



We are Rich

A New Identity

Scripture: Ephesians 1:1-2

Subject: Identity

Central Theme:

Objective Statement: There is an identity for a believer in Christ that should be primary. Paul points to this identity as he lays out the theme of the letter of Ephesians with three assertions.

Keyword: Assertions

Points:

Assertion #1- The Author's Identity. (v.1)

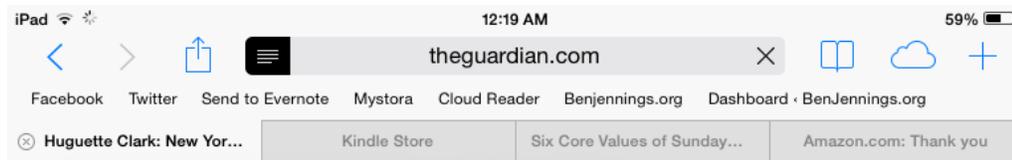
Assertion #2- The Recipient's Identity. (V.1)

Assertion #3- The Source of that Identity. (v.2)

Introduction:

Connection:

- I want to read you an interesting and perplexing story.
- It's an incredible story at its heart, that will help me to make a meaningful point.
- It's about a woman named Huguette Clark who died at age 104 in New York.



Huguette Clark: New York's billionaire recluse dies, aged 104



Huguette Clark, the Manhattan billionaire who inherited a Montana copper fortune, pictured in 1930 in Reno, Nevada. Photograph: AP

For 80 years her life was set in aspic, preserved as if in a time warp in an ever-shrinking social world that ended with her death this week aged 104 in a hospital room accompanied only by the nurses caring for her and her beloved French dolls.

But Huguette Clark leaves behind her a fortune estimated as at least \$500m (£307m) and a story of eccentricity and loss anchored in another age.

For the past 22 years or more, she has lived under a false name in a hospital room, most recently in the Beth Israel Medical Centre, New York, where she died on Tuesday, with no one other than her lawyer allowed to visit her. The last known photograph of her shows her standing on a steamship swaddled in furs; it was taken in 1930.

As MSNBC's investigative reporter Bill Dedman, who has written the definitive work on Clark and last year tracked her down to a bustling corridor in the hospital, has put it: "She wasn't sick. She was reclusive. She made Howard Hughes seem outgoing."

By choosing to closet herself away at Beth Israel, Clark deprived herself of fabulous riches. Her inheritance included Bellosguardo, a mansion worth \$100m overlooking the Pacific in Santa Barbara, California, which she last visited 50 years ago, as well as the \$24m Le Beau Chateau, tucked among 21 hectares (52 acres) of land in Connecticut, which she bought in 1952 and expanded with an artist's loft but never occupied.

Above all, there was the Fifth Avenue apartment, distinguished by being the largest at that illustrious Manhattan address, with 42 rooms over one and a half floors of an entire block. She was last spotted there at least 22 years ago.

- Can you imagine having access to those kinds of resources and then living devoid of any of it?
- I've heard stories of people dying of malnutrition with bags of cash found in their closets and under their beds.
- They are very unusual stories because most people value the resources that they have enough to use them for those kinds of basic necessities.
- It's a tragic thing to be in need without really being in need.

- But if we are not careful, we will act exactly as those same kinds of people when it comes to our relationship with God.
- Today we are starting a series of messages that will take us verse by verse through the book of the Bible known as Ephesians.
- We call it a book, but it really is a letter. We'll talk about that a little bit today.
- In the first chapter of the book Paul communicates the contents of his prayer life for the reader that we will get into in the next few weeks.
- What's important for you to know is that in this prayer he declares a rather incredible prayer request.
- He tells this church in Ephesus that He has been praying that they would know how rich they are.
- He says multiple times in this first chapter that people who are saved are rich.
- One of the reasons that this is an interesting statement is that this letter is known as a "prison epistle".
- Paul wrote this letter from prison to the church he had started in Ephesus.
- The theme of this letter is that he was rich, and so are we who are what he calls "in Christ".
- So, we have named this series "We are rich".
- The problem is that too many Christians are just like Huguette Clark.
- Now I don't mean that you have 500 million dollars...
- When it comes to spiritual resources how many times have you thought...
 - "There is just no way I can beat this sinful habit. It controls me..."
 - "I could never serve like that. That person is just so used of the Lord and I'm just little old me..."
 - "There is no way that our Sunday School class could ever make that kind of a difference..."
 - "Our church should just be small. We can't change our community. We'll just keep "being faithful" and plodding along."
- Notice the Outline of the book:
 - Nature of the book of Ephesians- Chapter 1-3, Chapters 4-6
 - The first three chapters have no commands.

