

Let us pray,

Lord, may we find our identity in you and be who you wish us to be.

Amen.

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*What do you call an identity stealing spaghetti?*

*An impasta!*

*What do you call a baker who has no identity?*

*John Dough*

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In all seriousness lets talk about identity.

Identity is something that is so very important to all of us.

We spend the vast majority of our lives trying to figure out who we are.

I don't know about you though, I am almost 34 and I still am learning new things about myself, and "who" I am.

For most of us, especially when we are younger, our identity is given to us.

Our parents or guardians pick our names for us.

We are given one or both of our parents surnames.

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For most of our childhood we are living into our parents or guardians shadow.

We do what they want, and I don't know about you, but for a lot of my childhood I wanted to be like my parents and do what they did for jobs and hobbies.

But as we grow older, we start to form new interests of our own, we have our own experiences outside of our family, and we start to form an identity apart from them.

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In America, this is expected.

But in ancient Mesopotamia, this was not the norm.

Most people did not do new things.

Most people did what their parents did.

Most people stayed in their lane, and did not venture outside of their family.

We can even see here, Jesus addresses Simon as Simon Son of Jonah.

Simon's identity was tied to his father's identity.

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But no longer!

Jesus takes Simon's old identity, and replaces it with a new identity.

Peter, the rock of Christ's church.

No longer is Simon tied to what his family did.

No longer is his identity intertwined with his fathers.

Simon is now Peter, and he is the foundation, the rock of this movement that Christ and he and the rest of the disciples are doing.

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Jesus reminds us that identity is not stagnant.

It isn't something that is set in stone.

Pun intended.

It is in flux.

It is constantly moving and reinventing itself.

We like to think that we are this one thing.

Or that we need to figure out “who” we are in this world, as if all of us have this one identity in life.

But I do not think that is the christian world view.

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Our identity is not something that the world can define for us and it is not something that our parents or guardians can define for us either.

I mean, could you imagine if Peter said to Jesus, no thanks.

Im good, Id actually rather be Simon son of Jonah, because that's who my father wanted me to be.

Peter maybe wouldn't have even made it into the history books.

Sometimes I think, we think, that Jesus wants us to be stubborn in what we believe.

But we confuse conviction with inflexibility or mulishness.

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We look at changing our minds as some sort of rejection to our faith or a corruption of who we believe God is.

Or sometimes I think we can become afraid of learning too much, knowing too much, that our faith can come into question.

But for me, the only reason that our faith would come into question because we learned too much, is because we are basing our faith on what we currently know now and don't allow room for our understanding of God to be expanded.

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Just like God's identity is not fully realized by us humans.

Our own identity is not fully realized by us.

We can change, grow, and be changed.

God does not want us to be afraid of the future.

God does not want us to be afraid of change, in all aspects of the word.

In fact, what God truly wants from us is to be moldable clay that is open to the spirit's molding.

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Identity and faith is not something that we decide one day.

It is a constant every changing reality that is shaped by experience, knowledge and the spirit's work in our lives.

God does change God's mind on things because God loves us and wants to meet us where we are.

But who God is at God's foundation, well the reality is, we just learn more about that part of God every generation.

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We learn more about the grace and mercy that God bestows on us.

We learn more about the love that God has for this world.

Our understanding of God changes, but that doesn't mean that God has somehow changed or gotten less strict.

We just learn more about how gracious, and merciful and loving God actually is!

I am not saying that everything in the past is bad or that everything in the future is good.

But what I am trying to say, is that when it comes to identity and faith, we need to be more open to the spirit that is within us.

If Peter wasn't willing to change, he would never have been the leader of this wonderful faith of ours.

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May we be more open to the spirits work that is within us.

May we learn to be less stubborn to our own views of the world, and rather, allow God to continuously shape who we are and who we are called to be.

May we learn to hold fast and firm God's promises, but for everything else, lets be moldable, flexible, God-made clay.

Amen.