

"UNIQUELY UNITED – FOR A GREATER PURPOSE" / EQUIPPED TO SERVE – BRIDE OF CHRIST

If you want to see what you look like – and you don't have a camera -you would need some kind of reflective surface. Seeing a true physical representation of yourself depends on what thing or tool you are using to see a reflection of yourself. Distortion or clarity depends on the tool. A fun house mirror, shattered window, pond, clear – well lit flat bathroom mirror. Christ follower – those who have trusted your soul to the person and work of Jesus to make you right before God. What determines the true representation of yourself – before God? Said another way, If stood before God today – how would He see you? Would you be viewed as completely acceptable before Holy God? For many of us – even as Christ followers - that is a hard question. Why? Because of how we view ourselves. 1) For example, we often see something different than God does because our view of ourselves – is often determined by things we have done to hurt God and others and because of this we have a distorted view of ourselves – much like looking into a funhouse mirror. 2) Or, our view is based on what others have done to us – like looking in a shattered window. 3) Or, our view is so cloudy – we are not sure. We hope God will see us as acceptable – but we don't really have a clear view of that. It is really like looking at ourselves in a pond. 4) As a Christ follower – the only way to clearly see who you are before holy God – is to see yourself through His eyes – not yours. The only way to clearly see your reflection as God does is in His Word. Jm 1:23 says God's word is like a mirror, reflecting who we truly are. God says this about you - one who is in Christ. 1 COR 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. God is saying ...

When we are baptized into Christ, we have a new identity that changes everything.

Baptized literally means to be completely submerge/engulfed in something – cloth in dye, a person in water. When we faith Christ to make our soul right with God – we are engulfed/submerged completely into Christ. This changes our identity – who we are – and this begins to change everything about us. 01. How are we changed? Well that is the only question we are going to answer today. And we are going to do so by looking into the clear and powerful mirror that is God's Word. As we do – I pray two this for you and I today: I pray we see a clear picture of how God views us – that is clearer & more true than the distorted view we often have of ourselves. And that this clear picture of God's view would move us as one people – who are in Christ - to live in the truth of who we are.

01. How are we changed

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13 (ESV) *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

• We begin to change - by the presence of God's Spirit in us.

Next week – we are going to dive into who the Holy Spirit is what He does in us to equip us. Today – hear this really good news: God is so committed to you in his love – He has permanently place Himself in you – when we faith Christ as our right standing before God. He will never leave you or forsake you – and He will change you!

Houston because of Harvey- Flooding affects everything. When a home is engulfed in water like in Houston – everything is affected, changed for the worse: carpet, furniture, dry wall, paint, appliances – everything has to go because an all engulfing flood affects everything - changes everything. In Christ – you have been engulfed or baptized into the presence of the Holy Spirit and for the good – He does affect everything about you.

2 ways baptized gets used in God's word. 1] When we faith Christ to make us right before God – the Word tells us we are completely engulfed in Christ. We receive all of who He is by His work and we receive God – The Holy Spirit. We receive a whole new identity that calls us to a whole new allegiance and life. 2] It describes the act of water baptism – When we are physically baptized we are publically declaring our allegiance to Christ because of His work on our behalf that brings us to God and engulfs us in the presence of God.

That is what you witnessed this morning. **Have you trusted the person and work Christ with your soul to be right before God? How do you know?** We tell God we are sinful – not right with Him and that the only way we can be right with Him and with Him – is thru Christ – because of His work alone. Have you done this? You can now!

If you are in Christ, the Spirit will begin changing you. If no change, there is no Spirit, because God's Spirit changes where it touches. No change: you are not in Christ. **1st & greatest thing He changes: is who we are – our identity!**

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13 (ESV) *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

• Our identity which has changed - begins to change in us as we believe we are united with Christ in His greater body.

The word literally says here, For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body.

You have been united with Christ and formed with others into 1 body in Christ.

“Remember whose you are!” This is who you are now – you belong to Christ. And, this is not about ownership – this is about being united with Christ. You and I are a part of Christ and all who are in Christ. You are not out there on your own trying to figure this out. You have literally been joined to His body, a part of a greater team with Christ as the Head of this body. And there is great joy in our union – we are not alone and Christ will never leave us alone because of His work – not ours.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13 (ESV) For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

- **As our identity begins to change in us - our allegiances begin to change.**

There are 2 things mentioned here that call for our allegiance above our allegiance to Christ (there are more). 1] Race (Jew and Greeks), 2] social standing (slave or free). This how you were known in this culture – by race and standing. And both of these labels carried allegiances (things one had to do if you were to stay in good standing w that group). There are many things that call for our allegiance above Christ today.

Race still unites and divides today. Jesus calls us from this allegiance to race – that makes us look up at ourselves or down on others. Family is another. Will I follow after my mom or dad’s approval. This is a struggle for adults even as you grow and become a parent. Christ calls you to honor your parents – but he calls for your full allegiance to Him. But I think our standing is the greatest challenge to our allegiance to Christ. And this may be the hardest to turn your allegiance from because it is the most subtle. What are things that give us standing today: our career, our kid’s place on a team/club, our achievements, a hobby, knowledge, or title we hold in the community.

