

**Sermon Title: Your True Identity** – September 28, 2014 (Scripture is from the ESV)

**Location:** New Philadelphia Church, Sillim Campus – 4pm service

### **Introduction**

Good afternoon, New Philadelphia Sillim! It's my pleasure to preach again for now our third service together. I told you in my message last week that in my first few messages here I desire to share important lessons I've learned in my life. This message today is one of the most important that God has given me.

While serving here at New Philadelphia Church I have been the healing and deliverance pastor for a few years. I've had the privilege to counsel and lead into deliverance people with all sorts of backgrounds and past sins. Our church is marked by a whole lot of broken people who came here and found their healing and their fullness in Christ Jesus. One of my favorite things to share with newcomers is that among our ten core leaders at New Philadelphia Church different leaders struggled with sexual addiction, bulimia and intense rejection, drug addiction, one was in prison for a few years and then deported to Korea because of his drug addiction, another was homeless at one point in his life, another was kidnapped and raped when she was in college, and another had an abortion. All those sins, struggles, and trauma among just ten leaders, who all happen to be the core leaders of this house! Pastors Christian, Erin, and Myunghwa of Hongdae, Pastor Marcus of Itaewon, Pastors Caleb and Mina of Busan, and Pastors Jon, Anita, Sky, and myself here at Sillim. God is amazing. The Gospel is truth. Jesus came that we may have life and have it to the full. Jesus didn't just come to forgive us, but to redeem us and make us new, clean, and strong in Him. We know who we truly are now, and the past is fully behind us. **And knowing who we are now and who God has called us to be not only keeps us secure, but gives great authority and power as we live for God.**

Today's sermon is titled: "**Your True Identity.**" I want to repeat what I just shared: Knowing who you are and who God has called you to be not only will keep you secure, but will give you great authority and power as you live for God.

### **Importance of Identity**

God knows how important our identity is. Turn with me to Matthew 3:16 to read God's first words to His son Jesus...

**Matthew 3:16-17 – And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."**

Other translations read, "This is my Son, whom I love, with whom I well pleased."

**God's first words to Jesus were regarding Jesus' identity.** Jesus had not done any works yet up to this point in His life. His ministry had not yet begun. And God makes it clear from the beginning Jesus is His Son, whom He loves, and whom He is proud of. Jesus does not have to perform for God to be proud of Him. Jesus doesn't have to earn God's love. Rather, Jesus is safe and secure in knowing God is always for Him, always loving Him, and always supporting Him. What a difference!

The message of the Gospel is that by grace we have been saved. By God's choice and by Jesus' sacrifice, we receive grace. While we were still sinners Christ died for us. We don't

have to earn His love, and so we don't have to fear losing it. Like Jesus, we are safe and secure in knowing God is for us, loves us, and supports us. God is so good!

Satan also knows the power of identity. His first words to Jesus were also regarding Jesus' God given identity. Immediately after the passage we just read, Jesus goes into the desert and is tempted by Satan. Look at Matthew 4:3 and notice Satan's very first words...

**Matthew 4:3 – And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”**

**If you are the son of God!** Satan was trying to put doubt and confusion in Jesus' identity. He was trying to get Jesus to prove Himself and to get Jesus to rely on Himself rather than rely on the Father.

Satan doesn't stop after one temptation; look down to verses five and six...

**Matthew 4:5-6 – Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down...”**

**If you are the Son of God!** Satan was again challenging Jesus' identity. He was trying to put doubt in Jesus and make Him try and prove Himself. **Satan knew he had no chance against a true child of God**, so Satan's attacks were to try and shake Jesus' identity and get Jesus out of right relation with God.

Even Satan's last temptation was a direct attack against Jesus' identity by offering the world if Jesus would worship him. Satan was trying to get Jesus to believe that he was greater than Jesus. Satan was trying to make Jesus see in the present moment rather than in the eternal.

