

Identity Theft: Who gets to define who you are?

(Walk up song – who are you)

Main points:

1. Rejecting the truth of our identity leads to evil
2. We are image bearers, but fallen
3. Only the truth is loving
4. Jesus wants to set people free by giving them a new identity

What is going on?

We live in a time that is marked with things that would seem funny if not true.

- What are your pronouns?
- I identify as ...
- A man can get pregnant.
- Men should be allowed in women's sports, locker rooms, bathrooms, prisons if they claim to be a woman.

Last week Reijo talked about how suppressing the truth, or refusing to believe the truth leads to all kinds of delusions. I want to just start with one verse from last week.

2 Thess 2:9-12

The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

As things go along, more and more people get sucked into the delusion and evil propagates. One example of the evil that is being loosed is the transgender movement. Transgenderism is the idea that a person may have a male soul in a female body, or vice-versa (they wouldn't use those terms, but that is what they really mean). What is sad is that this bad idea seems to take hold in young people who may be struggling with their identity anyway. The adults around them, who should know better than to let a young person make life-altering decisions while not having a fully formed brain, or the ability to really comprehend long-term consequences of their actions, are pushing them along.

A little over a week ago there was an article about a nurse who worked in a pediatric gender clinic, Jamie Reed. She is blowing the whistle on the obvious harm being done to young people in the name of gender transition ideologies. She is not a Christian, or a "culture warrior", but someone who first hand is seeing the destruction evil can wreak. Children are being permanently harmed because people are believing the lie. We must not be afraid to speak the truth. Parents are told that going through this process will free their children from the depression and anxiety they have because they are unhappy with the body they were given. What is the real result? Massive disappointment. People are realizing

that mutilating your body, going on life-long medications, and living with painful side-effects from multiple surgeries doesn't do anything to alleviate the underlying issues. The core issue is:

Who am I, really?

What is being done to children at this point can only be called evil, and it is very sad that children fall prey to this madness.

As Andrew pointed out a couple of weeks ago, it is a battle of world views: Biblical vs Post-Modern. It comes down to this simple question: **who defines truth? Who defines who you are?**

A biblical worldview says God has revealed the truth.

The post-modern view says there is no such thing as truth, you get to define it as you wish.

A key problem with defining truth based on feelings on a personal level is that reality can be a harsh teacher. I can say that I don't believe in gravity and jump off the roof, but my belief will not buoy me up in the air. Unless I have a rocket strapped to my back or some other means of generating thrust and lift or at least slowing my descent, I'm hitting the ground hard. And at my age that would be ill advised.

Likewise, as the culture tries to re-write reality by use of language and pronouns and such, it doesn't change the reality:

Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

An important side note here is that language really does matter. It has long been known that the way to manipulate and turn a culture is to gradually change the meaning of words. We shouldn't yield such things as what is a man or a woman as an irrelevant side note. Truth matters.

Consider the worldview that young people are being exposed to and some believe or are pushed into believing. **Rather than believing each person is made in the image of the almighty creator, who made them a male or a female, they believe they might be a cosmic mistake. Their male soul, placed in a female body, or vice-versa.** As if they were made first thing Monday morning at the human factory and someone got the order wrong. Kids – as young as 12 – are having permanently life altering surgery, being given hormone blockers that have devastating effects on the body.

I'm going to confess right now that had I been growing up in this time of confusion, **I would have been a good target for this evil**...I was not very masculine, more sensitive, often lonely, depressed. I may have been someone who could have been made to believe the lie that I'm really a woman in a man's body. And if I changed my body, I would be happy! But as I matured and began to grasp who God made me to be, I am very content and happy to be the man God made me to be. How tragic if that had been stolen from me!

Again – reality is a hard teacher. What is happening to many of these young people is that after going through the process, not only are they not any more content or happy with who they are, they are now on permanent prescriptions and have constant physical pain and other issues which plague them, and will the rest of their lives. One young woman showed up at the clinic I mentioned above, a few years after "transitioning" and said she wanted her breasts back. This tragic. This is one area that the law does need to step in and stop people from messing with kids.

It's ironic, in a way, that the materialistic worldview that dominated America as I was growing up has now been replaced. Now people can hold these views that their souls and bodies are not one and the same but it also comes with the catch that whoever is in charge has such poor quality control they can't get it right. Compare this to God's revealed truth.

Created in God's image

Recognize that you a child of God. You have within the imprint of deity and a mandate to reign.

Gen 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth,^b and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Some important points here -

1. We were all made in the likeness of God. There is in us a similarity to the creator of the universe. As God is creative, so are we. As God changes his surroundings, so do we. As God has power to rule, so do we. This is POWERFUL information!
2. We are made MALE and FEMALE – it isn't complicated, and God wasn't confused when he thought of you. Are all men the same? No. Are all women the same? No. But there is distinction between men and women. It is biological. It is innate. **It is by design.**
3. We were made with a mandate to rule the earth. What that could mean would be for mankind to not let hunger, or disease, or the weather cause human suffering. We are to fill the earth with people and continually make it better!
4. We are made to be in God's family!

So how do we get such confusion?

But Fallen

Unfortunately mankind rebelled. Adam sinned and rejected God's perfect way. Every person since Adam are born into the sinful human race.

Ps 51:1-5 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

...