- They just make declarative statements. This is important to understanding the purpose of the book.
- The last three chapters start with chapter 4, verse 1 and so begin the commands—the imperatives in the book.
- What is established in the first three chapters is our identity.
- What is commended in the last three chapters is behavior born out of our identity.
- This is the overall message of the whole book. You can sum it up in two words: “In Christ”.
- Paul’s declaration to those who are in Christ is, among many other things, “You are rich...in Christ.” Then his command is this. “Act like it!”
- We’re going to spend a significant portion of the rest of this year walking through this book.
- I believe it is going to be life changing for many of you if you partner with God to let it be life changing for you.
- Why?
- Because once you get your identity right, once you get your theology right, then your living will be right.
- So many of you are trying to live the Christian life and you’re doing it completely devoid of the resources that you have.
- For those who are in Christ the issue is not a resource problem. The issue for so many of us is an access to resources problem.
- You are spiritually rich in Christ, and you are acting like spiritual pauper’s.
- When Paul wrote a letter, he often gave an indication of his theme for the entire letter.
- The theme of the letter to the Ephesians is our identity in Christ.
- And so today we’re going to look at the introduction of the book to see this theme:

Body:

There is an identity for a believer in Christ that should be primary. Paul points to this identity as he lays out the theme of the letter of Ephesians with three assertions.

Assertion #1- The Author's Identity. (V.1)

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

Explanation:

- Three important words come up in this first phrase.

A. Paul- He is the author of the book.

- Paul was in a prison with almost nothing to his name and he writes a book that declares that those of us who are in Christ are rich!
- Can just imagine a dialogue between Paul and his prison guard:
 - Guard: What are you writing?
 - Paul: A letter.
 - Guard: What's it about?
 - Paul: It's a letter to a church in Ephesus about how rich those who follow Christ are and how much power is available to them.
 - Guard: Rich? You're in a dungeon. You're not rich. Christians are some of the poorest people I know. And powerful? You're in a dungeon! You were powerful before you were a Christian Paul. Saul of Tarsus-- that guy had power. But Paul...no you're not powerful...
- Now here's the thing...I know it seems counter intuitive to think that we are rich and we can know that because of a guy who wrote a letter in a dungeon....
- But there are riches and power that we have access to that go way beyond worldly riches and worldly power and yet at the same time can affect our lives so much on this earth...
- What's important to see here is how he introduces himself.

B. An Apostle

- He calls himself and apostle.
- The word "apostle" means "sent one". One who is a delegate.
- This was an office in the local church in the first century.

- The qualifications for an apostle are found in Acts 1.
 - They are laid out because after Judas died one was needed to take his place. In fact, Acts tells us that someone taking that office was prophesied in the book of Psalms.
 - What were the qualifications?
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Acts 1:21-26

(21) Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

(22) Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

(23) And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

(24) And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

(25) That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

(26) And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

- Had to be a witness of the risen Christ.
- The ministry of the apostles was to help the early church be established by witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and making sure that Christ's doctrine was the doctrine for the New Testament church.

C. "of Jesus Christ"

- Paul says here in our text that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ.
- The word Jesus Christ appears as the third and fourth word in the letter (in the original Greek language- Παύλος, ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)
- This means he was sent by Jesus Christ.
- Paul's identity is set in these first four words of the book.
- Paul is his name. (That had been changed from Saul after his salvation).
- Apostle is his position and mission. He is one who is sent.
- Sent by who? Jesus.
- Who is Jesus? "Christ"- The Anointed One. The Chosen One.
- How did it happen?

D. "by the will of God"

- God chose Him for apostleship.

Application:

- Talk about identity!
- He didn't say, Paul, the tentmaker.
- He didn't say, Paul, the writer.
- He didn't say, Paul, the former killer of Christians.
- His identity was firmly fixed, here in writing, and tied to Jesus Christ.
- What was the authors identity? He was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Transition Sentence:

- Paul's identity was that he was "of Jesus Christ". Now let's look at how he identifies the recipients

Assertion #2- The Recipient's Identity

to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Explanation:

- Notice four more words in this phrase.

A. Saints

- The Greek word is "ἅγιοις" (hagios) and is translated here "saints".
- What an interesting word to call the recipients of a letter.
- You've heard some religious traditions use the word saint as a kind of attainment one achieves when they become really, really good.
- In the tradition I am thinking of there must be miracles associated with the persons life to be called a saint.
- Not just anyone can be a saint in this way of thinking.
- Yet, Paul is obviously addressing a church.
- If you read the whole book is pleading with them to know their identity in Christ and all of the resources that they have in Christ.
- He's not talking to one or two specially spiritual and religious people. No. He's talking to the whole church. He's calling all of those who are "full of faith in Christ at Ephesus" saints. "Sacred ones". "Set apart ones".

