

“I am a Servant of God”

Series: Identity: Becoming Who We Are

June 11, 2017 – Brad Bailey

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“...having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.” - Romans 6:22 (NASB)

1. As a servant of God, I am aligned with my true position of _____ and _____

2. As a servant of God, my service to others is aligned with greater _____

3. As a servant of God, every moment is aligned with _____

'Well done, good and faithful servant! ...Come and share your master's happiness!' “ - Matthew 25:23

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Intro

A recent report came out by the fastest growing crime in America which is...identity theft.

A crime in which someone steals some combination of your credit card number.... Driver's license number... Social Security number... and take what is yours... leaving you to try to prove who you really are.

This latest Javelin Strategy & Research report declared that ... the past year reached an all-time high. An estimated **15.4 million consumers** were hit with **some kind of ID theft last year** ...with fraud losses **totaling \$16 billion** in the past year alone. [1] 46% of Americans have had their card information compromised at some point in the past 5 years Worldwide there is a new victim every 2 seconds.

Some of you may feel inclined to reach for your wallet...or your purse. But we are wise to stop and realize... we won't find our identity there. Those may be valuable forms of identification that can protect our material assets...but they really can't tell us who we are.

Jesus understand that the ultimate identity theft took place a long time ago.

We allowed a far greater enemy to slither into our lives and he knew he need only to get us to trust him with our identity.

We hear it in the words depicted in the garden of our formation...right after God declares the role of human life...this slithering enemy says “Did God say...?” In trusting him to define us... we lose everything.

(Right after God declares that Jesus is the Son who has come to save... the enemy comes to Jesus and says “IF you are the son...” But Jesus refuses to turn over his identity.)

So our focus this Spring season has been on IDENTITY...on realizing what Jesus came to restore...in understanding WHO WE ARE.

The question...Who are you?... cannot be answered by your name...and the numbers on your Driver's License...Credit Card...or Social Security card.

So we have been **focusing each week** on an aspect of **our ultimate identity.... Who we as human life were created to be.**

There is one final title of identity that I want to invite us to hear this morning. It is the one title that was used to sum the highest honor of every great Patriarch through the period ... was

that which Mary took upon herself... which Jesus lifted up...and which the disciples and apostles considered their greatest honor.

“Servant of God” That is the identity that captures our place in this world.

You might be thinking...whoa...that’s **a bit anti-climatic**.... I was thinking “prince of the king”.... Or “The Beloved”...or “Agent of Mission”...perhaps “Guardian of the Galaxy”... or “Wonder Woman” of God.

Servant of God. It may be hard to initially think of being a servant as something to embrace and aspire to. Yet in truth it captures something that reflect our greatest freedom...and honor.

This **past week**, the **actor Mark Wahlberg** celebrated his **46th birthday**...and one of the notable aspects of his life has been his Christian faith...and the significance of his relationship with God. [2]

When he first met his wife...he asked her if she wanted to go to church with him the next day... which they did. Now as a husband, father, and actor and producer of multiple movies... he goes to the local Catholic Church almost every day... to pray. He says he prays for 15 to 20 minutes every day before he sets out. When the interviewer asked him...what he prays for. He responded...

"I pray to be a good servant to God..." - Mark Wahlberg

Interesting that of all the ways he might capture his calling...he chooses to speak of being a “servant of God.” This may be explained in part from his past.

Sent to prison at 16 for a violent assault, Wahlberg's early life in Boston also included various drug addictions and around 20 other run-ins with the law. Yet in his late teens the actor turned for guidance to his parish priest, Father Jim Flavin, and began to turn his life around.

I don’t presume to know all of why Mark Wahlberg chooses being a good servant of God to be an overriding desire to define himself...but he makes a connection to his past...particularly being incarcerated. He knew he was not only bound...but was **destined to be a slave to what he had been doing**.

The Bible says:

Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 1 Peter 2:16

The Bible helps us to understand that in truth...we have been bound by our sin and separation from God...and the consequences it condemns us to...and that God is the one who comes in Christ to free us....but taking those consequences upon himself....and defeating the power of

death. So we are free...but such freedom can only be grasped in now serving the one in whom freedom is found.

