

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

Our Deepest Identity

Beth Davis

Hey everybody. I'm Beth Davis, and today we're going to talk about rooting ourselves in our deepest identity. Would you pray with me? *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Come Holy Spirit, come Lord Jesus. God, we take this moment in our day to fix our eyes on You, to invite You into this moment, into this room, into our hearts again. And I ask You to give us the grace to know once more Your personal and profound love for each one of us. And we pray that in the name of Jesus. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

So, when I was in college, I went to school on a theatre scholarship. And one spring play, I remember I was cast in multiple roles, one of which was a man. Now, I had 2 distinct impressions during those rehearsals. The first was I couldn't believe how much I looked like my dad. And 2, I had this sort of silly, strange idea that when I was in costume, when I was in character, I was somehow invisible. Now, I know, I was in college. It doesn't make a lot of sense. But I think I believed that by changing my outward appearance so drastically, I could somehow move about in the world unseen, or unnoticed. So, I thought I would test this out.

One performance, I stepped out during intermission to get some air, and I saw a group of my friends standing outside the theater. So, I made my way casually over to them, kind of hung around the edge of their circle to see if any of them would notice me. And, sure enough, they noticed, gave me a bit of a sideways glance, and politely moved away. And I felt triumphant. I couldn't believe I'd fooled my friends. I got away with it. But just as I turned to go back in the theater, one of them came up by my side and whispered in my ear "Hi Beth." Ugh! I was disappointed, right. I was found out.

But there was a deeper part of me that was relieved that he saw me, that he knew me, that he called me by name. And I think in some ways, we've all done this, right. We might not put on a costume, or adopt a totally different character, but maybe we put more of ourselves out there and keep some of ourselves back. Maybe others have assigned a role to us, and we think "That's who I am. That's my identity. What I do, or what I have, or who I know." And we build our identities around these things. But our deepest identity, our truest identity, is as God's beloved sons and daughters. Now, interestingly enough, it's also the most common way that our identity is attacked, in our belovedness. It's the way that the

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enemy most painfully tries to create distance in our relationship with God: by attacking our role as His beloved sons and daughters.

Now, to demonstrate this, we're going to look at the gospel of Matthew too. A very common, familiar gospel, the gospel of Matthew, Chapter 3. If you've got a bible, would you read it with me, starting at verse 16. ***And when Jesus had been baptized, just as He came up out of the water, suddenly the heavens were open to Him, and He saw The Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said "This is My son. The beloved, with who I am well pleased."*** Now, a little context here: Jesus has done no ministry yet. He's performed no miracles. He's literally been living a hidden, quiet, family life for 30 years. And yet when He comes up out of the water, the father says about Him "This is My son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased." You can hear the father's pleasure, speaking over Jesus. This is His pride and joy. And Jesus hasn't done anything, and the father is well pleased because of who He is. Not what He's done.

The same is true for us, friends. You and I are the beloved of God. Not by virtue of anything we've said or done. You don't have to have any special gifts, you don't have to perform to be loved by God. It's simply because we are His that He calls us His beloved. He created us, because He wanted us. There's no performing necessary.

Now, something interesting happened. After the Father has just spoken these lavish words of love over Jesus, starting at chapter 4, verse 1: ***Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, and afterwards He was famished. The tempter came and said to Him "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."*** Now, let's pause here. Something to take note of, not just in the life of Jesus, but for our own lives, is that Jesus was exhausted, and hungry. And how often does spiritual attack or doubt, or strong emotions that maybe allow us to stray from the truth of God's love for us, that happens when we too are exhausted. The enemy sees an opportunity to come in and to speak a lie, to plant an untruth in our hearts, to give us doubt. So we can look to the example of Jesus to find out what to do when our identity is under attack. Jesus answered him "It is written." Meaning He didn't use His own reasoning, His own words to prove the Devil wrong. No, He went to the word, He spoke Scripture, and this is true for us too. We've got to know God's word, we've got to know what He says about us, we've got to speak it out.

Jesus said "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Every word. That's His food, the word of God. And what's the

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last thing the Father spoke about Jesus? “This is My beloved Son.” So when the enemy says “If You are the Son of God.” When the enemy plants that seed of doubt, “If You are the Son of God.” Jesus says “The last thing that the Father said about Me is that I’m the beloved, and I’m going to choose to believe Him.” And this is a lesson for us, that when that doubt comes, when those lies come, when we begin to believe that we don’t have anything to offer, or what we’ve done is who we are, we can speak the truth. “I am the beloved Son of God. I am the beloved daughter of God.”

Now, let me ask you: what’s the last thing the Father has said about you? Are you thinking? What’s the last thing that God said about you? Now, let me give you a few ground rules here: God only speaks good things over us. So when’s the last time you were encouraged in prayer? Maybe go back to your journal, spend some time in adoration perhaps, and ask the Lord “Who am I to You? Let me see myself the way You see me.” We’ve got to root ourselves in this reality, and we do that by reading God’s word, the truth about us, that we are His beloved sons and daughters, we believe it, and then we speak it out. This is the key to a deep and intimate union with God, is believing who we are because He says it’s who we are. You, my friends, are beloved sons and daughters of God. And I pray that today you will root yourself in that reality, and that God will pour out His grace that you would know it even more. Would you pray with me?

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, You are so good, and You love us so much. Thank You for calling us by name. Thank You for calling us beloved. And Lord, would You give us Your spirit of truth, shine Your light on the lies that have been spoken over us, the lies and the labels that we’ve believed. And I ask You, Holy Spirit, right now to bring one of those lies into the light. I ask for the grace, God, to ask You the truth, and I ask for Your spirit, to help us to live in that truth. Thank you, Jesus. And we pray all this in Your most holy name. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.