

Who are you? What is the source of your identity? How do you define yourself?

How do you introduce yourself in a greeting?

In an introduction, most of us probably identify ourselves by our work

Alternatively, we identify ourselves by that which uses the majority of our time

Our identity becomes "what we do"

Additionally, there is the question of how we feel about ourselves

Constant messages that we should lose weight, improve our appearance, etc

We should experience [...fill in the blank...]

The messages say we won't be truly happy until we achieve those things

At the same time, we're told we can do and be anything we want

Mixed messages—which often leave us unsatisfied

The world measures our worth by competencies, appearance, achievement, and productivity

Reality is that those measures are done in comparison to others

No wonder the pressure to get ahead leaves us all competing against each other

But we are part of this counter-cultural Kingdom of God

If this is our primary culture—we take our identity from the Kingdom of God, not the world

We move from finding our self-esteem and value in the world system to the Kingdom system

World: Measured through productivity, accomplishment, competition, doing

Kingdom of God: Given to us as a gift from God, grace, love, being

Our identity is in being a child of God—it is who we are, not what we do!

Romans 8:14-17

We do not earn our identity in God—it is simply a gift of being

We are created uniquely and given place in this world

This gift isn't of our doing nor do our efforts improve it—we simply are the children of God!

We are "human beings" not "human doings"—although we often act more like human doings

We are often driven to keep busy

How often do you find yourself answering the "how are you?" question with "keeping busy"?

We often act as if there is inherent value in being busy

It is a challenge to center ourselves in our being—being in the Kingdom of God

Being a child of God

It is a process of letting go of the world's messages of how to attain value and purpose

Then simply sinking into the deep well of the Presence of God

Moving from a base of doing to a sense of being is difficult for some of us

Particularly those of us who find joy in doing

But it isn't the doing that gives us value

Rather that joy of doing is an expression of our being

Some of us are wired to find our joy in being—in being in the present moment

In being present to others—or our being is expressed in thoughts—or discernment, etc

While others of us find our joy in being expressed through our doing

But this kind of doing is very different in that it flows with joy out of us

It isn't self serving—rather it is this flow that serves others

In this way, who we are/what we do flows from our center of being

"...for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10

Joy is our new expression of living life in the Kingdom of God

The world is searching for the elusive happiness and tries to hoard it when it finds it

This happiness is dependent on everything going well and feeling good about it

But what happens when things don't go well?

The Kingdom of God never promises happiness

Jesus even tells us that we will suffer, just as he did

But when our being is solidly centered in the Kingdom of God and we take value in that

We learn that we can meet any obstacle with Jesus at our side

While the circumstances may be difficult—we aren't alone

Even if my body dies—I win in that I live with Christ

Finding this center of being in the Kingdom of God means that we can live with joy

Joy is one of the signs of the Kingdom of God—of living with the Spirit

*...the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV*

Joy is a by-product of the trusting, adoring gaze we give God in all circumstances

Jesus has given us his joy and in that, we live...

Right in the middle of John 15, where Jesus talks about abiding in him, being his friends, etc

*I have said these things to you so that **my joy may be in you**, and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11 NRSV*

In claiming this new found identity as a gift from God—our place in the Kingdom of God

We are now called the children of God and joint heirs with Christ

We share equally in the inheritance of the full Kingdom of God

All resources of the Kingdom of God are ours—fully available to everyone of us

To be a joint heir with Christ—means that everything Christ had—we have

Yet we often live as if we don't deserve it—impoverished and withdrawn

Story about the cruise patrons, who ate in their room, not knowing meals are included

If the Kingdom of God is now—the inheritance is now as well

We aren't joint heirs with Christ, meaning that we will eventually live with him

We have our inheritance now—we live fully into everything that God has for us