**This is Satan's common attack against Christians' identity: to make them see themselves in light of their present struggles rather than who they are in light of eternity.**

### **Process of Claiming Our Identity**

We cannot form our identity completely around who we are in the moment and what we are doing. Otherwise we will be easily shaken by the enemy and we will never achieve our true calling. When a person is saved they do not automatically become a super, mature, strong believer. They simply get saved. In order to become the super, mature, strong believer they are called to be they must go through a process that the apostle Paul mentions in two separate letters...

**Ephesians 4:22-24 – To put off your old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and **to put on the new self**, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

**Colossians 3:9-10 – Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self** with its practices and **have put on the new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of our transformation. **You get saved when you believe in God. You are changed when you realize He believes in you.** This change happens as you study His Word and learn how to pray and connect with Him. John 8:32 says,

“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” The more you know the truth and the identities God speaks over you, the more secure and strong you are as a believer.

While directing the healing and deliverance ministry I have discovered that a person’s renouncing of false identities and claiming their true identity in Christ has been even more powerful than their repenting of sins. It’s one thing to repent of looking at pornography and struggling with masturbation. It’s another thing to renounce, or forsake, shame and addiction and to claim acceptance in Christ and the truth that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. For others who have had to forgive their father or their mother, even greater breakthrough came when they renounced the lies they received from their abusive mom or dad: “I renounce that I am worthless. I declare I am precious and honored in God’s sight. I renounce that I’m a failure. I declare I can do all things through Christ. I renounce that I’m alone. I declare I am part of the body of Christ.” All the things renounced were lies the enemy had put over them because of sin and trauma. And all the things declared were direct truths from Scripture. God’s Word has power and authority!

Just listen to the authority as I share just a few of the many identities every Christian has in Christ: “I am a new creation. I am redeemed. I belong to God. I am sealed and anointed with the Holy Spirit. I am dead to sin. I am alive in Christ. I am free. I am a child of God. I am loved by the Father. I am His treasured possession. I am the light of the world. I am a friend of God. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I am precious and honored in His sight. I am made in the image of God...” There are so many more! In fact, if you join a community group with our church you will receive a document with descriptions of at least 35 identities every Christian has through God. And there are many more!

It can be difficult to claim a truth when you have believing a lie all your life. As the apostle Paul teaches, we must put off the old self and forsake or renounce the lies the enemy has put over us. Then we can put on our new self by claiming the truth in God’s Word. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free! So the steps go: “I renounce this lie, and I declare this truth!”

The more you are grounded in your identity in Christ, the more grounded you will be in your life. The more you honor God’s identity and the more you become secure in your own, the stronger your faith and your trust in God will be.

One of the visions God has given me for New Philadelphia Sillim is that this will be a church grounded in the Word of God. This church will be secure in their identity in Christ. This church will be mature and not shaken by the enemy’s attacks. The church will be set and secure in God’s love.

You see, love is mature when there is recognition of many identities in a person and not just one or two. I remember asking a friend dating a young girl and was asked what he liked about her and he responded, “Well... she’s cute. When she’s angry... she looks cute. When she’s sad... she looks so cute.” He didn’t have much more to say. We all laughed about his response. There wasn’t much depth. **A truly mature love recognizes many attributes in the other person and celebrates them.** For God, the Bible is not just loaded with descriptions of His attributes and His glory, but also of our identity in Him. God’s love for us is mature. It is deep. It is powerful!

I want to encourage you all to sign up for a community group if you haven’t already. It’s in these community groups that you will be able to go deeper in the truth and also affirm one

another in your identity in Christ. We were made not be alone but rather to have family. Sign up for community group and get built up in the family of God.

### **Our Unique God-Given Identity**

This message does not end with just our identity in Christ as Christians. As humans, we all possess similar identities: we can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. We walk. We talk. We all have a brain, a heart, a stomach, and other organs. But while we are all the same in some ways, we are also very different: ethnicity, height, weight, language, gifting, personality and other areas. The same goes for us as Christians. While we all have the same God given identities as children of God, we also have our own unique identity that God has given us.

