



Sermon Notes

Term –

Series – Identity

Gathering & Date – 29th April 10 & 5

Title – Embracing His Choice

Preacher – Andrew Stansbury

Reading – 1 Peter 2.2-10/Ephesians 2

Main message of this talk in one sentence – Our identity as followers of Jesus is ultimately God's choice, not ours – Will we allow His opinion of us to become our own opinion of us?

Main points –

Intro: Identity isn't a static thing – it is always growing, developing and unfolding. God longs to reveal more of Himself to us and as He does so, our understanding of who we are expands and develops because we are made in His image – the more we see of Him, the better we see & understand ourselves

Maturing to Childlikeness – Romans 8.14 says: *“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”* As Chris taught a few months ago – to be a follower of Jesus means to walk the road of life in union with Jesus. To let Him lead us and shape our opinions/directions.

If following Jesus means being led by Him in union with Him, and those who are led by The Spirit are children of God, then maturity looks like childlikeness because being a child of God means being led by God, and being led by God is what following Jesus is all about!

Do we allow God to lead us by pointing out areas of growth exposed by our emotional reactions? When we get angry/grumble/disheartened/discouraged/fearful etc, do we ask God what He unhealth He wants us to see is being exposed in that moment of reaction? Are we allowing Him to lead us in our personal growth, or do we just point the finger at others/external causes without letting God lead us internally?

If we don't want Him to lead us in our personal growth we can't grow in identity because children of God follow His lead and often He wants to lead us within ourselves to see where we need healing/transformation/change!

The Unfinished Sentence – in Luke 15 the younger son doesn't get to finish His sentence when he is asking for the father's forgiveness – he is interrupted by the father. The son wants to ask to be a servant, but the son doesn't get to choose his identity – it is the father's choice!

We do not create ourselves – we are created by God and are therefore defined as He defines us.

Unworthiness & Independence can hold us back from this. Either thinking of ourselves very lowly despite God's opinion of us, or we want to define ourselves by our own efforts and achievements as opposed to embracing His definition of us.

Embracing His Opinion, Embracing His Choice – Humility is embracing God's opinion as our own. Choosing to allow His thoughts to define our thoughts – to give ourselves to Him in every way, including how we see ourselves!

Will we each give ourselves fully to God, allowing Him to lead us in our personal growth exposing internal growth opportunities through exploring our reactions? Will we embrace His opinion about us as our opinion about us?

For further thought and prayer (QUESTIONS)–

1. Read out loud together the following 2 declarations – how do they make you feel? Do you find them easy to say? Do you think 'what's the point in doing this'? Why? Talk together and share thoughts as to your internal dialogue when saying the below out loud:

⁹ But we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.

¹⁰ Once we were not a people, but now we are the people of God; once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy.

1 Peter 2.9-10 (adapted)

¹⁴ For if I'm led by the Spirit of God, then I am a child of God.

¹⁵ The Spirit I received does not make me a slave, so that I live in fear again; rather, the Spirit I received brought about my adoption to sonship. And by him I cry, "Abba, Father."

¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with my spirit that I am one of God's children.

¹⁷ Now if I am a child, then I am also an heir—heir of God and co-heir with Christ, if indeed I share in his sufferings in order that I may also share in his glory.

Romans 8.14-17 (adapted)

2. What caught your attention/stood out in the above declarations? What could God be saying to you through that thing?
3. Do you allow God to explore with you your reactions and the underpinning beliefs they display? What tools/ways of doing this can you share that might help others to grow in this?
4. What holds you back from embracing God's opinion of you as your opinion of yourself (be honest...!?)
5. Look at Ephesians 2 (Next page) and make a list of what God chooses to do in the scripture and what effect it has on us. I.e. what are the causes and what are the effects in the passage and who is responsible for the causes?

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh^[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. **6** And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **7** in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.**8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast. **10** For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— **12** remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **15** by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, **16** and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. **17** He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. **18** For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.