Good morning, Family. This morning, we continue our series about our Christian identity. How we answer the question, “Who am I,” is incredibly important. So many things in life try to define us. I read this week that every person has seven hundred plus identities—from child to parent to cook to consumer to worker to idler to sports fan to driver—on and on. Which identity should take precedence? None of these! We must construct our identity as believers by the Word (Holy Scripture) and its truth about God. Our identity comes from Christ. While the world tells us to perform, to compete, to define ourselves, Christ says about our identity, “It’s done.” Christian, listen your Christian identity is based on grace, not performance. A person finds identity as a Christian in grace alone (\*Ephesians 2:8-10). Identity as a Christian comes by faith alone through Christ alone. You have eternal value, and you are precious in His sight.

 One of the best ways, I think, to understand who you are and what Christ has done for you is to remember who you were before. Now, don’t live in that memory, but give God glory for His redemptive grace in your life. I think this is what the Apostle Paul does frequently—remembers who he was and what Christ has done for him. The phrases “in Christ,” “in Him,” or “in Christ Jesus” occurs over 165 times in Paul’s letters. In our readings today, we are reminded of the cause of the change in our identity from the old to the new, redeemed position in Christ. Titus 2:14 says of Christ that He “gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” We are a people of His own possession! Redeemed! “Well,” you say, “Pastor Chris, I’ve heard that, but what does that really mean?” To redeem means to set free by the payment of a price. Redeemed means no longer a slave—bondage removed. And, redemption is a gift from God with no strings attached. Redemption brings freedom in Christ; we are set free by the power of Christ. In biblical times, the purchase price to set a prisoner or slave free was called

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\*Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

“redemption money” (\*1Peter 1:18-19). One of the most beautiful names of Jesus is “Redeemer.” Redeemer is the name of Christ on the cross. On that cross, He purchased our full pardon, setting us free. Once we were slaves to sin (\*\*John 8:34-38), once we were children of wrath (\*\*\*Ephesians 2:3), but--“BUT GOD”!! God made us alive and seated us with Him. Why? How? Today’s reading from Titus (see below) confirms that the purchase price gives us the complete and final picture of our redemption: In verse 11, the past; in verse 12, the present; in verse 13, the future; in verse 14 the final, absolute, complete, eternal return to God (\*\*\*\*Galatians 4:4-7). Scripture confirms God knows us, and we can come to know Him because of our relationship with Christ. In Christ, we find freedom, and we have enduring belief that gives capacity for enduring surrender to Him.

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\*1Peter 1:18-19

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

\*\*John 8:34-38

34 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, 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. 37 I know that you are Abraham’s descendants. Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, because you have no room for my word. 38 I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father.”

\*\*\*Ephesians 2:3

3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

\*\*\*\*Galatians 4:4-7

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.[a] 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba,[b] Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

 Scripture has much to say about our pardon and our freedom in Christ. Romans 6:16 Paul writes, “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” Obedience to Christ recognizes that He has paid our ransom, purchased our pardon. But we must accept that pardon. The famous story of George Wilson illustrates this lesson. During his administration, President Andrew Jackson issued a full pardon for thief George Wilson, who with a friend that was convicted and hung, faced a similar fate for his crime. Powerful friends came to Wilson’s aid and petitioned for the pardon from the President, but Wilson refused to accept it. The friends—hoping to save Wilson’s life—took the issue to the Supreme Court, where the chief justice confirmed that law enforcement could only honor the pardon if Wilson accepted it. He didn’t, and he was hanged. What does this mean for us? It means that we can only be saved by the blood of Christ if we accept His pardon. If we can’t accept this freeing gift, we cannot be saved. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

 But, for some of us, maybe our real bondage right now is that we are content. We are satisfied with where we are on our walk with God. We want “just enough Jesus” to be content, to feel good. THAT is not true freedom, Christian. Christ has pardoned you to be one of the people of His own possession. And He will never ask for a refund. The freedom is IN the pardon and the invitation to fall in love with Him: Redeemed! Surrendered to His supremacy. Family, you are looking at a former captive—a person who lived without Christ, but now I am redeemed. Jesus paid the price of His blood to free me from my old life. He has done the same for you. Redemption is a work of our God. It is absolute and eternal. But it must be received. Delivery is not complete without acceptance. We are loved by God, precious to Him. What are you doing with your redemption? Maybe, we need to repent of our complacency. Our lives should be continually honoring God, for by His grace, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Passages in support of this sermon:

Titus 2:11-14

**11**For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. **12**It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, **13**while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, **14**who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Colossians 1:9-14

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,[a] 10 so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, 12 and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you[b] to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.