Romans 6:22 (NASB) “...having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”

We are all slaves... who have been **purchased...by another...who sets us free....but that freedom lies in giving ourselves to Him.**

The real term that is usually translated “servant”...**is actually “slave.”** [3]

Many translation will use the English phrase “Bond –servants”...as one is bound to the one who purchased them. It is not one who simply volunteers to serve another. It is not an employee who is simply fulfilling some exchange when they want to. It is describing one who knows that the only life they have is rightly in service to another.

We are more than just slaves... or servants...but we are always servants.

This is what every great life has understood. Not only were all the Patriarchs honored to be God’s servants...the disciples of Jesus understood this in a new light of having become servants or slaves of Christ who had purchased their freedom. Listen to how they identified themselves...

"Paul, a slave of God, - Titus 1:1

“Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus” - Romans 1:1

“Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus” - Philippians 1:1

What about James, the great leader of the Jerusalem church?

“James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” - James 1:1

What about Peter, the prominent voice of the original 12?

- “Simon Peter, a slave and an apostle of Jesus Christ” -2 Peter 1:1

What about Jude, the brother of Jesus?

“Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James” - Jude 1

What about the apostle John, the one Jesus loved and was most intimate with.

Revelation 1:1

His bond-servant John NASB)... His slave John (HCSB)

This is **how they introduced themselves ...often** mentioning this title before any others.

Far more than the term “Christian”...they chose to introduce themselves as slaves or servants.

Some might think... well... didn't Jesus make it clear we are **more than servants**...we are **"friends"** of God..."yes"...and **"children"** of God ..."yes."

It's true... all of these are held together...not as opposites but composites of our identity.

At one point... Jesus says "I no longer call you slave...but friends"... but he is very clear that his point is that a servant doesn't know what their master is doing...he's making things known to you... they will be those who do know something about what is happening.so in that sense we are friends with Jesus... friends of God.

> But they would not forget... Jesus lived to serve the Father in heaven...and they were now purchased to be the same. They may now be servants who the master has sought to also be friends...but they are still his servants.

And it's so essential that we understand that God is our ultimate father are His children. This was central to all that Jesus said and did. We are "children of God"... created to bear his image... never intended to be living in the spirit of fear that a slave does.

Jesus would describe that what was at hand for every life...was like (Prodigal Son)... a son is restored not as a servant...but a son... dignity... authority. But whose house was the son returning to?

> The Father's house. So like the prodigal Son who returns home...we have been restored to knowing we are loved... to knowing how good the Father is... but we return to serve such love and goodness. All the love you long for...all the dignity you may feel is lost...is all there.

As we take up our role as servants of God...our lives become aligned. The finite before the infinite ...and the source of all good.

It is this identity that aligns us to live well.

Like a car that gets aligned so that it can drive in a balanced form.

Like a body that gets aligned by a chiropractor who understands that a element of health is the alignment of the central structure of the body...the spine...with the nerves and bones... when aligned as they were meant to be... the whole body can move naturally. Let me unpack this.

1. As a servant of God, I am aligned with my true position of responsibility and control.

Few truths can serve life more than this one: I am not God (You are not God.)

Some of us have a tendency to live as if we are the boss of the universe... as if the Trinity had an opening to fill.

When I was running from God... defiant... but at came to an initial moment of facing the position... and "If you do exist. I don't have the right to run my own life."

That was a defining moment...when it was over....there was a freedom. Not that I lives easily as a servant of God...but that I know that it's the guiding truth out of which to live.

I know that it can be **hard for the rebellious...** but **also for the responsible.** Those whose disposition are that of being highly responsible can presume more responsibility than they have...and with it...presume more control than they have.

God smiles... in our dignity we are sons and daughters...but in our duties we are servants.

Jesus lived out of this freedom. [4]

John 5:19 (NLT)

Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing.

John 4:34 (ESV)

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

John 17:4 (NIV)

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

And this helps us to discover another truth....

2. As a servant of God, my service to others is aligned with purpose

When we understand our primary calling is to be a servant of God...it helps center our serving of others in that purpose.

We are to be servants of others....but as servants of God.

Not merely to the whims and wishes of others...but serving God's purposes in others.

This is what is so profound in Jesus. He was more sacrificial than any life who ever lived... but he was no doormat... not a people-pleaser.

The Apostle Paul writes

Galatians 1:10 (NIV)

If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

When we embrace that our primary calling is that of being a servant of God...we will serve others best. We won't serve only to be liked...or be heroic...or to prove anything.