**God has created each of us with our own unique design, purpose, and grace.** Turn to Romans 12:3-8...

Romans 12:3-8 – For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. **Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us**, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

We each possess gifts that differ according to the grace God has given to us. We are part of the body of Christ, but each of us has our own purpose and our own unique design.

For New Philadelphia Church, our vision is to raise up an army of mighty warriors. Our prayer meetings are marked by strong intercession and our leadership training is meant to strengthen every believer into a soldier of Christ who can fight and make a difference. But while we are all part of the army of God, within an army are different roles: frontline soldier, officer, medic, engineer, chaplain, surveillance, and many others. Every person in the army is required to fight if a battle requires it, but the army functions best when each person is working according to his role and expertise. One of the dangers of so many churches today is that their members are boxed into one or two roles: main leader such as pastor or worship leader, and member who attends and sits in the chair. So for many churches, the vast majority identifies their Christianity as meaning they go to church, maybe do a little bit of volunteering there, and that is it. They have little calling and little passion because their gifts are not being used. For New Philadelphia Church, one of the dangers is that every leader can feel like they must be a frontline soldier at all times and pray really hard at every prayer meeting. But like I just shared, in every army there are many different roles that are all important. Some of you were made to discern like radar what is happening in the spirit. Some of you were meant to serve in areas like tech team or service team to keep our services moving well. There are many different roles, and we cannot completely box all of us into just one.

The worst thing you can do to someone is stifle who God made them to be. My wife is very creative, so to not allow her to do anything creative and to keep her from places of creativity can lead to depression for her. God has made me to be a shepherd and to care for people, so to lock me away in an engineering cubicle by myself, which was my original line of work, can cause emptiness to well up within me. Many boys in the world today are losing

themselves to the rigid school system and so their energy, creativity and vigor for life is being drained away. We need outlets for our design and our giftings. We need to develop them for God's glory.

How sad would it be if after God gave wings to eagles, they never discovered their ability to fly? How sad would God be? The eagles could probably still live and get by, but their life would be complete sadness compared to if they had discovered their ability fly and used it. God doesn't want us to be grounded birds. He wants us to discover our unique abilities and giftings and learn how to develop them. God wants us all to fly, in our own unique way.

Here are some simple questions to help you discover your true, unique identity in Christ...

1. What are you exceptionally good at?
2. At church, what are you most blessed by? Getting deep in the Word? Worship and praise? Fellowship with people? Serving in the background? Praying for people? Teaching? Prophesying? Evangelizing?
3. What are some specific identities that have been spoken over you?

For each of those questions, you might not have any clear answers yet, and that's okay. **We are meant to discover these things as we walk with God and as we are a part of the body of Christ.** Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." It's as we delight ourselves in Him that we begin to discover who we really are and who God has called us to be. And that is when we experience life to the full!

For me, as I've walked with God a lot of different identities have been spoken over me. A few of them have really stood out and been repeated by many: "Beloved, Messenger, Warrior, and Shepherd." My own identity statement is, "I am God's beloved son, called to go deep into His heart. I am God's messenger, called to declare the stirrings of His heart. I am God's warrior, called to deliver and commission God's people. I am God's shepherd, called to father a fatherless generation." It's from this personal identity statement that I know better what I'm called to do and what I'm not called to do. My challenge for each of you in this room this week is to list some identities about yourself and pray through them, and then come up with your own identity statement. I recommend sharing it with your small group leader or with a pastor and getting their prayer and input. Then begin to claim your God given identity, just as you need to be claiming your identity in Christ.

