

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**May 5, 2024. "Who am I? How can I discover who I am? We were made to live a life of celebration. Joy"**

### **I Intro.**

Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. We don't want you to miss out on anything. So, make sure you stay connected to keep informed. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

### **II Sunday.**

Here we go...a brand new series. There's always a little bit of excitement when we start a new journey. And this one is especially interesting. More and more scholars, sociologists, people who study human behavior in individuals and groups, are all saying that one of the greatest causes of the division, social strife, and anxiety we're seeing today is from lack of personal identity. We don't know who we are. With church attendance down. People don't belong to social organizations like they did in the past. And we're still suffering the effects of COVID. All of these push us to hyper individualism and isolation. In all of this we don't know who we are anymore. I'm not saying we were actually the groups and organizations we belonged to. All of us are infinitely more complex than that. But we're missing out on the social, communal aspect of self-discovery. And that is the purpose of this series. To help us all walk through some sort of understanding of what makes us...us. Unique, beautiful creations, divinely designed. And to find purpose and meaning through all that. So, some starting questions before we start this journey.

**Who do you say you are? (Not what you do, role you fill, or what you like. But who are you?)**

**Who would others say you are?**

We laid a lengthy foundation down about some understandings of identity before we hit our scripture. We will include that list in this devotional, but won't list them again. We will briefly hit this at the start of each message. But this will be the most in depth description of the series.

#### **1. Our identity is a combination of inherent traits and environment and experiences affecting those traits.**

The first big question. Nature vs. Nurture? The answer is YES! We each have innate characteristics and traits that operate within parameters. They're in our genes. (i.e. Temperament. Extrovert vs. Introvert. Spontaneousness. Physical attributes. Skills. Athletic ability. Intelligence) Also we are continually being formed by experiences and the world around you. (i.e. Upbringing. People in your life. Experiences. Significant events) You are an

aggregate of everything in your life. And it all affects the essence of 'you'. A huge part of discovering who we are is identifying all these factors. There are some core traits, but they are influenced by things around you. Which will lead to different variations of you. **Understanding this truth will help you accept inborn things about you, and how your experiences have shaped those in discovering who you are.**

**2. Sometimes we're the role we have to fill.** We're one way at school, work, in public, at church, and at home. We can feel divided like we have multiple personalities. Having to be so many different people in all the different responsibilities and roles we fill. The discovery of who you are will feel different depending on what role you're having to fill. This requires being aware of how the roles you have to fill enhance or suppress you. **Understanding this truth will help you frame what often feel like contradictions in who you think you are.**

**3. There is one constant in our constantly evolving self. The image of God.** There is a divine presence within us that was implanted by God, to guide us as we go through life. This is the foundation we hope to build this month-long series on. Any questioning or struggle to wrap our minds around this will make all of these other truths less stable. With all of the things swirling in and around you influencing who you are, how we see ourselves has to be rooted in the truth of an inner divine nature. There's a divinely designed, dependable, trustworthy identity inside you that serves as an anchor and connection to God. We all have it. And it looks different in each one of us. **Understanding this truth will help you find a solid place to stand while you and the Holy Spirit do the work of discovering who you are.**

**4. Integration vs Disintegration.** We're going to break our identity down into specific divine, intentionally placed traits. So, when we understand them, tap into that unique 'what makes me...me', we can experience an **integrated self**. There is a current movement in understanding of self around the idea of being integrated vs disintegrated. Experts are discovering the importance of being integrated. Having an internal sense of harmony, united in heart, mind, body and soul. Being 'integrated' leads to a healthy state of being. Psychologists, and mental health experts have discovered the root of mental health issues, anxiety, depression, and even physical health issues, from what's called 'disintegration' or being internally fragmented, divided, conflicted. There's a good bit of scripture that shows this truth. Bottom line is this truth. In the discovery of who we are, the goal for this series is to become fully integrated. To find God. For our inner world to be at peace, in agreement with our outer self. We can see and admit our shortcomings, personal weaknesses we battle. But they do not define who we are. No shame. No condemnation. We don't let those internal struggles or weaknesses keep us in a divided state. From ourselves, from each other, or from God. Doing this well, discovering who we are, will help us deal with the inner turmoil we all wrestle with. Which will help us be better 'us's' in the world. We'll have healthier relationships. And make the world a better place.

**5. Identity is found in relationship.** Identity has to be formed in relationship with something else. Answering who I am has to happen in context to what is around us. You cannot find who you are disconnected from everything. **No light without dark. No heat without cold.**

This will be a very 'teachy' instructional series. With the greater purpose of helping us become more aligned with how we were made.

One final word before we dive into scripture and today's theme; 'we were made for joy'. We talked about joy around Advent. But this will be about the joy of life. There is joy inside you. Whether you feel it or not...it's in there. Sometimes it catches us off guard when we experience it, because we weren't expecting it. Often the reason we don't feel joy isn't because things aren't happening the way we think they should be. I want to propose this; We're not experiencing joy because our inner world, who we believe we are, is in disintegration. There's a part of us that thinks we're supposed to be a certain way. Life is supposed to be a certain way. And it's not." The problem ISN'T there's something wrong with us. The problem is; we don't know who we really are.

So...**Who am I?** I believe we were made to celebrate and experience joy. And if we're not...and there are so many times none of us are. Then we have to be brave enough to figure out why we aren't. And this first truth is grounded in just one truth.

The scripture we used Sunday was **Psalms 98**. It's a short passage. Read it and we'll talk about it.

**What jumped out to you about this passage?**

**What elements that speak to experiencing joy did you see?**

This is the first big truth and the heart of experiencing the joy that is central to our identity. God is continually doing the work of salvation. God is doing everything to help bring us back to him. EVERYTHING!! We were created to enjoy all God has given us. But what does this mean? Your identity, who you are, every fiber of your being, NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, is a 'child of God'. This isn't some quaint cliché phrase, or an indefinable concept. This is at the very core of who you are. Whether you're a mom, dad, wife, husband, daughter, son, employee, neighbor, co-worker. Introvert, extrovert, loud, serene, straight, gay, no matter race, ethnicity, or any other descriptor we use to describe each other and ourselves. God calls us his children. And every little thing he does is to bring us back to him. He has devoted himself to our salvation. To redeem us back to him. And there is joy planted deep within us, that we can fully experience when we consider the work God is doing. Jesus said in John 17 that our joy will now be complete. And this is the work of integration. Being united. At one.

### **III Wrap up and Challenge.**

That's it! That's the first understanding for our first Sunday of this series. We all drift, mess up, let selfishness take over, and believe lies about us. We let the world decide and define who we are. But know joy is already placed inside of us. It is who we are. And it's awakened, woken up, when we fully embrace the truth God is for us. God is continually doing the work of salvation so that our joy will be complete. Who you are is fully loved, as you are, a child of God. That he continually pursues, and uses everything he can to woo you back. And what is experienced in that...is full on Joy.

THAT is who we are. Wake up your inner joy!