

“You Are My Beloved Son”
Mark 1:4-11
January 2, 2022
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

This morning, we return to the Gospel of Mark. This is a text that is especially appropriate for us this morning. This coming Tuesday is Epiphany – a day where the Church has often focused on the revelation of who Jesus is – specifically in the coming of the Magi, the first miracle of Jesus at Cana, and the baptism of Jesus, which we will read of this morning in Mark 1:4-11.

With that said, please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

Mark writes:

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Lord, look upon us and deliver us,
for we do not forget your word.
Be our advocate and redeem us,
and give us life according to your promise.
Great is your mercy, Lord,
and so we ask you to give us life according to your law.
Help us now to love your word,
and give us life according to your steadfast love.
The sum of your word is truth,
and every line of your word endures forever.
And so help us to attend to it now, and grow in your truth,
in Jesus’s name. Amen

[Based on Psalm 119:153-154, 156, 159-160]

Introduction

At the heart of our text this morning is the revelation of the identity of Jesus – a revelation that is made here not only to us, but to Jesus himself.

The Holy Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove, and then God the Father says to him, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

At the heart of our text is how Jesus is being told who he is.

And while the connection may not seem obvious at first, it’s a passage that also raises the question of how we know who we are.

Who are we? Or, to take it a step further, as Herman Bavinck does, we might even ask: *What are we?* [Bavinck, *Christian Worldview*, 29]

Now, as modern people, when we start thinking or talking about these questions, we usually begin to frame it in terms of “identity.”

And the modern concept of “identity” can be helpful, but we should also be careful about its limitations.

It’s worth noting that the word “identity” does not occur in the English Bible. Not in the English Standard Version, or the New International Version, or the King James Version. Now, the absence of the word does not mean the absence of the concept.

But we should note as well that the word also does not appear in our denominational doctrinal standards right now either. It’s not in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Shorter Catechism, the Larger Catechism, or our Book of Church Order.

Instead, the modern concept of identity is a product of our culture – particularly of the Western Enlightenment. It is a cultural product rather than a biblical doctrine. That said, it’s been widely employed by many Christians, which is fine. But we need to be sure to recognize its limitations as well.

And so, it’s probably helpful to think of our modern concept of personal identity as more of a cultural lens through which we can view Scripture, but not as a biblical doctrine itself. That’s an important distinction for us as Christians. And even if you’re not a Christian, the fact that the modern individualistic concept of identity has its roots in the Western Enlightenment should send up some warning flags to you as well – a note of caution before applying the product of one culture to other cultures from different times and different places.

That said, I’ll use the language of identity this morning, and I think it has often been used by Christians to express biblical truths in a way that is well accommodated to our culture, but there are also ways in which it can be helpful instead to think in terms of even broader questions like “Who am I?” or even “What am I?”

One reason such broader questions may be more helpful than our modern category of “identity,” is that our more modern concept often imports a number of individualistic assumptions into how people understand themselves – assumptions that are the result of modern Western thought, and that are therefore not universal experiences or ways of thinking across all times and cultures.

But another reason to be cautious about our use of “identity” language is a tendency – especially in Christian circles, I think – to think of personal identity in ways that are far too simplistic – in ways that reduce the complexity of a human being rather than accurately representing it.

If we start with the question “Who am I?” or “What am I?” we can quickly begin to see just how complicated any person’s answer must be.

I am many things. I am a human being. I am male. I am a father. I am a Christian. I am a New York Giants fan. I am an American. I am a husband. I could go on.

Now, as we try to answer this kind of question, there are a few ways we can go wrong.

For one thing, the list I just gave is barely a start, and so obviously some things are missing. Our answer to the question “Who am I?” can be incomplete.

But another way we could go wrong is that some of those things I did list could be false. If my parents are secretly Canadian, and they moved here when I was an infant, but never told me, then I may not be an American citizen, even though I think I am.

