



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

1, 2 Peter, Jude Sermon Series

Supports Session 3: Our Identity

Sermon Title: “Living Out Our Identity” (Matthew 5:13-17)

Connection to Session 3

As Christians, our identities are found in Christ and not in the things of this world. This means we are mature, living stones, and God’s people. When we understand this, we cannot help but to openly influence those around us while seeking to bring attention to the praise of God.

Introduction/Opening

It is easy to identify ourselves in a host of ways. We can identify ourselves according to the school we attend or from which we graduated. We can identify ourselves according to our profession or an endless number of other ways. The manner in which we identify ourselves can help determine our actions and how we live. For example, we would never wear a hat from our rival school. With this in mind, let’s begin to explore some questions. What does it look like to identify with Christ? What actions would this yield in our lives? Today’s message will help us answer these questions from a biblical viewpoint.

Outline

1. We are salt and light (vv. 13-14)

- a. If we are to deal with this passage accurately, then we must make sure to put the words of Christ in context. Jesus had begun teaching what is known as the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7). He began this with what is known as the Beatitudes. Many commentators would say that the Beatitudes serve as the characteristics of a follower of Jesus and how God blesses those who faithfully follow Him. For example, a follower of Jesus is to be merciful. When we share God’s mercy with others, God blesses us by sharing His mercy with us.
- b. Upon completing His teaching on the Beatitudes, Jesus said that His followers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. According to Jesus, this is our identity. We will need to look at specific words in these two verses to fully understand and apply what Jesus is teaching.
 - i. The first word to study is “you” (v. 13). It is written as a plural word. This means that Jesus was not speaking to Peter or another disciple. Instead, He was speaking to those who were His followers.
 - ii. Next, we need to study the word “are” (v. 13). This is a factual and present tense word. He did not say they would be or could be, but rather they are.
 - iii. Our next word is “the” (v. 13). This is a singular word. If someone says they have the key, then they possess the one and only key and not just a key.

- iv. The final words are “salt” and “light.” Salt was meant to slow the decaying process. Salt is ineffective if it stays in the salt container. The purpose of light is to dispel darkness.
- c. When we look at the words of Jesus in context, we discover that our identity as His followers is to be the salt and light of this world. He did not tell us we had to grow into this first, and He did not indicate that He had a different plan. For those of us who know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are called to be His salt and light in this world.

2. No hiding allowed (v. 15)

- a. When we get a new car, new clothes, or even a new toy that we have been saving for, we want to share this with others. We are excited to share the details of the new golf club or appliance at home. We are happy to share the perceived benefits of this new thing. The last thing we would do is hide it or never take it out of the box.
- b. In a similar way, when we understand that our identity in Christ is to be salt and light, we are to display this truth for others to see. This does not mean that we are offensive, but we also do not hide this truth. For example, those in the congregation that are married, we display this truth on our left hands. Our wedding rings show others that we are committed to another until the Lord calls us home or comes to get us. We are proud of this commitment and want to display this fact to those around us.
- c. The question now becomes, how do we let our identity in Christ give light to those around us? We can find the answer from the words of Jesus within the present context. When we hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6), we are giving light to those around us. When we are peacemakers, and not just peacekeepers (5:9), we are giving light to those around us. When we live according to the Beatitudes He taught, we are displaying our identity in Him.

3. Our lives capture attention (v. 16)

- a. The result of us knowing and living out our identities in Jesus is twofold. First, others will see our good works. In looking at the Greek, we learn that this phrase means to be attractional. When walking past a store, the front is glass and products are set close to the glass. The purpose is to encourage someone to see the product and desire to purchase said product. Truly living out our identity in Jesus will cause others to want to have what we have in Christ.
- b. Second, the Father gets the glory. It has long been said that the purpose of humankind is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.¹ If we believe this to be true, then we have found the way to fulfill our purpose. We are to live out our identity in Christ by being the salt and light of this world. When we do this, the Father gets the glory and we receive the blessing.

Conclusion

¹ Westminster Assembly (1643-1652). *The Assembly's Shorter Catechism, with the Scripture Proofs in Reference : with an Appendix on the Systematic Attention of the Young to Scriptural Knowledge*, by Hervey Wilbur. Newburyport: Wm. B. Allen & Co., 1816.

The key to this entire passage is making sure that our identity is truly found in Christ. If we know that it is, then we should be encouraged to know that He has called us to be His salt and light. If, however, someone is not sure if their identity is in Christ, then let today be the day that you find yourself in Him.

What does it mean to find ourselves in Christ? First, we each need to understand we have all sinned and fallen short of God's standard (Rom. 3:23). Also, the wages of sin, what we earn as a result of sin, is death (6:23). The good news, however, is that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (5:8). Finally, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (10:13). Finding our identity in Christ means asking for forgiveness, repenting of our sins, and submitting to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

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