B. Ephesus

- Ephesus was an important Greek city, but by the time of Paul it had become the capital of the Roman province of Asia.

- WHERE IS EPHEBUS LOCATED?
 - It is in modern Turkey and in the western part of the region toward Greece. It had a major seaport that opened up into the Aegean Sea.
- But Ephesus was more than a cultural center; it served as the headquarters of the cult dedicated to the goddess “Artemis” (Greek name) or “Diana” (Roman name).
 - The temple of Artemis in Ephesus was considered one of the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.”
 - By the way, the TEMPLE of GOD in Jerusalem was also one of those remarkable “Wonders.”
- Paul’s fruitful ministry in Ephesus was well over 2 years and he initially faced little repercussion (Acts 19:11-20).
- However, when he opposed the idolatry of the Artemis cult, he began to experience significant opposition (19:21-27).
- When a riot broke out in the city, Paul was forced to leave Ephesus and he appointed Timothy to lead the Church there (19:28-41).
- This Epistle of Ephesians is his correspondence back to one of his favorite Churches.
- These people knew and loved Paul because he had been so instrumental in his life.

C. Faithful

- The idea here is not that there were two groups in Ephesus- saints and faithful. No. By faith we become part of God’s family. He is saying that the saints are the ones who by faith have trusted and are therefore...look at the next phrase...

D. In Christ Jesus

- This is the second time in the first sentence where Jesus Christ’s name is mentioned.
- These people weren’t particularly good and therefore achieved some saintly status because of their incredible achievement of faith and works.
- These people were saints because of Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross.

Application:

- Paul set his identity in Christ, and now He was affirming the Ephesian’s identity in Christ.
- Do you see the Holy Spirit’s thinking as He using the apostle (that He sent) to introduce this incredible letter? Our primary identity should be that we are in Christ.

Transition Sentence:

- Where did this identity originate? How did it come?

Assertion #3- The Source of our Identity

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Explanation:

- Here is the explanation of the source of this in Christ identity.
- Grace- This is the portion of the sermon where I get to affirm and explain the name of the series.
 - We are not rich because of us.
 - We are not rich because of our good works.
 - We are not rich because we deserve it.
 - We are not rich because we are so special or faithful.
 - We are rich in Christ Jesus because of His grace.
 - Grace is unmerited, unearned favor.
- Peace- This peace that we have is a positional peace that has lead to an experiential peace. We were enemies of God because of our sin, but by the grace of God, in Christ Jesus, we have been made at peace with God, and set apart as saints. We've been put into Christ Jesus.
- We are no longer at war with God. We are now at peace with God.
- And God's grace has been shown to us, because of what Jesus has done for us.

Application:

- We all ground our identity in something.
- I've noticed that men tend to size each other up. How do we do that? "Hi, my name is Ben Jennings. Hello Ben, what do you do for a living?"
- I am a _____ .
 - Mother/Father
 - Business man
 - Democrat/Republican
 - Marine, Sailor, Soldier
- The problem with every one of these identities is that they can go away.
- Another problem with these identities is that when you die and stand before God none of them will make you right with God outside of 1 identity. What is that identity?
- I am in Christ.
- Jeremiah put it this way:

Jeremiah 9:23-24

(23) Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: (24) But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

- You know the problem with intellect? It can go away.
- You know the problem with strength? It will go away.
- You know the problem with riches? Money tends to leave.
- But what will matter 100, 1000, and 1 million years from now is your relationship with God found in Christ.

Transition Sentence:

- We really are rich when we are in Christ, and that should be our first and primary identity.

Conclusion:

- But there is a problem with my entire sermon that I need to remedy right now in the conclusion. Maybe you've picked up on it.
- I've been talking about the fact that those of who are in Christ should make that our primary identity. We are rich in Christ. And that is true.
- But there is another group of people that are potentially here today, and you are not in Christ.
- Spiritually speaking you are not rich.
- In fact, Paul makes the case that those who are not in Christ are not only not spiritually rich...He makes the case that they are spiritually dead.
- If you are not in Christ, you don't just need spiritual resources...you need Spiritual life in the first place.
- Your identity isn't in Christ because that isn't who you are.
- And the problem is that the only thing your identity can be in is something that is temporary.
- We are not promised tomorrow. We aren't even promised the rest of today.

Inspiration:

- But there is good news. Jesus didn't just die for a select few. Jesus died for all.
- You can be saved and know it. Paul writes two incredible verses that I want to point to as we conclude today:

Ephesians 1:13-14

(13) In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

(14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 2:8-10

(8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

(9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.

(10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