But then a third way we can go wrong is that even as we recognize a range of answers to that question “Who am I?” we also must realize that there is a hierarchy to our answers. Some answers must outrank others. The fact that I am a father *should* outrank the fact that I am a NY Giants fan. And for me to switch those in the hierarchy of how I understand myself would cause serious problems in my life.

And it’s that third way that we can go wrong with understanding ourselves that I especially want to focus on: the ways, to borrow a concept from Augustine, that we might mis-order our answers to the question – that we might over-value some things while under-valuing others in how we understand ourselves.

And so, the question for us to really focus on this morning is: What do we think of as our chief identities? When we try to understand ourselves – when we think about who we are – what are the aspects of who we are that carry the most weight, in how we think, and talk, and act?

When you consider who you are – when you think of yourself – what are the traits, the identities, that feel the most important?

Who We Are: The Fragile Places We Often Look

And there are a few ways in which people have tended to answer that question.

First, in more traditional cultures, people's primary identity usually came from their community – from the status of the community they were a part of, and then their own place within that community. It could be in terms of their family, or in terms of their vocation, or in terms of their tribe or their nation. Often it was a combination of several communities that provided the chief ways that people understood themselves. But in any case, the most important aspects of their identity were given to them by the people in their community, and their standing within that community.

In an important book that they wrote, sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues have described how that tendency has changed with the rise of individualism in the Western world. Over time, people began to think of who they were more and more in terms of their individual achievements, or as a matter of individual expression.

Now, this was a large cultural shift over the course of centuries, but it is interesting to note some of the specific shapes it took.

Bellah and his colleagues give this example – they write: “Sometime after the middle of the eighteenth century, according to Daniel Calhoun, child-training practices began to change [in America] from an emphasis on peace and order in the family to the development of ‘independent self-sufficient individuals.’ Interestingly enough, this had something to do with the popularization of John Locke’s views on child-rearing [...] just when his political views were becoming popular in the colonies.” [Bellah, 57]

The shift, note, is from an emphasis on one's place in the community of one's family, to one's ability to achieve things on their own.

Yuval Levin has noted a similar shift in our other cultural institutions. Institutions that used to be molds for people – shaping them, and giving them a place to understand themselves within the institution, have more and more been transformed to platforms – to tools that individuals use as they seek their own individual goals and dreams. [Levin, 29-42, 48-51]

In our individualistic culture we tend to think of who we are – of our identity – primarily in terms of what we achieve or what we express.

The first of these Robert Bellah and others identify as “utilitarian individualism.” In this way of thinking, the way we find out who we really are is that we go out into the hard and competitive world, and we try to make a name for ourselves – we try to achieve an accomplishment or rise to the top of a field – and whatever we achieve in this way then defines who we are. We may succeed, or we may fail, but our identity is primarily wrapped up in what we do.

But then, in part in response to this, there is the rise of what Bellah and others call “expressive individualism,” where who we are is detached from our accomplishments, and the harsh competition of the world around us, and is found more in the private sphere of life, and the ways we look within ourselves and take what we find there, and then express it or pursue it in the world around us.

Sometimes this identity is found in creative expression. Other times this identity is founded more on our personal desires and longings. [Bellah, 77] Still other times our identity is found in how we spend our leisure time – our recreation and consumption patterns. And often as we come to understand ourselves chiefly in these concepts of expressive individualism, we seek out and reinforce these identities by connecting to “lifestyle enclaves” – groups of other people who share our creative pursuits, or our hobbies, or our lifestyle patterns. [Bellah, 71-75]

Expressive individualism and utilitarian individualism dominate our culture and how we understand who we are, and often we move back and forth between them. And so, a career-oriented person may begin understanding themselves in terms of their achievements, but when their goals fail to pan out, they may shift, and begin instead to define themselves primarily in terms of their expressive selves that comes out in their private lives. Other times, an individual may vacillate between the two modes of self-understanding. [Bellah, 69, 163]

In any case, what we want to highlight with these different approaches to understanding who we are is what they view as most important in answering that question. Our communities should be a part of how we understand ourselves. Our achievements are part of defining who we are. Expressing how the Lord has made us in creative work, or recreation, or relationships with others like us, are all good things that are part of understanding who we are.

