

Sermon for 6th June

Kingdom Identity

Intro

Morning everyone, it is great to be with you today in your homes or wherever you are watching this.

A couple of weeks ago, Akhtar spoke to us about Kingdom Authority and how... Jesus' death and resurrection opened up to us the gift of authority that we can have in His name. He talked about how we need to hold tight to Jesus.

Last week Pastor Steve spoke about Kingdom Gifts and how God wants us to walk in the fulness of all He has for us...

This week we are looking at Kingdom Identity.

I don't know whether any of you used to have or currently have a fish sticker in your car? I think it was quite common back in the 90s for Christians to have this fish symbol in their cars. When I was younger my parents had a fish sticker in the back of their car- my Dad possibly still has a fish today. It was a way of identifying us as Christians and witnessing, even in our cars! You did have to be careful how you drove though if you were telling everyone that you were a Christian. Even today when I see a fish in someone's car I get excited and I say to my husband, 'look, a fish, they're a Christian!'

I wonder today, apart from a fish in our car or a cross necklace around your neck, what are some of the things that would identify us as Christians?

Being a Jesus follower or a Jesus People isn't just a nice idea or something we do on a Sunday on the 'church day' but it is an identity that encompasses every part of our lives every day. It affects how we respond to situations, how we view our life, how we treat others and how secure we are as people.

Today I pray that we would each be reminded that our identity comes from being children of God, loved, freed and forgiven. And in being secure in who we are, may we be emboldened to share Jesus with others and see them step into their Kingdom Identity.

Read Romans 8:11-17

'And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.'

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 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." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-

heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.'

1) We are led by the Spirit of God.

The first thing that jumps out to me from Romans 8 is that as Jesus People we live according to the Spirit of God in us. We no longer live according to our flesh which means we no longer live for ourselves and what we want and desire... but we say 'Spirit of God, you give me life and so I desire what you desire.'

In Galatians 2:20 Paul says, 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.'

What he is saying is that through what Christ did for us on the cross, we can receive life in Him and we no longer live for ourselves but we live in light of what Jesus has done for us.

There's a total abandonment to Jesus, a total surrender to the Spirit of God in us.

As Kingdom people with the Spirit of God in us, we must look and sound and feel different to the world. We don't chase a career because it's what we want, we don't buy a new car because it's what we want, we don't make decisions based on what we want but we say, Jesus I am abandoned to you, it is no longer I who live but you who live in me and I want you to guide my life.

The other day I went through the McDonald's drive through and as I went to pay I had a crazy thought- what if I just offered to pay for the people's meal behind me? I had actually seen someone do that on a YouTube video and I was like maybe I should do it! And then I just paid for myself and carried on and enjoyed my Mcflurry... but what if I had followed that prompting to be generous and what if that was the Spirit of God in me saying, be generous, be kind.

Individualism is huge today- I'm just looking out for myself, what do I gain from this, how do I feel.

When we live for ourselves we make decisions based on what we want. When we live for God's Kingdom, His rule and reign, we look to serve the needs of others- Jesus says that He came to serve, not to be served. We look to help others and love others the way that Jesus loves us and gave his life for us.

It's a challenge and I am no way perfect in this. But my prayer is God, help me to see this situation as you do, help me to be led by your Spirit in how I respond. Help me to look different to the world around me.

Once I had a friend who was in need and so Josh and I decided to pay for a month's rent for them. They were so blown away and they said 'I don't deserve this.' We didn't cover their rent because they deserved it, we did it because we loved them and we wanted to help them. And it reminded me that I didn't deserve Jesus to die on the cross for me, but He did, because He loved me and wanted to serve me. If God himself loves me that much, how can I not love the people around me?

C S Lewis wrote this in his book, Mere Christianity:

“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”

Kingdom Identity means that we invite the very Spirit of God to give us life and to change us from the inside out.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, ‘if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here.’

We receive a new kind of life when we follow Jesus. We receive hope, healing and forgiveness. We are led differently and motivated differently.

Story of Paul- an incredible example of what it means when Jesus takes someone and changes their life- you can read about Paul’s conversion in Acts 9.

Paul went from persecuting Christians to becoming a Christian and sharing the Gospel. His life totally changed when he came to know Jesus and his decisions were motivated from a totally different place.

Kingdom identity means being led by the Spirit of God in us... no longer living for ourselves but living for God and His agenda, not our own. It involves total surrender and serving the needs of others around us, allowing Him to shape us as He wills.

2)We are children of God and we call him Abba, Father.

Secondly, in being led by the Spirit of God it means that we are children of God and we can call him, Abba, Father.

When I was 19 I did a discipleship school with YWAM. A part of the programme was learning about the nature and character of God and as we started to look at this I realised that there was a fundamental part of God’s character that I didn’t really know, and that was Him as a Father.