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

We were born in sin. At our very core all we've cared about is ourselves. Our needs. The reality is if you are not saved, not a follower of Christ you are on the road to destruction. We need to recognize two things:

1. **Unless you truly repent and believe, you are not saved. You are under a sentence of death already:**

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Why live under the sentence of death when life is available to you? If you have never really surrendered your heart, your life, your future to following Jesus and His ways, I want to encourage you to do that today. Don't wait so you can do what you want for a while before giving in to God's way. **You are only missing out on the good things God wants for you** and you run the risk of never again having the chance to dedicate your heart to Jesus. You are one step from here to destruction if you are on the wrong path.

2. You can deceive yourself.

The second implication of our fallen state is that we are deceived. We like to think we are in control, but we are being lead more than we realize. The devil is running the show down here. Social media has a strong agenda and your feed on youtube or tiktok is designed by people to get you to keep watching. More clicks by you means more money for them. These are tools the enemy uses to deceive and lead people to death. Sin is deceitful and powerful. Please take it seriously.

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Delusion of the heart. We all start there before we hear the truth and respond to it.

People – you can't follow your heart! This is a lie of the age. But Jesus came to set us free. You must lead your heart according to God's will and truth. If you walk in the Spirit you can do this!

John 8:32 You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

How do we discover truth?

When we mention world-views we really are talking about how we discover and define truth.

Biblical (Revelation)	Materialist (Observation)	Post-Modern (?)
Truth is defined by God God tells us (reveals) the truth	Truth is defined by what we can observe and measure.	There is no objective truth. I get to decide what is true.
Truth lines up with reality because God made both	Spiritual reality is ruled out by definition.	Often is at odds with reality.
Results in alignment and fulfillment	Results in despair, nihilism, and human atrocity	Results in despair, chaos, self destruction

Let's look at the example of transgenderism. God says, I made you! Male and female, I made you! Recognize that your maleness or femaleness is a physical reality. Within the materialist world view it cannot be denied that you have a biological gender. Every cell in your body has that defined in it. In fact, if you took all of the DNA strands out of your cells, and stretched them out end to end, they would go to the moon and back. 1500 times! No exaggeration, there are millions of miles of physical evidence to

define your gender. Why would we want to go against that? The post-modern view says, I will go with my feelings. I will define MY truth however I wish to.

The great lie!

This is what I think is The Great Lie. The powerful delusion sent upon those who refuse to love the truth.

Follow your heart.

This is the delusion of our age. I am what my base nature desires. If I want sex all the time I just go and do that. If I think I am a guy trapped in a girl's body, that's what I am. If I am a guy who is attracted to guys, that's what I am. If I am an adult who is attracted to kids, that's what I am.

We must realize again; our hearts start out deceived and wicked. What this really is saying is that you are defined by your sin. There is this great paradox of confusion which combines two thoughts:

On the one hand: You can define who you want yourself to be.

AND

But on the other: You can't change who you are.

At its core, it is a cruel bondage that sounds like freedom but results in chaos and death. That is why it is so vital for those of us who know the truth to step up and point the way to them. This is love:

Prov 24:11 Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. 12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?

There are a lot of church leaders who want to go along with the idea that you can be gay and be a Christian. Or be a queer, or trans. But what that is saying is that you should remain in your sin and stay a slave to sin.

And we do this with humility and grace. Why, because such were some of you. **All of us start out deceived and enemies of God** but because of the revelation of God's truth through the Word and the Holy Spirit we at some point heard the truth, humbled ourselves to repent, and God made us new. We aren't better than those who are lost, we have been rescued and must continue to try and rescue those who are still being led away.

Here is the message of hope – the world needs to hear:

1 Cor 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Is it good for the adulterer to keep cheating? The drunk to keep drinking? The swindler to keep stealing?

NO! It is far from the loving thing to do to leave people in bondage rather than leading them to the truth that can set them free.

If I was defined by my sin, I would be the sexually immoral man. I've shared from this pulpit years ago my struggle and deliverance from sexual impurity, and it can still be found on the church website sermon archives for those of you who want to hear it. I would be a slave to sin, had the Spirit of God not set me free. I'm not yet perfect, but I am free. Jesus came to set us free.

John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. 35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

How do we allow God to define who we are?

You are created in God's image, but fallen in sin.

Your heart is deceitful and wicked – you need a new one.

We are utterly sinful, we don't need rehab, but death and resurrection.

Isa 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

I come back to this because unless we recognize that nothing is redeemable from our old nature we will continue to struggle. We try to sanctify our sin and justify being a sinner because I was born that way. Again, not just sexual sin, but how about anger, laziness, gluttony, drunkenness.

"I was born this way" is not an excuse. It is, however, a true statement! In fact all of us were born sinful, so much so that even our best actions apart from God are "filthy rags". We must lay all that down and allow our sinful self to be counted crucified with Christ that we might then live.

So what will you choose? If you decide to agree with God, you then repent and ask for his cleansing forgiveness.

He will give you a new heart, and a new start.

Ezek 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28 You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

Getting on the Autobahn of Grace!

I want to help people find grace and be freed from the slavery of sin.

We need to stop walking around like a bunch of sad and bound up people. We have the greatest news of all time, the freedom to walk free from the burden of sin and death, and the paid in full right to be children of God, a brother or sister with Jesus, co-heirs with Christ! This is ours in Christ!

Tell others (tell yourself first):

God's grace is complete as is our salvation – Jesus saves us from our past and future sins

Heb 7:22b Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

The autobahn of grace means we can become free from the lusts of our past, because we are free!

Gal 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

The autobahn of grace means becoming who Jesus has created us to be. Alive! A child of God! A joint-heir with Christ!

I'm going to close with this passage.

Rom 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.