

## Title: “Identity Surrendered”

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Jer. 33:14-16

12/1/2024

**Service Readings:** Jer. 33:14–16; 1 Thess. 3:9–13 ; Luke 21:25–36

*An identity surrendered has become an identity reclaimed by Jesus through his suffering on the cross.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

It wasn't identity theft. That would have required that his identity be *stolen*. No, this was much worse. It was an identity *surrendered*. Traded for one much worse, one imperfect in every way, saturated in selfishness and greed. And it had been traded freely, handed over by his own accord. And it wasn't just him, but also she who did the same thing. There in that garden, Adam and Eve had been deceived. They had been told by the serpent that the identity God had given was just a glimpse of what it *could* be, what it *should* be, if they could only just get out of their creator's shadow. And they believed him. The lure of this new identity, one that promised to be even greater than what God had given, was just too tempting to ignore. And so they made the trade.

They handed over one reflecting God, one that attached them to this creator, for one reflecting Satan, one that bound them to this fallen angel. No, this was not theft; it was completely voluntary. And from that moment on men and women would be born with this corrupted, sinful identity. Bound to it by the chains of sin, and uninterested in any sort of restoration and reclamation of what was once surrendered.

Many years later a prophet would speak to the people of God about this identity surrendered. Yes, they had been chosen by God, *he had chosen them*, but *they* would continue to cling to this sinful identity handed down from generation to generation. They would pursue God with their lips, but remain attached to Satan by their actions.

And this prophet would speak into this identity crisis. He would point to the current siege from the Babylonians, and the final one that would destroy Jerusalem. He would proclaim that this was God's judgement against his people. Jerusalem would fall, the temple would be destroyed, the city walls torn down, and the people exiled to Babylon. And what then? Would their identity as God's chosen people, even though a sinful people, be taken from them? Would God abandon his people, abandon his pursuit of reclaiming for himself what was once surrendered? That was the question that Jeremiah spoke to:

<sup>14</sup>Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup>In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup>In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

This was the answer from God, this was his response to the people. A covenant had been made by God to his people. That covenant had been broken by his people. But the covenant would be fulfilled in the

later days. Yes, God's people would be delivered from the hands of the earthly enemy, but that freedom would only be a foretaste of what would come. And it would pale in comparison to the covenant promise, the one made long ago in the garden and renewed with Abraham. God would send a savior, not to free his people from earthly chains, but from spiritual ones.

And through this savior, God would do more than free his people, he would reclaim our identity that was once surrendered. This savior, Jesus, would break into creation, but not with a sinful identity but with one that was perfect in every way. He would not surrender it like Adam and Eve did, but would instead stain it by taking on the sins of all – making his perfect identity one that was sinful in every way. And he would subject himself, covered in sin, to the judgment of the father. And through this propitiation a way would be made for the restoration of our identities. An identity once surrendered would then be reclaimed by God. And it was, there on that cross. Our identity reclaimed.

And now today, in his mercy he offers us our restored identity through the power of his word and the waters of Baptism. From that moment on we become God's adopted children. No longer bound to Satan and the chains of sin, the identity once surrendered is now abandoned and a new one restored. And he seals us in his adoption by placing upon us his own name: "The Lord is our righteousness." We are his, and not sin, death, or the devil himself can steal or deceive what God has declared us to be.

Today we enter into the season of Advent with the recognition that what was lost has now been restored by the blood of Christ and given to us through the power of Baptism. And in the last days, the fullness of our identity will be revealed when at last we will live in the presence of God for all eternity.

I encourage you to spend time with God this month and reflect on what he has done for you through his son. Your true identity, one that loves and pursues God, one that lives to worship and glorify him, has been restored through your Baptism. Cling to this reality by faith as you await the day when your identity will be fully revealed and you will no longer be tempted by Satan to surrender what Christ has reclaimed for you.

And now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. For in Him, your true identity stands secure – not because you cling to it, but because He who has called you by name in the waters of Baptism continues to claim you as His own. Your identity is hidden with Christ in God, sealed by His promises, and preserved by His grace until that day when we shall see Him face to face. Go in peace, bearing the name that He has placed upon you: child of God, heir of heaven, marked by the cross of Christ forever. Amen.