Finally...

3. As a servant of God, every moment is aligned with meaning.

There is no identity that can give more meaning to every moment than this.

John 5:17 (NLT)

Jesus said, "My Father is always working, and so am I."

As I embrace being a servant of God... there is **not one moment that I can't serve** him. If you wake up and ...whoa ...a new day....get cleaned up...wow... got a body to work with... when you first see someone...wow someone God loves... and on and on.

Some of us tend to think...I'll wait for the big one. We think we will become a servant of God...in some big moment. **Like Superman stepping into the phone booth...**we will emerge and be the hero.

The truth is that the most common choice we will have to make is between being **a servant of ego...**and **a servant of God.** And one of the most notable differences is that the ego wants something big. **Self-glory is not content with what nobody sees.....or what no one is focused on.**

But God is looking for the servant who joins him in love so often unseen.

CLOSING:

Jesus tells a rather striking parable about how a master entrusted some servants with his wealth while he went away...and when he returned...one had squandered what they had been given...two are noted for being faithful and serving the master's interests with it. And he concludes with what the master...who represents God...says to these lives...

Matthew 25:23 (NIV)

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Those are the words Jesus is telling us to live for.

He **doesn't say**, "Well done, my **great and heroic servant.**" **No, he says** my "good and faithful servant."

They knew what their role in life was...to serve the masters interests...and they did.

We have each been entrusted life...with time and talents ...and we have the great honor of serving the goodness of God. We will ultimately have accepted or rejected that role.

These words reflect responsibility... that our lives were given purpose...and we are accountable.

But they also reflect something amazing we may miss...and that is...that we **bear the potential to bring God pleasure.**

“To please God...to be a real ingredient in the Divine happiness... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain.” [6]

I want to **invite you to join me in a prayer...a short prayer...actually two short prayers... 5 words each.**

“God, I belong to you.” / “May your will become mine.”

Notes:

1. This was reported in USA Today and here: <http://blog.credit.com/2017/02/identity-theft-hit-an-all-time-high-in-2016-165414/>

In the past six years identity thieves have stolen over \$107 billion.

The Javelin data comes from a statistically significant sample of about 5,000 U.S. consumers.

The survey is now in its 14th year; it was initially conducted by the Federal Trade Commission in 2003.

23 Frightening Credit Card Fraud Statistics By [Rebecca Lake](#) February 1, 2017

<https://www.creditdonkey.com/credit-card-fraud-statistics.html>

ACI Worldwide (an electronic payment systems company) estimates that 46% of Americans have had their card information compromised at some point in the past 5 years. According to a report from Javelin Strategy, there's a new identity theft victim every two seconds, and many of the incidents involve credit cards.

2. From various resources including: The faith of Mark Wahlberg - in five quotes - Martin Saunders CHRISTIAN TODAY CONTRIBUTING EDITOR 16 June 2015. The full response is: *"I pray to be a good servant to God, a father, a husband, a son, a friend, a brother and uncle, a good neighbor, a good leader to those that look up to me, and a good follower to those that serve God and doing the right thing, and people that I can look up to and try to emulate."* - Mark Wahlberg

3. The issue of “slave” being the more proper translation is developed in a very strong fashion by Pastor Phil Layton in “Slave – Our Fundamental Christian Identity (Titus 1:1)” regarding how the Greek word *doulos* is more consistently translated “slave” but most translations use “servant.” As my initial interest was to engage the provocative nature of such an identity this was very helpful. He notes drawing from a message by John McArthur. As he notes, some assume that the English and British translations have found “slave” too offensive due to slavery within our cultures....but the loss of appropriate translation has itself cost something. He further notes:

- the word “slave” is used more times than servant, saint or even believer, or just about any title we use of Christians
- the epistles don’t even use the word “disciple” which was common in the gospels and Acts, but in the rest of the N.T. one of the most dominant words and images for everyday believers was a slave. This is basic to the N.T. message.

Is this the most basic understanding of your personal relationship with Jesus? Is this the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of yourself in relation to God and His Son Jesus Christ?

I would venture to say that if before this message I gave every one of you a piece of paper and asked you to write down the words most basic to your understanding of who you are in Christ, and what words describe your relationship with him, there would be no one listing slave first and very few (if any) who would even have the word “slave” anywhere on the list! Perhaps none of us think first of slave, and most of us would never dream of introducing or describing ourselves to others first and foremost “a slave of God.”