That those things are *part* of our answer to that question is obvious. What we need to consider more critically is whether those things are or should be *primary* in how we understand who we are.

Are they, and should they be, *foundational* to our self-understanding?

Because they are each a very shaky basis on which to hang the bulk of our identity.

And we know this. Achievement is always tentative. No matter how many times you have succeeded, you can always fail the next time. And so you can never really find rest in an identity that is primarily rooted in your achievements.

Your status in a community is always shifting as well – especially in our time and place in history. Relationships can dissolve. People move. Jobs are lost. Churches split. Spouses divorce. And even if our communities persevere, they can lose their status in our broader society, as cultural conflict seems to pit one community in competition with another, over and over again. As key as community is to our lives, it cannot bear the weight of defining our primary sense of who we are.

And the same is true of our self-expression. We are called to seek to know ourselves in the ways we have been made in God’s image – that is true. But self-knowledge, on our own, is a tricky thing. The more we learn of ourselves, the more we often realize that we do not really know ourselves. It can be hard to distinguish what comes from us ourselves, and what we have simply learned from others. And even when we do see ourselves clearly, what we find can sometimes feel too weak to bear the weight of our identity. Can we really reduce who we are to our consumption patterns? Our leisure habits? Even our deeper desire? Is that what should primarily define us?

So, when you ask, “Who am I?” what is it that feels most important to you? I’m not asking what you think *should* be most important, but in how you think and act, what part of yourself do you tend to treat as most important – as most foundational? As the place where your value most lies?

Is it your accomplishments? Your place in a particular community? Your hobbies? Your desires? Your lifestyle?

When you ask, “Who am I?” what are the things that *feel* most important to you in your answer?

Who Jesus Is

In contrast to the answers we often give – in contrast to the things that often first come to mind for us – we have our text this morning.

Because the theme at the heart of our text this morning is the identity of Jesus: the question of who he is, of what is most important to know about him.

And in our text, that question is answered in none of the ways we have considered so far.

Think first about community. There’s something about that here that we can easily miss.

In verse five Mark tells us about the kind of people coming out to John the Baptist. We read “all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to” John. Jerusalem was the capital of the Jews. Judea was the heartland of the Jewish people. Those are the kinds of people going out to John – people, at least among other Jews, with some community status. They belonged to communities that had significance in Israel.

And then we read in verse nine: “In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee.” Galilee for us is a land we think of in spiritual terms because we associate it with Jesus. But Galilee in Jesus’s day was “Galilee of the Gentiles” [Isaiah 9:1; Matthew 4:15] – a region with a questionable reputation among the Jewish people. [Horne, 31]

And as for Nazareth, we need only remember that when Nathaniel heard that that’s where Jesus was from, his response to Philip was: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

In the ancient world, people often understood who they were – they based much of their identity – on their community. But Jesus came from a community that had no real status, even among the Jews, who were themselves a conquered and occupied people.

Jesus’s understanding of who he was did not come first from his community.

Second, we might think of his accomplishments.

And here again, Mark’s silence is striking. Up to this point, Mark has told us nothing that Jesus has accomplished. Jesus has not done anything that Mark chose to include as a way of leading up

to his identification of who Jesus is. Instead, Mark starts his story with Jesus in his early 30s, and he says not a word about anything before that.

It's true that in Matthew and Luke we get some earlier stories – but not a lot, and they are almost entirely about things that happen *to* Jesus, not things that he does.

Now, Mark will go on to tell us about many things that Jesus will do and accomplish – make no mistake. And as he does, he will use those stories to fill in our understanding of who Jesus is.

But it is striking that Jesus's identity is established *before* he does any of those things. His understanding of who he is is not something that he accomplishes, but something that precedes his accomplishments.