*All of these things that give us standing like a career or kids can be good gifts from God to enjoy Him & engage others in our world with the love of Christ. Few of these things actually demand an allegiance that insists you denounce Jesus. But most of these things can – if we are not careful – give us an identity, a worth, a value that directly opposes our identity in Christ – **as His own, as a part of His body.***

*How does God begin to change our allegiances and anchor our identity in Christ? **Powerful application:***

God changes your allegiances as you see and believe his love and commitment for His body. *As you see (<this) you will feel safe in asking the Spirit to help you see and drop your allegiances to other things. “Kids – will use you, fear you or love you.” Wise words from a mentor. If you are just their magic Genie who only exists to make them happy and give them all their wishes – they will use you until you cannot make them happy. If your kids believe they will lose your love or approval if they do not obey – they will fear you. But – if they see you run after Jesus, serve them, fight for them, sacrifice for your spouse, discipline them, and teach them good and hard lessons – they will love you. And their love for them will never equal yours while they are young or young adults. But their love for you will be a direct result of your love for them. It is like this for us in our relationship with God. As His kids, we love because we are 1st loved by our heavenly Father. Our allegiance to Christ grows as we see His love and commitment to his body. He gave up his life for us and now he says I will never leave you or forsake you because my work has made you my son/my daughter. I have put myself – My Spirit into you forever. Forever – I will love you – forever you are mine! All of this happens*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-16 (ESV) 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.

- **As our identity begins to change in us - our purpose begins to change as we live out our unique part in Christ’s local body.**

We often think our purpose is to be unique and when we become a part of some greater bigger thing – we think we lose that purpose. In Christ’s body – we don’t become a clone where everyone has to act alike and do the same things. Actually God has designed us in such a way that he needs us to live in our unique gifts – in the local body. As we join together with others in his body – we live out the perfect fullness of God’s design that allows to experience His joy, serve others, and display the amazing Oneness but unique complexity of our God.

Video – Beethovens Moonlight Sonatatas 3rd Movemement – with one twist.

One piano – played by one master – makes an amazingly beautiful sound when every key is unique but played together in the desired order by a master. But – when the master plays one piano with all the same keys – it is just one loud fast monotone sound. Not amazing, not beautiful – and gives no honor to the master.

This is the body of Christ: ONE body but many unique sounds together – create something beautiful in the master’s hands. This only happens in the local body. This is where our unique gifting joins others to enjoy God,

serve others, & display the amazing oneness but unique complexity of our God. **In this setting, we are changed!**

1 CORINTHIANS 12:17-20 (ESV) 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

• **As our identity begins to change in us - our self-focused life begins to change to a life of humility.**

***As we live together** – with all the parts of God’s body – we begin to all the parts of the body are needed. All parts – every unique part is needed or the body would be a dysfunctional monster if it were just your one part. As a unique part – needed by the whole and needing the whole – we are humbled by our part – not filled with pride – because alone we are a dysfunctional monster – like Mike Wazowski. Photo of Mike W.*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-25 (ESV) 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

• **As our identity begins to change in us – we begin to care for all the body – even those we don’t know.**

***Which do you need more – one of your eyes or your only liver?** Which gets more notice, more attention, more affection? Girls don’t go wild over bedroom livers! No! What gets noticed are those eyes. But what you can’t live without is your liver. God is not trying to say – one person is more important in the body here. He is trying to say – all are important because they are a part of your body! Your body.*

When you smashed your toe into the banister at the top of stairs – your whole body bounces and writhes in pain, your hands get involved, your heart, and your mouth. All of you hurts and even expresses that hurt - even though you just smashed one toe. Why? When one part of you hurts all of you hurts. This is how God made your body and His. And – one you are celebrating a victory by your team or crying tears of joy at a wedding – your whole body joins in the celebration. No part sits it out if you are fist pumping, dancing, or heaving tears.

What is your view of you?

Who’s eyes – or by what reflective surface do you view who you are before God?

God just gave you a reflection of how one huge thing in your life will be in transformation – change – if you are in Christ. I pray this encouraged you and was a loud flashing sign that said – you are in Christ. You are engulfed, baptized in Him and your life is His. You are part of His body and your identity is changing. Hang on, move forward in Him, don’t give up – God is at work in you and through you.

1) If you doubt you are in Christ – if none of this reflects your life – fall on his mercy now. Trust your soul to Him.

2) Believer: Root deeper in His love and His commitment for His body that you are a part of. As you do – you will be moved

- To remember who you are – each day.
- To toot out your allegiances to others that call for you to serve them above Christ.
- To see and believe your purpose is playing your unique part in the body of Christ. You are needed and you need the body for the master to make the music he desires.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:27 (ESV) Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

When we are baptized into Christ, we have a new identity that changes everything.