not to serve ourselves but to serve Him as we live for and help others around us.

And in doing so, we are following the example of Jesus. It is just as the Apostle Paul has written: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in

human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

You see, that is really what our new identity is all about. It's all about Jesus. Purchased by His blood from sin, Satan, and death, you and I are now called to live our lives for Jesus, giving Him all the glory, honor, and praise that He deserves.

Amen