

I. My Notes ... WWC message 12/13

II. Series: Advent 25

- Title: Who Are You?
- Text: John 1:19-23; Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 2:8-10
- Quote: The Advent season is that time when we seek to, in a manner of speaking, mute our memory of what has already happened, that we might brighten our joy that it happened. R.C. Sproul (Theologian, Author)

III. Introduction

- You might know someone like this, you might even be this person ... a young professional once shared how she was facing life. On social media she was that center of attention, always posting the remarkable things that were going on with excitement and a smile. At work she was driven, defined by achievements and promotions. At home she was the caretaker, the fixer. Everyone else's needs came first and she held everything together. None of these are bad things but they can certainly be exhausting when piled on top of each other. late at night, when the noise quieted, she admitted she didn't know who she really was. She felt like she was wearing masks—different identities for different audiences—yet none of them brought her peace. None of them gave her joy.

This story is not unique. Many of us live with that same tension. We are asked to define ourselves by what we do, what we own, or how others see us. And yet, beneath the surface, we long for something deeper—for an identity that is steady, true, and lasting.

- Advent speaks to this deep seeded cry and quest. John the Baptist was asked, "Who are you?" (John 1:19). He didn't claim titles or achievements. He simply said, "I am the voice... preparing the way of the Lord." His identity was rooted not in himself, but in the One who was coming—the Prince of Peace, the Bringer of Joy. That's the invitation of Advent: to lay down the masks, the restless striving, and to discover who we truly are in Christ. People of peace because He has reconciled us. People of joy because His good news breaks

into our darkness. The question we are looking at is - today - Who are you? - is one which we must answer in this Advent season. This quest calls us to answer not with what the world demands, but with what Christ declares.

IV. The Question

- In this time of preparation, of waiting, we can get lost. Part of getting ready is prioritizing. One of these priorities should be, “who am I because of Jesus?” Understanding our identity is important. Knowing what drives you ... values, beliefs, abilities, and purpose, is key to this self-awareness. It is essential to “growing in grace” (2 Peter 3:18) in daily life.
- Let’s look at an example of one who understood his identity.
- **John 1:19-23 NCV**

19 Here is the truth John told when the leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, “Who are you?”

20 John spoke freely and did not refuse to answer. He said, “I am not the Christ.”

21 So they asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”

He answered, “No, I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?” they asked.

He answered, “No.”

22 Then they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to tell those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

23 John told them in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

“I am the voice of one

calling out in the desert:

‘Make the road straight for the Lord.’”

- The birth of John the Baptist is foretold in Luke chapter 1. It might have made it a bit easier on his parents to understand what he was destined for. Being born to older parents must have presented some challenges growing up. But it also shaped John to who he was. His life was marked by humility, by sacrifice, by dedication. These are character traits he must have learned from his parents. Understanding purpose and being grateful for the simple basics

marked the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth ... it marked John's life (and ministry) too.

- There were many people looking for answers, seeking truth, during this time of upheaval and oppression. They were expecting the Messiah or at the very least, another prophet to perform miracles and settle disputes. John had a remarkable ministry. It was one of simplicity and truth. It was a call to repentance (Matthew 3:2) and a baptism that signified that repentance (Matthew 3:11). John's life, his identity was about pointing others to the One who would "take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
- This is a great lesson for us today. No matter what circumstances we are facing (and some can be very difficult), we can point others to Jesus. We can rest in who the Lord says that we are. The world will try to identify you by what you have or what you can do. It's not that way in God's family. Because Jesus came, we can know what it means to be loved without condition or stipulation, we can understand forgiveness and be grateful for mercy. The way we do this ... point others to the One who did this for us by the way we live, the way we care, and the way we serve those around us.
- Today, during this Christmas season, there are people that are facing devastating circumstances. Whether it is loss or illness or setback of one kind or another, they have a need. A need that Jesus can meet. It isn't about what we do or what we have, it's about who we belong to.
- My identity is wrapped up in one thing ... my relationship with my Lord and Savior. Once I understand this, it shapes how I live with everyone else. *"11 He came to the world that was his own, but his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who did accept him and believe in him he gave the right to become children of God."* (John 1:11-12 NCV).

V. The Answer

- Let me say this ... peace, the peace that many are searching for, is not the absence of conflict – it is the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. It is understanding that He is there, with us, always.
- The Prophet Isaiah spoke about the identity of the Messiah.
- **Isaiah 9:6-7 NASB**

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness, From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

- So many associate peace with quiet. Peace can be found in the difficulties, in the storms, in the noise that life brings. What I have come to understand is that peace comes from our bond, our connection with our Lord. *“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God.”* **(Romans 5:1-2 CSB).**
- Allow me to share a quote with you that I love ... “My deepest awareness of myself is that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ and I have done nothing to earn it or deserve it.” (Brennan Manning). This understanding will allow any person to find peace in the middle of any circumstance.
- As believers, we are not identified by our past mistakes or failures, we aren’t broken people unable to find healing or hope, nor are we incomplete and insignificant. This shalom brings wholeness in our person and spirit.
- This Advent season allows us to be the voice that points others to peace and hope. As we answer the question of who we are because of Jesus, we can help others see who they are because the Messiah came to show them mercy and grace.

VI. The Result

- Peace brings a viewpoint which opens the door to joy-filled living. It is a joy that every person is meant to experience.
- The announcement of the Messiah’s arrival tells us this.
- **Luke 2:8-10 CSB**

8 In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them,

and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: 11 Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

- This proclamation was made so that everyone would know that the Messiah had come. It is for all of us. Think about that. People you agree with, people that you like, even people who are friends can hear the declaration of the Good News. The Messiah has come; His name is Jesus. He brings with Him an extraordinary joy that transcends circumstances.
- This season is not (nor was it ever) a passive one. It is a proclamation of hope, peace, joy, and love. And it is for every person. Even the never mentioned, the forgotten, the ones who feel they have no worth or value. And for those who stand opposite you, who irritate and don’t get you, who are disagreeable at every opportunity ... this Good News and great joy is for them too.
- We (believers) are the witnesses. We have traveled all over the world declaring that peace, love, and hope come through Jesus Christ. This is done in simple ways; it has been done in big ways. The truth of “joy unspeakable” is contained in the connection we have with Jesus Christ the Lord.
- This active proclamation takes on a fresh meaning each Christmas season. We are reminded of the great joy that accompanied our Lord and Savior. And we do our best to be a little more kind, more understanding, more of the people that we want to be.

VII. Final Thought

- Imagine traveling internationally. Each time you cross a border, you’re asked for your passport. Without it, you’re uncertain, anxious, even fearful. But when you hand over that passport, stamped with your true citizenship, the doors open. You are recognized, welcomed, and secure.
- Our world constantly asks us for “proof” of identity—through achievements, possessions, or appearances. But Advent reminds us that our true passport is stamped with Christ’s peace and joy.

- Peace is the seal that says: You belong to God, reconciled and whole.

- Joy is the mark that says: You are welcomed into His kingdom with gladness.

- When the question confronts you—“Who are you?”—you don’t have to scramble for answers. You hold out your passport in Christ. You are a citizen of His peace, a bearer of His joy, and a witness to the promise and expectation of His return.
- And just as a passport gives you access to new lands, Christ’s peace and joy give you access to a new way of living—steady, radiant, and ready for His return.
- We get to live, every day, with our new identity – In Christ. We have been reconciled through His peace, we can live shining with His joy, and we are witnesses to the next Advent, to His coming kingdom.
- May the Prince of Peace guard your hearts, may the God of Joy fill your lives, and may the Spirit send you forth to bear peace and joy into a restless world.
- Let’s Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always