

A Renewed Identity

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[0 : 00] We want to hear what God has to say to us, and God speaks clearly and infallibly to us in his word. So we come to a part in our service now, which is really the high point of our service, which is when we get to hear God's word being read.

So this is the same passage that Anna Lauren was just reading a second ago with the children. It's from Luke chapter 4 and verses 1 to 13.

So this is the word of God. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.

Jesus answered, It is written, Man does not live on bread alone. The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

[1 : 18] And he said to him, I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.

So if you worship me, it will all be yours. Jesus answered, It is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand in the highest point of the temple. If you are the Son of God, he said, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully.

They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Jesus answered, It says, Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. This is God's word.

[2 : 30] Thanks, Dale. Good morning, everyone. It's lovely to be with you again this morning. So as Neil was saying, we're going to be looking at Luke 4, verses 1 to 13, as the kind of topic for this morning.

I was reading a poem by a famous German Christian thinker called Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the poem is called, Who am I? And in the final verse of this poem, He has this line, Who am I?

They mock me, These lonely questions of mine. How do you answer the question, Who am I? In the past, this would have involved staying, maybe your place of birth, your family, your occupation.

But in our world today, the answer is a little bit more complex than that. We are a culture that wants to self-identify. We want to carve out our own sense of identity.

And to be honest, I get it. And I appreciate the desire to construct your own identity, because if you believe that the universe is largely meaningless, and there is no big overarching narrative behind the universe, and therefore behind your life, it's clear that you must take steps to carve out your own identity.

[3 : 55] And so the question, Who am I? becomes almost impossible to answer, as our journey through life will change and diverge, and sometimes we'll need to make tweaks and changes as to how we describe who we are.

And this can leave us confused and increasingly anxious as we grapple with who we really are. As Christians, we believe that our identity is revealed through the person of Jesus.

And when we examine the life of Jesus, we're shown God, but we are also shown ourselves. And the passage that we have read in Luke shows us that God frees us to enjoy who we truly are through the obedient work of Jesus.

And this is the good news I want to share with you today. So as we step into the world of the Bible, we soon discover that the struggle to determine our true identity is not a modern phenomenon, but it's always existed.

The first temptation by the devil in the Garden of Eden was for Adam to create a new identity for himself, an identity which excluded God. The same devil comes again in this passage and tempts Jesus to create a new identity for himself, apart from his loving Heavenly Father.

[5 : 21] But unlike Adam, Jesus refuses to buy the lies of the devil, and by so doing, restores our original identity as children of God.

So as we go through this passage, and as we think through this idea of identity, we're going to do that in three parts. Firstly, we're going to look at it as the failure of a do-it-yourself identity. Then we're going to see how Jesus embraces his true identity. And then finally, we're going to see the joy of having a renewed identity. So let's think about the first part.

The failure of a do-it-yourself identity. I don't know about you, but I hate going back to square one. You've tried so hard to make some form of progress, but you're just not getting anywhere. You've tried lots of different tweaks. You've tirelessly thought out the alternative options, but eventually there comes a time when you just need to hit the reset your password button.

[6 : 27] And the story of Jesus's temptation is a moment of reset. It's about going back to square one and starting again. And it's a decisive step in the direction of restoration.

To get to the heart of this, we need to have a little bit of a history lesson. Last week, we looked at the story of Jesus's baptism, and we heard God declare to Jesus and to the crowds, you are my son, whom I love, with whom I am well pleased.

And after this ringing endorsement, Luke does a curious thing next. Luke decides what comes next is this rather long and largely unpronounceable genealogy, which starts in verse 23 of chapter three, and it opens with these words.

He was the son, so it was thought of Joseph. And the family line of Jesus is then explained and ends with the last entry, the son of Adam, the son of God.

That's quite interesting. Two men who have the same title, son of God. Both men had no human father. Both were sons and loved and chosen by God.

[7 : 51] But both are contrasting figures, and Luke really wants us to grasp how different these two sons of God are. So first, we have Adam, who in the book of Genesis, succumbs to the lies of the devil and seeks to find his identity outside of God.

He no longer wants to bow the knee to God, but he wants to become like God. And Adam, in trying to determine his own identity, severs the father-child relationship he has with God, and the blessings of intimacy with God as a father are gone.

Adam's failure to obey, his failure to resist temptation, brings a deep loss, which is now the experience of every human. Gone is our identity as those who enjoy and experience the loving fatherhood of God.

And now we are defined as being far from God. Within the story of Adam's rebellion against God, there, however, lies a promise.

And the promise was that there would come a time when that great liar, the devil, would be crushed. But in the crushing, he would bruise the one who would come to crush him.

[9 : 09] As we build up to the temptation story, Luke is going to show how Jesus is the promised serpent crusher. Jesus is the second Adam.

And in this chapter, he is about to enter onto the stage and restore humanity's lost identity. Jesus will live the life Adam could not live and that we cannot live.

This second Adam will perfectly obey God the Father and through his obedience, our true and best identity will be restored. And this will lead to the reestablishing of our place in God's family.

So we've seen how Adam had failed to create an identity for himself. But now we're going to see how Jesus embraces his true identity.

And as we look at the passage, we zoom in on the battlefield of temptation. We know that the devil is offering Jesus some really tantalising opportunities to reimagine his identity.

