



FINDING IDENTITY IN CHRIST

WEEK FOUR - SATISFACTION

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... what would a successful season mean for your favorite team? Is it winning the National Championship? Is it beating the rival school? Or is your bar so low that you simply want to suck a little less than the year before?

OPENING PRAYER

God, Our Sustainer, help us to place our contentment in you.
God, Our Parent, thank you for calling us your children.

INTRODUCTION

This question of “what satisfies?” is not one that is simply reserved for sports teams and fan bases. It’s also a question that people frequently ask about their lives. “Am I happy with where I am and

what I'm doing? What would I like to change? What would get me to a place where I'm content with my life?" Then we get busy, dismiss the questions as philosophical nonsense, and go on about our lives. And yet, where consciously or subconsciously, those questions never really go away. Well, today, we'll take those questions out of the box as we continue our discussion of the elements that make up our identity in Christ and the incredible benefits that come with our faith.

Setup Question: How satisfied are you with your life? What would you change? Different job? Different paycheck? Different home? Better starting rotation for the Cardinals next season? Or are you satisfied with your life and wouldn't change a thing?

SCRIPTURE

This question is an important one, because it gets at a deeper issue. If you've noticed in this series, each element of our identity in Christ has addressed a problem that every human struggles with. Strength countered struggle. Connections countered loneliness. Meaning countered nihilism. (Yup, "nihilism"... Google it. 5 points for Pastor Mike.) Well, the question we just covered in the setup hints at a problem every human faces: *discontentment*. We always seem to be longing for more or different. Society says we need this phone or that car, this level of income or that level of looks to be happy. And social media doesn't help... everyone posts only the happy stuff and we yearn

to have the lives we see online that aren't real to begin with. It almost seems as if everything in our lives is designed to keep us *discontent*.

So, what's the solution? For that, we turn to a story from Jesus in the Bible. He's trying to explain to the crowd what their identity in Christ could be, why they should believe in him. So he tells them a story... a parable... about a pen for sheep. Anyone who doesn't go in through the gate is probably a thief trying to steal the sheep. But you know who is supposed to be there because they just go in through the gate. The crowd looks a little perplexed, so, Jesus explains it.

Read John, chapter 10, verses 9 and 10.

That last line is a good one to memorize. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (v10) Jesus didn't come so that we'd be pursuing unrealistic expectations of what our lives could look like based on commercials or the misrepresented lives of others on social media. Jesus didn't come so that we'd stay in our discontentment, longing for more in pursuit of a worldly definition of happiness. No, Jesus came so that we might have life, and have it to the full... *through him*.

Question 1: Discuss the Scripture. Feel free to go back and read the parable, too. What stands out to you about this line from Jesus? What does it mean to you to hear, as if Jesus were saying it to you now, "I came so that *you* may have life, and have it to the full"?

REFLECTION

The phrase “life to the full” is one that gets translated in different ways from the Greek. One version of the Bible says that Jesus came so that we’d be “satisfied.” (v10, NLT) So, if the issue we’re addressing is *discontentment*, then the element of our identity in Christ that is the solution is...

SATISFACTION

What does this “satisfaction” look like? Well, it comes from two places. First, we find greater satisfaction in our lives based on the *voice* we listen to. Jesus says, in verse 9, that anyone who enters through the gate will find safety. (v9, NFTE) So, what does it mean to enter the gate through him? Jesus gives us a clue. In the parable that Jesus tells us right before this scripture, he says, “my sheep will know my voice.” (v4, NLT) When we listen for the voice of Christ, when listen for the voice of truth, we find all these elements we’ve been talking about... strength, connection, meaning, and today, *satisfaction*. Or as Jesus put it, “life to the full.” But Jesus also mentions something else in this parable... a thief that will try to steal that satisfaction. That “thief” is all the voices that try to distract you from listening to Christ’s voice... the whisper in your ear that you’re not good enough or successful enough or happy enough. The voice of Christ says you are loved. You are enough. You are a sheep of the shepherd and will find safety in his pasture. Which voice will you listen to?

Question 2: What robs you of your satisfaction with life? What voices do you find yourself listening to instead of Christ's voice? What steals your perspective on who you truly are?

The second way we find satisfaction in our lives through Christ is where we place our identity. If the foundation of your identity is your job where you're trying to move up some ladder, in some hobby that is supposed to fulfill you... or if your identity is how you look, or how much money you make, or how good a parent you think you should be, or your grades as a student, or some other standard the world puts on you... if you try to define yourself by what the world says you should, you will never be satisfied with your life. So, what is the standard we are supposed to live up to? Simply, you are a child of God. That's it. That's all. Goodnight. This means there is no standard to live up to, there's nothing you have to do or achieve, there is no level of success or behavior or appearance... because you are *already* a child of God. Your jobs and hobbies and passions and roles in life are great. But they cannot be the *foundation* of who you are. They can be bricks that are stacked upon the foundation of who you are. But we need a foundation that is immutable, unshakable, one that can never be taken away. And that foundation is that you are a child of God.

Question 3: What would you say are the largest bricks that make up your identity? Which would hurt the most if they were taken away?

What makes it difficult for you to see yourself primarily as a child of God, and make that the foundation of your identity?

CLOSING

What good is a relationship with Jesus Christ? Well, it doesn't mean you'll always be happy. Jesus never promised us that. It doesn't mean everything will all of a sudden go your way. Jesus never promised that either. But when we listen to *his* voice, Jesus says we will find "pasture." Pasture means sustenance, comfort, safety, rest. When we listen for Christ's voice, commit to that relationship, and make the foundation of our identity that we are children of God, we find those things. We find sustenance... that is, we are no longer hungry for the things of this world that won't satisfy us and just leave us wanting more. We find comfort... knowing that no matter what we are struggling with, there is a God who is bigger than it all. We find safety... a God who is fighting battles for us we don't even know we are in. And we find rest... the ability to let go of the expectations that this world puts on us and simply *be* in the presence of our Savior and Creator and Sustainer. And all of those things put together... sound pretty satisfying.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.