Third, we might wonder about Jesus's identity being the result of his self-expression. After all, if anyone had good reason for basing his understanding of who he was on the insights he had into his own heart and mind, it would be Jesus. Jesus was perfect. He was without sin. If anyone could rightly perceive their own heart, and if anyone's heart was pure, it was Jesus. We would certainly think that Jesus could begin his ministry by looking into his own heart, and then telling everyone else who he is.

But he doesn't. In none of the gospels does Jesus begin his ministry with a self-expression or self-proclamation of who he is.

Instead, in our text this morning, Jesus says nothing. Instead, we read of someone else telling Jesus who Jesus is.

Instead, we read in verses ten and eleven: “And when [Jesus] came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’”

Jesus's chief identity – Jesus's most central understanding of who he is – comes not from his community, not from his accomplishments, not from his own self-understanding, but by the work of the Holy Spirit, and the words of God the Father: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Jesus looked to his heavenly Father to be told who he is. And the stress in the text is on Jesus's perception of this revelation – not anyone else's.

Jesus looked to God to be told who he is.

And when he did, what was he told? What was his identity to be rooted in?

His identity was to be rooted in his relationship to the triune God.

That is what we see here. Here God the Father speaks, God the Holy Spirit descends, and as they do, they identify Jesus as God the Son – the One who is well pleasing to the Father.

Here, Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, finds his identity by the word of God the Father, rooted in his relationship to the triune God.

Let me say that again: In our text this morning, Jesus seeks to know who he is by listening to the word of God the Father, in which he is told of his relationship to the triune God.

Jesus's Identity & Ours

That's Jesus. What about us? Does our text have anything to say about us – about how we are to know who we are?

Well, actually, it does.

From the days of the early Church, Christians have understood their own baptism in the framework of Jesus's baptism. They have seen their baptism uniting them to Jesus, so that they too share in the benefits of his baptism, as they are described here. And they have done that with very solid biblical warrant, as we see in the writings of the Apostle Paul [Horne, 34].

The Apostle Paul writes this in Galatians 3 – he says: “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”

Note what Paul says in those verses. He says that we are united with Christ through faith. He says that in our baptism, we have put on Christ. And with that, Paul tells us that we too share in Jesus's identity – we too, he says, are all “sons of God.”

In other words, the same identity that God the Father ascribed to Jesus in our text – “You are my beloved Son” – that same identity is applied to us: Paul says, “in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God.”

And the gendered language of “sons” is significant.

Some Bible translations have changed Paul's words to make them gender neutral – to say “in Christ Jesus you are all *children* of God” [NIV].

But that actually misses something. Tim Keller explains it like this – he writes that if, with our cultural concerns, we are too quick to alter “the biblical language, we miss the revolutionary (and radically egalitarian) nature of what Paul is saying.” He goes on to explain – he writes: “In most ancient cultures, daughters could not inherit property. Therefore, ‘son’ meant ‘legal heir’, which was a status forbidden to women. But the gospel tells us we are all sons of God in Christ. We are all heirs. [...] If we don't let Paul call Christian women ‘sons of God’, we miss how radical and wonderful a claim this is.” [Keller, *Galatians for You*, 90]

Paul is saying here that in Christ, we share in his identity as God’s sons, in such a way that no other identity – not gender, not ethnicity, not socio-economic status – no other identity we have can supersede the identity given to us by Christ, spoken to us by the Father, and imparted to us by the Holy Spirit.

Paul is telling us that when we are united to Christ by faith, our understanding of who we are – of the chief aspects of our identity – is also found in the baptism of Jesus.

We too must look not to our place in human society, not to our accomplishments, not even to our self-understanding, to know the most important thing about who we are – but we must look first to the word of God.

And there, like Christ, we find our identity rooted in our relationship to the triune God.

As Christians we find our most important identity in the word of God, declaring us his beloved sons in Christ. But as we look more closely, a more complex picture emerges as well.

