

Sermon #21

**Who Am I? What Am I Doing?
Where Am I? Why?**

God is the Lord of all, for He created all.

No one is greater than He.

No one is wiser than He.

No one is smarter than He.

No one is shrewder than He.

No one is more awesome than He.

No one is more powerful than He.

He is the King, the Great One, the Master and Owner of all.

Yet He doesn't lord His power over us;

He cares for us and loves us.

He is gentle, patient and kind with us.

He protects us and guides us as He nurtures and loves.

God is good. His desire for us is good.

His will for us is eternal life and complete fulfillment.

God shows us the way and gives us instructions;

He gives us all we need to do His will.

Our challenge is to see and believe this truth.

Who Am I?

God sees me for who I am.

He knows who I am, and His knowledge is true.

God created me and gave me my life.

I gladly took it and set about making a name for myself,
creating an identity based on human associations,
relations and organizations.

But one day I looked honestly at myself and my contrived identity,
and hated what I saw.

I was disgusted at my compromises and defeated by my failures.
My self-assurance was gone.

Then an amazing thought came to mind:

Since my striving and efforts and methods of pursuing happiness
had failed, why not try living God's way? It certainly couldn't
result in anything worse than the results of living my way!

So I turned my heart and mind to God and said,

“God, I will do whatever you say.”

And He promptly told me one thing to do: Love.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, when I gave myself and my life
back to God, He began to lead me out of my worldly, self-
constructed identities and into my true identity as His child.

He took my self-made identities and turned them upside down
or inside out:

I saw myself as an authoritative father,
but God led me to be a submissive child.

I saw myself as a mighty lion, but God led me to be a gentle lamb.

I saw myself as a boss, but God led me to be a servant.

I saw myself as a winner over others,
but God led me to conquer myself.

I saw myself as a husband, but God led me to be His Bride.

I saw myself as a king, but God led me to be His subject.

I saw myself as greater than others, but God led me to be the least.

I saw myself as a righteous man, but God led me to be a forgiven man.

I saw myself as a pastor, but God led me to be His sheep.

I saw myself as a leader, but God led me to be His follower.

I saw myself as a teacher, but God led me to be His student.

I took pride in the name I made for myself,
but God led me to lose my name in His.

**I continually have a choice of how to see and identify myself.
So do you.**

I can be who God calls me to be, *or*

I can conjure up all sorts of identities in an effort to improve my status among men.

I can accept my inherited place from God, *or*

I can strive to obtain a place among men.

Accepting my true identity in God may strip me of all worldly status, titles, associations, memberships and authority.

But these things are like cubic zirconia and fool's gold: They look like the real thing and appear to be valuable, but they aren't.

My true identity as God's child is like a rare, valuable jewel.

It is who He created me to be: unique and beautiful, pure and greatly prized by the Owner.

So who am I?

I am a nobody in the world's eyes, the blind eyes of doubt and greed.

But in God's eyes, the eyes of truth and love, I am His child.

I belong to Him. I am His child and His sheep.

I am also His employee, His church member, a citizen of His country, His servant.

He is my Father, my Creator, my Owner, my Shepherd, my Pastor, my Counselor, my Boss.

And He is good—very good!

Where Am I?

There are two possible places where I can be:

the Kingdom of Heaven or the nations of the world.

These two realms are both here, now.

Let's look at the handout for a comparison of the two,

and to try and figure out where we are and what we are doing.

{4-page handout; go over part or all of it}

God has always been willing to show each of His children just how to live their life to the fullest, to have great enjoyment, peace and love.

Most refuse to do it. They think they know a better way.

But God's way is best, and even the wisdom of Solomon falls far short of what you need to live life fully and eternally in His Kingdom.

So do not heed the teachings of men; listen to God.

He speaks to you through the Spirit of Truth,
and He shows you just what to do each step of the way.

“I AM full of grace and mercy, and I AM also firm and strong.

I will lead you well and you will rejoice.

Who are you?

That's your choice.

You can be whoever you want to be.

But if you want to be like Me, and have My power and might,
you must humble yourself and follow Me. I will show you the way,
and I will strengthen you—not by human power—but by My Spirit,
which is not seen or heard with human senses.

I will know you and recognize you, but the world will not.

I will write your name in My Book of Life,
but the world will write you off.

I will call you by your true name,
and show you who you truly are, and you will have great peace.

Yet if you want to make a different name for yourself in the world
to get praise from men, you are free to do so.

But it won't be real or true, and it won't last.

So put your hope and faith in Me, and let Me show you who you are—
who you truly are—

if you want to fully enjoy and live the life I have given to you.

My way is best.

My name is best.

Truth is better than lies. Life in Me is better than fiction.

So be who you are, and delight in My gift of life.

Reject the lies, delusions and false identities that separate you from Me.

I want you to have the best.

I love you.”

Where Am I?

