

“Learning Your Identity From The ‘Blessed Are (s)’”
Micah 6:1-8
Psalm 15
1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Matthew 5:1-12

God isn't looking for heroes, but for followers. Abraham Heschel, a critical thinker, and Hasidic Rabbi, wrote this about God's promise that faith has incredible rewards, one of which is discovering your identity in Christ. Heschel writes, “God is unwilling to be alone, and man cannot forever remain impervious to what He longs to show.”¹

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’” Being formed in faith through God's acts of justification, sanctification, and redemption, are a sign that the image of God is unlocked, growing, and solidifying one's identity in Christ. Faith is critical.

The texts in Micah 6:1-8, Psalm 15, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, and Matthew 5:1-12 clearly articulate characteristics of the identity Christians have in Christ. Christians do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Christians walk blamelessly, do what is right, speak the truth, do not slander, do no evil to your friends, do not take up a reproach against your neighbors, honor those who fear the LORD, stand by your oath even to the hurt, do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent. Christians proclaim Christ crucified and do not boast about self but in the Lord. Christians live and experience the Blessed are (s).

The text in Micah 6:8 lifts up these characteristics of the identity Christians have in

¹As cited in Samuel H. Dresner, editor, *I Asked for Wonder* (New York City, New York: Crossroad, 1983), 5.

Christ: Read Micah 6:8, “He has told you O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

This verse sums up biblical ethics succinctly.

The text in Psalm 15 lifts up these characteristics of the identity Christians have in

Christ: Read Psalm 15:1-5,

O LORD, who may abide in your tent? ...Who may dwell on your holy hill? Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart; who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbors....who honor those who fear the LORD; who stand by their oath even to the hurt; who do not lend money at interest, and those who do not take a bribe against the innocent. Those who do these things shall never be moved.

This text is a strong affirmation of the good news of forgiveness following a prayer of confession.

The text in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 lifts up these characteristics of the identity

Christians have in Christ: Read 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, “...but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Christian thinking and living is shaped by and rooted in the cross.

The text in Matthew 5:1-12 lifts up these characteristics of the identity Christians have in Christ: Read Matthew 5:1-12, “Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. And blessed are you when people revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” Practicing the beatitudes develops one’s relationship with God and others as

well as one's identity in Christ.²

The four lectionary texts reveal a comprehensive list of characteristics contained in the identity in Christ. Timothy Keller writes this about being anchored in the cross of Christ and its application for living one's new identity in Christ,

The sense of worth or value that comes through faith in Christ is arguably more secure than any other. It has several facets to it. First, there is the worth we have as God's creations. All human beings are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27), made to reflect many of God's own qualities and character...In addition, for Christians there is inestimable worth we have through what the Bible calls our adoption. Through faith in Christ we become God's loved children (Galatians 3:26-4:7).³

You are chosen and adopted. Ponder the impact of being chosen and adopted by God. Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Walk blamelessly, do what is right, speak the truth, do not slander, do no evil to your friends, do not take up a reproach against your neighbors, honor those who fear the LORD, stand by your oath even to the hurt, do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent. Proclaim Christ crucified, do not boast about self but in the Lord. Live and experience the Blessed are (s). Your sense of self and sense of self-worth can turn 180 degrees in a different direction right now. Amen!

This sermon was preached (for the In-Person, Online, and Village TV 6 congregations) on Sunday, 29 January 2023 by the Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, California

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²In the five paragraphs above of textual analysis, I have benefited from the thinking of Patricia K. Tull, Ken Evers-Hood, Eric Todd Myers, Charles L. Aaron Jr., Scott McKnight, Christopher T. Holmes, and Zaida Maldonado Perez in *Connections, Year A, Volume 1* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 209-212, 212-213, 214-215, 216-218, 218-220, 221-223 and 223-224.

³Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God* (New York, New York: Viking, 2016), 139.