Michael Allen – a professor at RTS in Orlando (where Tim Bentson will be heading this week) – Dr. Allen has a helpful article in which he points us to four foundational aspects to a Christian identity.

And in our text this morning we see references to each of those states – allusions to who we are in our creation, in our sin, in our redemption, and in our restoration.

Who We Are: Creation

First, our text points us back to who we are in our creation.

We are told in verse four that the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove as God speaks. And with that, we are given an image that a first century Jew would have almost immediately associated with the creation account in the Hebrew Scriptures. In Genesis 1 we read that as God began his work of creation “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” The word there translated “hovers” means “flutter” and evokes the image of a bird. And once we are told that, the next thing that happens is that God speaks. The account of Jesus’s baptism before us points us back to God’s work of creation. [Keller, 4-5; Horne, 33]

Which is the first aspect of a Christian understanding of who we are: we are creatures who are created by God, and made in his image.

That is what we are told by God’s word in Genesis one – we read:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. [...]”
So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.”

We, as human beings, are made in God’s image. That is the first key aspect of our identity. That is the first thing God tells us by his word. That is the first way we relate to the triune God: we bear his image.

And we do that both by the human traits we share, and also by the traits that make us unique – the many smaller answers we may give to the question “Who am I?”

For, as Herman Bavinck points out, it was in the multitude of humanity, each different from the other, that God expounded on his image in human beings. That is why God made not just a man, and not just a man and a woman, but he called them to be fruitful and multiply.

Bavinck writes: “The image of God is much too rich for it to be fully realized in a single human being, however richly gifted that human being may be. It can only be somewhat unfolded in its depths and riches in a humanity counting billions of members. Just as the traces of God are spread over many, many works, in both space and time, so also the image of God can only be displayed in all its dimensions and characteristic features in a humanity whose members exist both successively one after the other and contemporaneously side by side.” [Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2.577]

So who do we learn we are as we hear God’s word in creation? We are image-bearers, in our creational unity and in our God-ordained diversity, we bear the image of God as his children.

Who We Are: Sin

But then, with the second aspect of our Christian identity we remember that something has gone wrong with how we bear that image.

And we are reminded of that in verse four of our text – for John proclaimed a baptism “of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

The second aspect of our identity is that we are sinners. We have marred the image of God in ourselves – in our hearts, in our lives, in our communities – by rebelling against him.

Now, we have not, by our sin, eradicated God’s image from ourselves – for even after the fall, in Genesis 5:3 and 9:6, human beings are still described as bearing God’s image. But that image has become twisted.

That is the second aspect of who we are, according to God’s word to us: we are rebels. We are sinners. We are estranged from the triune God.

Who We Are: Redemption

But of course, that is not the end of the story. For as we have just read, John's baptism was for the "forgiveness of sins." God has promised redemption. And indeed that is why Jesus has come.

He has come, as we have already heard from Paul in Galatians, so that, united to him by faith and sharing in his baptism, we too might be counted as sons of God.

He has come, as Paul says in Romans 6, so that having been buried with him by baptism, into his death, we too might walk in newness of life.

The third aspect of our Christian identity that we hear from the word of God is that we are redeemed – our relationship with the triune God is restored as we are united to Christ by faith, and share in his identity as sons of God.

Who We Are: Restoration

Finally, our text points us to a fourth aspect of who we are in Christ: we are people destined for full restoration. We are headed somewhere. We are going to be made new.

And I think we get an allusion to this here in our text as well.

It is noteworthy that the Spirit descends as a dove.

We already mentioned that the Spirit is described as hovering like a bird in Genesis one. There is one other place where the Holy Spirit is described that way in the Pentateuch, and it is in Deuteronomy 32. [Horne, 33] There the Holy Spirit is described as an eagle hovering over her young. [32:10-11]

So why isn't the Spirit described as an eagle here? Why a dove?