I remember waking up one night- we were doing a mission in a town in Australia sleeping on a church floor and I was so restless- I didn’t think it was just because I was on a church floor but it was as if God was drawing me to Him. So I got up and I woke up a leader and together we started praying. And I felt God say to me, Susie you are asking for more of me but until you understand that I’m your heavenly Father and you’re my daughter you won’t experience the fulness of all I have for you. I knew God as my Lord and my Saviour but not as my Father. And when I had a revelation of Him as my Father it was like he poured his heavenly Father love into my heart and I saw myself differently and I saw Him differently. I found a new closeness in my relationship with Him. I found an

affirmation and a sense of divine protection and I noticed that I stopped caring as much about what others thought of me. I experienced a sense of freedom and almost 10 years later I can still say that knowing God as my Father brings such a closeness in my relationship with Him and a confidence in who I am.

In Matthew 6 when Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray, he starts the prayer by saying, 'Our Father in heaven.'

God wants us to know Him as Father. A Father who loves us, who is trustworthy, faithful and true. A Father whose love for us never changes, never comes and goes, never lets us down.

If we can grasp our identity as children of God I think it will change our lives. We will know a love and a security that can never be shaken.

1 John 3:1 says, 'see what great love the Father has lavished on us that we may be called children of God. And that is what we are.'

If you are led by the Spirit of God you are a child of God. That is your Kingdom Identity. That is who you are.

3)We are co-heirs with Christ. - verse 17.

If we are led by the Spirit of God, we are children of God and thirdly we are heirs and co-heirs with Christ.

This blows my mind! I still don't think I can quite comprehend how incredible this is and what it means for my identity- that me and you are heirs and co-heirs with Christ.

Not all children are heirs but if you are a child of God you are guaranteed an eternal inheritance. We don't need to wonder whether or not we will partake in it or be good enough to receive it- if we are children of God then we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

Galatians 4:7 says, 'You are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.' "Everything that God owns belongs to us as well because we belong to Him. Our eternal inheritance as co-heirs with Christ is the result of the amazing grace of God."

There is no other greater inheritance in the universe than what we will receive as children of God. There will be suffering along the way- Jesus told us that in this world we would have trouble, but has overcome the world (John 16:33) and we share in Christ's suffering as well as His glory.

We don't need to live in fear, we don't take the place of a slave but of a child and an heir.

As I was preparing this I was filled with I sense of awe and deep gratitude.

I thought, what have I done to deserve an inheritance like this? And I realise nothing, it's all because of love, not what I have done to deserve it. Not how worthy I am, but how worthy Jesus is.

Our kingdom Identity is that we are loved so much, that Christ gave His life for us so that we could be called children of God, have relationship with the Father and inherit eternal life. And nobody is outside of this love. God so loved the world- the whole world, every single person, that he gave us Jesus.

Tim Keller says- *“The **gospel** is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”*

When we give our lives to Jesus, He fills us with His Spirit, we are adopted into God’s family and we receive an eternal inheritance.

Application Points:

In closing, I’d love to invite you to do 3 things.

- 1) Invite the Spirit of God to lead you.

Invite God’s Spirit to lead you. Listen to Him and ask Him to help you live a life that is governed by His Spirit and His agenda, not yours. Invite God’s reign and rule into every area of our lives. Maybe He is asking you to be extremely generous, to forgive someone, to pay for someone else’s McDonald’s at the drive through!

To identify as Kingdom People means to be led by God’s Spirit...

- 2) Come to know God as Father. You don’t have to earn this or strive for this because Jesus has made it possible for you. Read passages like Romans 8, 1 John 3-4 and ask God to give you a revelation of his Fatherly love for you. When I encountered God as a Father I started addressing him as ‘Father’ in my conversation and prayer life with Him. I read a book called The Father Heart of God by Floyd McClung...

- 3) Share your story with someone this week.

There is something powerful about sharing our story with people... we all have a story about how God is at work in our lives. Our story as Kingdom people, Jesus People is that we belong to God and we can call Him, Father and that He is working in our lives.

1 Timothy 2:4 says that God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. How will other people know God as Father if we don’t talk about Him with them? Be bold, be led by His Spirit in you and this week share a testimony with someone about how God has moved in your life.

If we can grasp the security available to us as children of God, I really believe it can change our lives.

I want to close by reading from Romans 8:38-39 over us:

'For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

Pray- Father, thank you that you love us and nothing can ever separate us from your love and that you call us children.

- some have experienced God as Father before but it's not an ongoing relationship. If you would come to Him today as His child, He wants to remind you of His heavenly Father love for you.

Further Notes:

Being a Jesus-follower and having Kingdom Identity means:

- 1) We are led by the Spirit of God.
- 2) We are children of God and we call him Abba, Father.
- 3) We are co-heirs with Christ.

Application:

- 1) Walk in the Spirit today.
- 2) Encounter God as your Heavenly Father.
- 3) Share your testimony with others.

Colossians 3:1- set our minds on things above- as Kingdom people, Jesus followers, we know there is an inheritance in the life to come and we fix our eyes not on earthly things but on heavenly things.