Good morning, Family. Least we, we began our sermon series about our identity in Christ. The focus is on how a proper view of who we are in Christ changes everything (\*2 Corinthians 5:17). In Him, each of us is a new creation. And, as we discussed, one of the most important revelations we can receive from the word of God is to understand who we are in Christ—fearfully and wonderfully made with eternal value and with eternity in mind. Undeniably, our value is determined by the purchaser! Now this week, we continue where we left off last week (\*\*Ephesians 2:13-22) with the knowledge that those who trust Christ as Savior are forgiven, filled with His Spirit, gathered into His church, empowered to love, and positioned to be loved. Family! To be loved by God is the highest position achievable! As Ephesians 2:13 affirms, formerly far away, we have

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\*2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

\*\*Ephesians 2:13-22

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.

now been brought near by the blood of Christ. How comforting is that?! Understanding our identity speaks to our genuine relationship with Him (as opposed to the mechanics of religious ceremony and habit).

 Listen, family, I don’t know where you are this morning, what you are experiencing, or how you are feeling, but I want to share with you some strong theological truth today:

 JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE CHILDREN,

 ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD!

 RED AND YELLOW, BLACK AND WHITE,

 THEY ARE PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT.

 JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD!!

Wow! “Precious in His sight!” And Isaiah 43:4 confirms this truth:

 Since you are precious and honored in my sight,

 and because I love you,

 I will give people in exchange for you,

 nations in exchange for your life.

Christian! YOU are precious—valued, important—to Him. He sees you! In Psalm 139:1-5 David writes (sings!):

 1 You have searched me, Lord,

 and you know me.

 2 You know when I sit and when I rise;

 you perceive my thoughts from afar.

 3 You discern my going out and my lying down;

 you are familiar with all my ways.

 4 Before a word is on my tongue

 you, Lord, know it completely.

 5 You hem me in behind and before,

 and you lay your hand upon me.

Our all-powerful God, omniscient, omnipresent, involved God sees you!!

 In our reading in Genesis, we can see the truth of God’s personal interest in each of us in the story of Hagar. An Egyptian servant to the elderly Sarai, Hagar is given to Adam by Sarai to provide an heir. When Hagar becomes pregnant, Sarai’s heart hardens to her. Sarai treats Hagar harshly, forcing Hagar to run away. Verse 7 tells us that God sees Hagar and responds to her. As the tale continues, Hagar calls God “El Roi,” which means “the God who sees me, shepherds me, gazes upon me.” In her rejection, isolation, and heartbreak, God sees her and responds. And His faithfulness, His care for His people, appears throughout the pages of scripture. God is omnipresent and personally and involved. Remember Gideon in the OT; remember the woman at the well, the leper, and the blind man, all of whom Jesus saw in the NT. In chapter 19:25-27, John records the attentiveness of Christ on the cross—His meeting the needs of His mother Mary:

 25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Christian, the God who orchestrates the movements of the universe is in no danger of forgetting His children. He studies everything, misses nothing. You are precious in His sight! (\*Matthew 10:29-31).

 Knowing that we are of value and that He sees us should cause us to pursue God’s will and increase our desire to stay in step with Him. In other words, Christ’s attentiveness toward us should foster our attention toward Him. It should encourage our obedience and motivate our surrender. And here’s a thought, His faithfulness and attentiveness should keep us from treating him as a mascot! Instead, we should approach Him reverently and gratefully, recognizing Him as Lord and Savior. Your worth finds expression in what God has done for you. God is pure love, and YOU are the focus of His love, a truth that should equip us for life in Him.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\*Matthew 10:29-31

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care.[a] 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

 Now, let me be clear. Being precious in His sight is not a place of boasting or pride. It is a place of repentance, humility, assurance, and security. It is a place of guidance and correction. Look at of Psalm 23: “He lets me rest” (verse 2); “He leads me” (verse 2); He restores me and guides me (verse 3); He is with me (verse 4); and “His rod and staff, they comfort me”(verse 4). We are kept by the external and internal reality of God’s existence, His dominion, and His love, Hagar, in her loneliness, uncertainty, and feelings of abandonment, encountered the character of God. When we better understand our identity in Christ, our influence for the Kingdom grows.

 Perhaps today, you need to encounter the character of God (2 Corinthians 8:9). Christian, His grace has made you rich. He sees you! You have been brought near because of the blood of Christ. His Grace has destined you to have life and have it more abundantly. The truth of “El Roi” should draw us to God in awe and humility, in repentance and hope. (God, thank You for seeing me, for knowing me!) Listen, Family,

Revelation 12:11 says, “11 They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” We overcome by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. Our identity, Church, is this: we rely on the finished work of Jesus on the cross. My identity and value are not based on my accomplishments but determined by the one who purchased me!

Passages in support of this sermon

16 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.”

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. 3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”

6 “Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so, she fled from her.

7 The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. 8 And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” 10 The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”

11 The angel of the Lord also said to her:

“You are now pregnant

 and you will give birth to a son.

You shall name him Ishmael,

 for the Lord has heard of your misery.

12 He will be a wild donkey of a man;

 his hand will be against everyone

 and everyone’s hand against him,

 and he will live in hostility

 toward all his brothers.”

13 She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.” 14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

15 So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.