Commentator Mark Horne makes the case that in this, we should see an allusion to the flood of Noah. For it was a dove that Noah sent out over the waters, as God was remaking the world. [Horne, 34]

And in the picture of God's work of renewing and restoring the world in the days of Noah, we have a reminder that God will renew and restore us as well.

When Christ returns, he will make us new. He will rid us of our sinful tendencies, and we will bear his image again perfectly, without spot or stain.

And even now, our sanctification in this life is that future work of renewal flowing back, into the present, by the work of the Holy Spirit who is for us a guarantee of our final renewal. [Romans 8]

The fourth aspect of our Christian identity that we hear from the word of God is that we will be made new, restored to a perfect relationship with our triune God.

Who We Are: Rightly Ordered

We are image-bearers of God in creation. We are rebels against God in our sin. We are saved sons of God in our redemption and in our restoration. This is what God tells us about who we are.

These are the chief aspects of our identity – the most important answer to the question of who we are.

And we need to appreciate each aspect, while also recognizing their right ordering.

First, all four of these aspects are part of who we are as Christians in this world, and we need to be careful not to neglect any of them. There are many tendencies to pick one of these aspects, and neglect, or even deny others.

Some Christians so emphasize our identity in creation that they can lose the Bible's emphasis on God's work of redemption in our lives, and instead seek only to live their best lives now.

Other Christians can emphasize their sinful nature to such an extent that they begin to deny the fact that they are made in God's image, and that they are in fact redeemed in Christ.

Still other Christians focus on our redemption, but do it in a way that denies the fact that, while we are no longer slaves to sin, we are still sinners. They even criticize other Christians who speak of their ongoing struggle with sin as part of who they are. And yet Paul could both say that he was a "new creation" [2 Corinthians 5:17] and that he was a "wretched man" [Romans 7:24]. Luther could say that a Christian is at the same time both righteous and a sinner. We must be able to say the same as well.

Some Christians focus on growth and renewal in ways that neglect their already-redeemed status as sons of God which they received before they did a thing, while other Christians neglect the call to renew their lives, and do not seek to live out their sonship as they should.

In contrast to these temptations to pick and choose from what the Bible tells us about who we are, we are instead called to hold on to them all as essential to our identity.

All essential, but not all equal.

For in this life, one aspect rises to the top. One aspect reframes all others. Central to how we understand who we are must be the words we hear from Paul as he writes to the Galatians ... the words that God the Father spoke to Jesus Christ.

Foundational to who we are is that we are redeemed sons of God. We share, by grace, through faith, in Christ's identity. It is through that fact that our created nature is restored. It is by that truth that our sinful nature is passing away. And it is rooted in that promise that our renewed nature is assured.

In Christ, God the Father looks at you and says: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Conclusion

Do you believe that?

If you don’t – if you’re not a Christian, then there is nothing more important in your life than that you come to know Christ, and cling to him by faith, so that you too can have God the Father declare who you are in him – so that you can hear him say: “You are my beloved child. With you I am well pleased.” For without that, there is no hope. Apart from Christ, the identity that dominates us is our slavery to sin. And only Christ can free you from that – only he can restore you to your identity as a child of God.

If you have already done that – if you already know that in Christ, God the Father looks at you and says: “You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased,” then the question for you to consider is whether that proclamation is the primary aspect of your identity – whether it is, for you the most important answer to the question of who you are.

Is it? Or in practice, when you consider who you are – when you consider what gives you value – do you find yourself placing far more emphasis on your accomplishments, or your relationships to others, or the claims of your own heart, rather than the proclamation of God?

If so, our text this morning is a call for you to repent and believe. It is a call to place the word of God at the center of how you understand yourself. For only there can you find true peace.

Your place in this world, your wants and desires, your successes and your failures, your growth and your sins – these are all aspects of who you are.

But they all are superseded by the word that God speaks to you, when he looks at you in Christ and says: “You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased.”

Believe that again this morning.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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<https://journal.rts.edu/article/sources-of-the-self-the-distinct-makings-of-the-christian-identity/>

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