	In the Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Heaven)	In the Nations of the World (Kingdom of the World)
Other names and symbolism	Garden of Eden; Promised Land; “above”; in heaven; obedient human heart	Sodom & Gomorrah; Egypt; “below”; “under the sun”; corrupted human heart
Capital city	Jerusalem: “Double peace” the Bride: the forgiven human soul (Rev. 21-22)	Babylon: “Confusion, mixing” The Prostitute: the polluted human soul (Rev. 17-18)
Inhabitants	Righteous and faithful generation; freed and forgiven children of God; the redeemed; saints; angels	Adulterous and evil generation; slaves to fear and greed; “those who dwell on earth”
Who rules it?	God: Father and Creator King/Lord: Lamb (humility) Teacher: Christ (Truth) Leader: Jesus (love) Governor: Peace of Christ Ruler: Righteousness of Christ (Rev. 4, 21)	gods: appetites, desires, fears kings: self-exalted man teachers: human laws, rules leaders: hypocrites (vipers) governors: conflicts of man rulers: sins of man (Rev. 13)
What is it?	Obedience to Christ: walking in truth and love	Disbelieving and disobeying truth; walking in pride, greed and/or fear
When is it?	Always has been, always will be (Rev. 4, 22)	Whenever a lie is believed (Genesis 3)
Where is it?	In our midst, and within the minds and hearts of people who believe the truth as revealed by Christ (Matthew 16:18)	In our midst, and within the minds and hearts of people who speak lies and/or believe ideas that are contrary to truth (Matthew 16:23)
Why does it exist?	Because God exists, and it is where He lives and dwells	Because of man’s ignorance and disbelief of truth and his disobedience of God
Language	Truth, honesty, love	Lies, deceit, falseness, mocking
Attitude	Merciful, peaceable, faithful	Judgmental, hostile, fearful
Living conditions	Unity, goodness, light, peace and joy (Rev. 4, 21, 22)	Selfishness, badness, darkness, discontent (Rev. 9, 13, 17, 18)
How to enter it	Humble yourself and decide to do what God tells you to.	Believe a false philosophy or idea; follow a deceiver

What Am I Doing?

*Consider how you may be hindering or hastening
your fulfillment in the Kingdom of God:*

What Hinders My Fulfillment	What Hastens My Fulfillment
Being two-faced	Being honest to all
Being double-minded: trying to serve/love both God and money	Being single-minded: serving and loving God
Being hypocritical	Practicing what I preach
Believing a lie, deception or ploy	Seeking and believing the truth
Being counterfeit	Being who God created me to be
Suppressing and denying my honest feelings	Admitting and confessing my honest feelings
Following my feelings	Following Christ, and ruling my feelings
Being concerned with what people think about me	Appreciating and enjoying God's grace and favor
Allowing myself to desire what belongs to someone else	Desiring God and trusting Him to fulfill me
Blaming someone else for my problems or unhappiness.	Having mercy on myself and others. Forgiving.
Pursuing and striving for money and things	Seeking and obeying God
Exalting myself above others	Humbling myself and giving thanks to God
Getting involved in as many church and/or social activities as possible	Spending quiet times alone with God, and doing only what He leads me to do.

“I AM good. Have faith in Me. Put your trust in Me. Be like Me.
Chose good over evil. Choose My thoughts over your thoughts.
Choose My word over vain philosophies and man's word.
When you think My thoughts, speak My words and walk in My ways
you are in the Kingdom of heaven.
You can be there in a moment. You are only a choice away.
Choose good. Choose Me.”

Why Follow Christ?

**Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life,
reveals God to me.**

He leads me to God and shows me how to relate personally to God.

He loves me unselfishly, unconditionally and eternally.

He knows the Father intimately

and is His perfect image and likeness.

He fulfills all law and prophecy,

and sets me free from religious bondage.

He exposes my heart, burns out the evil, then heals and restores it.

He redeems, purifies and loves my soul as His cherished Bride.

He teaches me mysteries of God and then reveals them.

He shows me how to live in the Kingdom of God on earth.

He enables me to overcome the world and be purified of its evil.

That is why I choose to follow Christ.

What does it mean to follow Christ?

Mainly, to believe what He taught and put it into practice as He leads.

Secondly, to receive His grace, mercy, forgiveness and love so that

I can continue forward through my own sin and failures,
without giving up or getting discouraged.

What is the cost of following Christ?

Giving all that I own over to Him,

and doing with it whatever He tells me to do.

Trading in my cultural values and traditions for His heavenly values
and obedience.

Subjecting the influence of my parents, teachers, pastor, spouse, friends
and role models to Christ, and leaving them if He calls me to do so.

Giving up my pride and personal ambitions in favor of His humility
and His purpose.

Trading in my religiosity for a personal relationship with God.

What are the rewards of following Christ?

Eternal, abundant life	knowing God intimately and personally
being taught by God	fulfillment and enjoyment in life
soundness and strength	wholeness, harmony, unity and freedom
victory and power	being truly and deeply loved
wisdom and understanding	patience, goodness and kindness
trust and faith	provision for all my needs
righteousness	peace and joy
truth	grace and mercy
self-control	forgiveness

Surprises

People to love!

Narrow escapes!

Things to enjoy!

Fulfilling work and service!

Mysteries and solutions!

Hardships and victories!

Challenges and adventures!

and the desire, motivation and ability to do God's will

Are the rewards worth the cost?

Each person should count the cost and decide for himself!

“I AM the Lord.

I created your body and gave you life.

I gave you free will and a mind that is separate from mine,
so that you can choose to live as you please.

Your life is a gift from Me, with no strings attached.

You may do with it whatever you please.

You may use it for good, or use it for evil.

Life is a gift that I freely give.

You can live it with Me in My kingdom and

be My son and an heir to all I have;

or you can reject this life and get your own.

You can see and accept and believe who you are in Me,

or you can conjure up your own identity in the eyes of man.

Either way, it's your choice, and your life will reflect that choice.”