[10 : 17] The devil is seeking to persuade Jesus to escape from the hard path of obedience and suffering that was appointed for him to overturning the consequences for all humans due to Adam's sinful disobedience.

in verse 3 we have the devil speaking to Jesus and saying, if you are the son of God tell this stone to become bread. Straight out of the trap the devil is trying to lay the seeds of doubt as to who Jesus really is.

If you are. I know you've heard God declaring from heaven that you are his son and that he's really pleased with you but what kind of father would allow his boy to starve in the desert?

Go on. You have the power to transform these stones into bread. Just go on. Go and do it would you? The devil is really striking at the heart of what it meant for Jesus to be the son of God.

Jesus had come to obey his father and not to please himself not to satisfy his own desires and so Jesus resists but let's not be fooled.

[11 : 30] Resisting for Jesus was hard it was difficult. Every temptation that the devil brings before Jesus is a real temptation for Jesus.

In verse 4 Jesus quotes the Bible and says man shall not live by bread alone and Jesus is declaring in this moment that he's battling the temptations of the devil as a human being.

He is identifying with all of us during the temptations. It was as a man that Jesus takes the stand against the devil's temptations.

He totally fought against Oscar Wilde's strategy to overcoming temptation when Wilde quit. The only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it. Jesus never yielded to the temptations of the devil. By verse 5 the devil lays before him a vision of a great kingdom. As the great liar the devil can promise Jesus a great kingdom but he can't deliver this.

[12 : 40] The devil is promising power and riches glory and fame. Jesus though he wasn't about gaining for himself power and riches.

He had come to save his people. He had come to overturn Adam's disobedience. He would one day receive a kingdom but he's going to receive it from the hand of his father.

To gain that kingdom he must continue to perfectly obey his heavenly father and he will choose to take the hard road of humble service, self-giving love and sacrificial suffering which had been appointed to him by his father.

The third and final temptation that Luke records happens in verse 9 and the third temptation is a strange one and the devil says let's go to the highest point in Jerusalem to the top of the temple and just throw yourself off the temple and you know what it's going to be an amazing spectacle because God's not going to let you hit the ground.

He's going to send his angels and they are going to catch you before your foot strikes the ground. It's going to be an amazing spectacle and you know what when people see this you are going to be treated like this great celebrity wonder worker.

[14 : 10] You can gain thousands of followers. It would make the perfect Instagram story. Jesus just sit back and enjoy the adulation and the acclaim of the crowd because God will have been forced to perform a miracle to save you.

Yeah, again Jesus resists in all his kind of, in all the temptation that's going on he continues to resist.

Jesus resists the idea of an easy life full of adulation and praise because Jesus knows a day will come when he will need to put his life in God's hands.

On Good Friday, Jesus will allow himself to be killed on the cross and as his life ends, he will cry out, Father into your hands I commit my spirit.

In that moment and in the days after, it looked that God had not come to his rescue, but by the third day, God the Father again declares to Jesus, this is my son with whom I am well pleased by raising him from the dead.

[15 : 39] In the desert, Jesus triumphs over the devil. He remains obedient. He succeeds where Adam and we have failed.

Jesus, in resisting the temptations, takes the first clear and decisive step towards restoring the losses that had come through Adam's disobedience.

Jesus will continue to live a life of perfect obedience to his Father. The temptations and the testings of the devil will not end at this point.

In verse 13, when the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Jesus, in resisting the continual temptations of the devil, will be perfectly obedient to his Father.

He will fulfil the will of his Father. And it's because Jesus was obedient to his Father that we can have a renewed identity, a fixed identity, an identity which is fixed in Jesus.

[16 : 53] And so our final point is a renewed identity. For those who accept to have their identity in Jesus, we no longer live with the pressure to define ourselves.

Through Jesus' obedience, we can identify ourselves as a child of God who is dearly loved because you're truly known.

And because you are truly known, this means that your deep need and the deep longing within your heart to be heard and acknowledged, to be loved and to be enjoyed can be met.

As the Gospel of John states in chapter one, but to all who did receive him, that's Jesus, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

As Christians though, how often do we lose perspective on who we truly are by listening to the lies of the devil? How often do we forget that Jesus has triumphed over sin and through his victory we are now children of God?

[18 : 11] How often do we forget that God is our heavenly father, that we can come to him with everything and anything? How easy it is for us to listen to the lies of the devil and enjoy living for ourselves rather than for God.

How quick we are to pursue the trappings and the riches which can be found in this world, rather than trusting God's plan for our lives.

lives. Sometimes we are even tempted to try to make God work on our behalf, to do things for us, so that we can look better to others, so that we can maybe have an easier life.

And so as Christians we struggle too with our identity. identity, and that means that we're really, there is no place for us to be judging others who are struggling also with their identity.

Cornerstone must be a place where we generously accommodate those who struggle with their identity. identity. Glenn Harrison, a fairly well known Christian psychiatrist, has written some really interesting articles on identity, and he calls us as the church to have this mindset, and I'm just going to read a little paragraph that he wrote on this.

[19 : 47] So he calls us as the church to have honest, authentic testimonies that allow people to see how, in one way or another, we all fall short.

Only then will Christian communities become beacons of hope and redemption for the most damaged, confused, and psychologically fragmented souls. Whether our confusion centres on issues of sex and gender, or the thirst for status and public recognition, in one way or another, we are all struggling to be reformed after Christ.

To conclude, I will read the next and the final sentence of Bonhoeffer's poem, Who Am I?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine. Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.

I pray that you know the joy and peace that comes from having your identity fixed in Jesus.

Genesis. Oh,