The word for gift in the Bible is charisma, which is from the root word charis, which means "grace." The giftings we possess are actually grace from God. **If I have grace for something, then it will be easier for me than other things.** Personally, I am introverted so I am not gifted at interacting with a lot of people. The worst places for me are wedding receptions or large parties. You can usually find me at the end of a table, trying to just talk to one or two people and avoid the larger groups. What I am gifted at though is shepherding. So ironically, while fellowshiping with large groups of people can wear me out, shepherding them is actually easier for me. I've also been blessed with grace to be a messenger of God's heart. So preaching for me, if I have a word from the Lord, is usually smooth and encouraging for me. But if I'm not confident in the word I'm preaching, or if I'm just asked to emcee or talk in front of large groups, then I get really drained. I don't have much grace for emceeing. I can do it, but it's exhausting for me. Unless I have a message or unless I'm shepherding, I would rather not be acknowledged among a large group of people and would rather keep to myself or just with a few close people. **Grace makes things easier. Your gifting should flow and not be exhausting.**

Now, I would have never known I am really His messenger if I hadn't stepped out. Messenger was spoken over me when I was a younger believer, long before I became a preaching pastor here at New Philadelphia Church. When I was first scheduled to preach years ago I would have trouble sleeping for the week leading up to when I would preach because I was so nervous. I easily could have just turned down the preaching requests and kept comfortable, but I knew God had anointed me as a messenger and that I needed to learn to spread my wings and fly. Even today I still get anxious a bit about preaching, but it's gotten a lot better. And I think many of you would agree that it would have been a shame if I had never tried preaching and buried those gifts within me.

Some of you are called to be mighty prophets. Some of you are called to be CEO's. Some of you are called to be creative innovators that will bring forth breakthroughs that will help bless society. Personally, I believe I'm called to be a father to a fatherless generation, not just to the orphans at the children's home where I currently serve but a father for all the orphans of Korea. Clearly I am not there yet, but I pray into it. I want God's will for me to be fully completed in my life.

Many people want to get to the pinnacle of their calling right away: "I'm a dancer, I want to be the best dancer right now. I'm a singer, I want to be popular right now. I'm teacher, I want to be at a university right now. I'm an author, I want to write a best-seller right now." But we have to understand that our development takes time. **And for the greater callings, usually more time of refining is required.** The more gradual the ascent up the mountain, the safer we will be, protected from pride and the dangers of inexperience.

Officers in the army should never start behind a desk; they should start at boot camp just like every other soldier. Then they will be able to understand the soldiers under them and care for them. For many of the great people in the Bible, God called them to be shepherds first before they could lead His people. Many of the great people in the Bible also had what many call "desert seasons" before they stepped into their calling. Moses spent 40 years in the desert as a shepherd. David ran from Saul in the wilderness for many years. The apostle Paul slipped away to Arabia after his conversion to grow with the Lord. Even Jesus Himself took 40 days in the desert before He started His ministry. It's in the desert that we can get the foundation of our identity set in Him. It's in the desert seasons that we can fully learn and experience how we are God's children and how He cares for us. Our dependence and worship to Him is not based upon circumstances in the desert. Our identity and self-worth are not based on our gifts when we are in the desert. Instead, our identity and self-worth are based simply on the truth that God has given us through His Word. This must always be the foundation to our life.

So do not be discouraged if you feel you have no idea of your unique design and calling God has given you. First get your identity in Christ set. Then pray and ask God for clarity about yourself and spend time with fellow believers and learn your giftings. Learn what blesses you and what is easy for you, and also learn what is a lot harder.

The last thing I want you to get from this message is this: **Developing your true identity requires faith and practice. Faith and practice.** Faith comes from hearing the Word of God and claiming it. If someone declares you are an encourager, begin to claim it! Speak it over your life! "I am an encourager." And begin to practice it. Pray for and look for opportunities where you can encourage people. Develop the gifting God has given you, even if you don't like it at first. You will soon begin to experience a deeper self-satisfaction and contentment than you ever had before.

## **Conclusion**

My hope is that each of you will take today's word to heart. I hope that each of you will learn your identity in Christ and begin claiming it more, so that your foundation in the Lord will be strong and secure. And I also hope that as each of you attend here that you will begin to discover your own unique design, purpose, and gifting. Take time to reflect on what has been spoken over you and on the moments in life and ministry where you've felt a grace about you. And get involved in the small group ministry so that you can continue to learn and develop the gifts you possess. I want to see everyone in this church learning to spread their own unique God-given wings and fly in the Lord.

\*Close in prayer