Friends, Christianity has lost this most basic truth that undergirds and permeates so much of the New Testament, and the church including our church desperately needs to recover this!!

4. See also: John 12:49-50,7:18; John 5:19,30,14:31; 1 Corinthians 2:13

5. Another text that captures both how Christ lives and we should follow is Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV):

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ 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.”

6. From March 2010—Standing Before God at http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/66

In the end that Face which is the delight or the terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us either with one expression or with the other, either conferring glory inexpressible or inflicting shame that can never be cured or disguised. I read in a periodical the other day that the fundamental thing is how we think of God. By God Himself, it is not! How God thinks of us is not only more important, but infinitely more important. Indeed, how we think of Him is of no importance except insofar as it is related to how He thinks of us. It is written that we shall “stand before” Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the Divine happiness... to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.1 The thought that “we shall ‘stand before’ Him, shall appear, shall be inspected,” can be deeply disturbing when we reflect on our sins. But Lewis reminds us that through Christ (and his atoning, reconciling work for us on the cross) we can gain God’s approval and actually bring him pleasure. It is truly mind-boggling that this could be true, but the Bible assures us that it is. However, it will not happen to everyone alike, but only those who really choose it. The choice Lewis refers to is the choice of saying “yes” to God and not “no.” It is saying yes to God’s pardoning love by obeying

Jesus' call to "repent and believe the gospel." And it is continuing to say "yes" to his commands out of a heart of grateful love—relinquishing ourselves to him who loved us and gave himself up for us. As we do so, God will be glorified and pleased, and we shall stand before him without shame.

“I am a Servant of God”

Series: Identity: Becoming Who We Are / June 11, 2017 – Brad Bailey

We have been exploring different aspects of our ultimate identity.... Who we as human life were created to be. There is one final title of identity that we are exploring this week, that captures our place in the world, “Servant of God”.

- 1. Which aspects of your identity in Christ have you most embraced during this series?**
- 2. The apostles mostly identified themselves as “Slaves of Christ” in Scripture and not as “Christians”.**

"Paul, a slave of God, - Titus 1:1

“Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus” - Philippians 1:1

“James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” - James 1:1

“Simon Peter, a slave and an apostle of Jesus Christ” -2 Peter 1:1

“Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James” - Jude 1

“His bond-servant John” -Revelation 1:1

Why do you think, these leaders of the faith introduced themselves like this?

- 3. Discuss the characteristics of a servant.**
- 4. What are the distinctions of a slave?**

1 Peter 2:16 , “Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.”

- 5. In what ways are we to serve God?**
- 6. A slave has complete dependence on his master for everything. How can we develop greater dependence upon Him?**

Acts 2:36, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

- 7. Discuss the significance of making Jesus the “Lord” over our lives.**

Discuss the following quote:

“You’re going to be a slave to someone or something. Being a slave to Jesus Christ is beyond any kind of slavery that anybody ever knew because this master makes us sons and daughters and gives us all the rights of His own children. He adopts us into His family, calls us joint-heirs with Christ, takes us to heaven where we rule and reign from His own throne and pours out all the lavish riches in His possession forever and ever and ever for our own unmitigated joy and His own glory. Who wouldn’t want to be a slave under that master? What a joy to be a slave of Jesus Christ.” John MacArthur

Prayer: "Father, we thank You for helping us to see we are slaves, happily so, gladly so, who have been bought out of another slavery, the slavery to sin and death and hell. We have been bought, redeemed from the slave market of souls under the power and authority of the devil himself. We have become Your own purchased possession. We want to obey You as our Lord, our Master. We want to please You in all that we do. We will never have another Master. We will not have duplicity. We will not try to serve You and the world. But we will only serve You knowing that You will provide everything we need and more, that You have given us precious promises to do that now and forever and that You have made us not just slaves but sons, not just sons but joint heirs, not just joint heirs but rulers who will reign with You forever and upon whom all the glories of eternity will be showered. We are slaves who are loved. We are slaves who are beloved by our master. We love You in return, O Lord, and desire to serve You and to please You with all our hearts in single-minded, undistracted devotion. And we pledge ourselves again to that because we love You and because it honors You and pleases You. Thank You for the privilege and all that You give us of which we are so unworthy. In the name of Christ, amen."