

I heard about this elderly lady. She came into church one Sunday morning and a friendly usher greeted her and said "Maam where would you like to sit?" She said "I would like to sit in the very front row." And he said, "Oh no Maam, you don't want to do that. Our Pastor is very boring. He'll put you to sleep. Let me seat you somewhere else." She was appalled. She said "Sir, do you know who I am?" He said "no." She said "I am the Pastor's Mother." He hung his head in embarrassment and finally he looked up and said "Maam, do you know who I am." She said "no." He said "Thank God."

I want to begin my sermon with a question, do you know who we are?

The answer to this question will be different for each of us because of the many roles we have in our lives. We could be a spouse, parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, farmer, doctor, nurse or any one or more of thousands of roles.

We receive our identity from others, from the expectations of friends, from the labels society puts upon us, and from the influence of family.

There is one identity that all of us who have come to faith have. We are Christians. we no longer allow others to tell us who we are. Christ now claims us and instructs us. There are no barriers of class or ethnic segregation. The Christian identity includes all of us. Paul says in Galatians 3:26, "for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." All who accept Christ as their Savior becomes members of God's family.

Following World War II, there were more than two hundred French soldiers with amnesia who returned to Paris. They had been prisoners in Japanese camps and suffered through horrible ordeals of privation and torture. These men had been so psychologically devastated by their imprisonment that they lost the conscious awareness of who they were and where they had lived before the war.

Most of the soldiers' identities were quickly established from Red Cross records or with the help of fellow prisoners, but after all known efforts were exhausted, there were still thirty-two men whose existence seemed impossible to trace. Not only were there no records of them, but none of the other soldiers knew anything about them. The doctors who were treating these thirty-two men believed that their chance for recovery would be impossible unless they were reconnected with family and friends.

Someone proposed publishing photographs of the men on the front page of newspapers throughout the country. A date, time, and place of meeting would also

be given, hoping anyone having information about them would come. The plan was implemented and French newspapers soon published the pictures, adding that the Paris Opera House would open its doors for the potential identification and connection with loved ones.

On the assigned day, a huge crowd gathered inside the opera house to view the veterans. Every seat was taken and people spilled out onto the streets. Finally, in a dramatic entrance, the first of the amnesia victims walked onto the stage of the darkened room and slowly turned around under the glare of the spotlight, giving everyone a full view. Then, according to instruction, he and the other thirty-one soldiers who followed asked the same pleading question: "Does anybody out there know who I am . . . does anybody know who I am?"

Thankfully, many of the men were soon reunited with their families.

This is the same question that all of humanity is asking---"Does anybody out there know who I am?" So what is the answer? For Christians, the answer is clear. We are children of God.

Being whole in life and having meaning in life are not the result of what we own or don't own or what we have done or what we have not done. Our lives have meaning because we are children of God. The only equation that works in our lives is us plus Christ equals wholeness and mercy. God wants us to continually pursue the reign of his kingdom in our lives where we submit to his will. When we do this, we will see new ways to respond. So the most important things about us, our true identity, is that we are now sons and daughters of God.