

What Is That to You?

John 21:15-22

Oct 11, 2020

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/what-is-that-to-you/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

[Offertory Song: Don't You Want Somebody to Love by Jefferson Airplane]

Prayer

Lord God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come thou fount of every blessing. And help us sing your praises, in Jesus's name. Amen.

Message

That's #47 in the Presbyterian hymnal... (laughs)

These are challenging times... and you know what bugs me? Bubbly Christians that act like nothing's wrong and everything is right, who go around constantly cheery and praising God... I think: *Don't they know that we're commanded to weep with those who weep?*

You know what else bugs me? Sad Christians who act like Jesus didn't rise from the dead, who go around constantly feeling the pain of this fallen world and everyone's sorrow... I think: *Don't they know that we're commanded to rejoice with those who rejoice?*

But you know what really chaps my hide? Conservative Christians... As if it's all about conserving the past, and nothing should ever change.

But the ones that really bug me are Progressive Christians... It's like they're totally unaware that it's possible to progress right off of a cliff.

And what about Christians that are all into *feelings*? (Frances is like that--we'll be having a good theological argument, and she'll want to know how it makes of us all feel! As if it's all about the heart or maybe the soul, the psyche... "*Tell me about your mother...*" psychology. That bugs me.)

And Christians that think it's all about the mind? Arrogant and obnoxious. And what about Christians that say, "Well, it's all about *what you do*, your strength..." Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength. They all bug me.

Don't Contemplative Christians kind of bug you? Go meditate already! And how about the ones that are always having *revelations* and *visions* and *words of knowledge*? I think "*Hey what makes you so special?*"

But what really irks me are Christians who are always talking about how *beloved* they are, while I work non-stop trying to feed the sheep, while God leads me from one trial to the next... and they just rest their head on Jesus's chest...

Well, I just needed to get that off of my chest... Well, anyway:

John 21:15-17 · When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.”

This is the conversation Jesus has with Peter on the shore of the sea, after he's risen from the dead.ⁱ And Peter has denied him three times. Jesus continues...

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.)

As most of you know, Peter was crucified, upside down, in Rome, under Nero in 64 AD, about thirty years after this conversation. Only John is thought to have died of natural causes, rather than torture or martyrdom like the rest of the disciples.

¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, (The “Beloved Disciple” is John who's recording this incident. By referring to himself as the beloved, he's not saying that Jesus didn't love the others—John tells us “God is Love.” I think he calls himself “the disciple that Jesus loved,” because that's the only thing that mattered to him.)

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against [Jesus] during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” ²² Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!”

“What is that to you?” There are so many things going on in these amazing verses—and I've preached on these verses in the past, and that message can be found online if you're interested.ⁱⁱ But this morning, I'd just like to focus on this question:

“What is that to you?”

So, look around this room; look at the people... *“What is that to you? What are they to you?”* Now look at someone.

- If God blesses them with a long and relatively pain free life, what is that to you?
- If they are gifted with prophetic words and visions, what is that to you?
- If they have a great heart, soul, mind, or strength, what is that to you?
- If they're progressive or conservative, bubbly or sullen, what is that to you?

Hopefully, you're aware that I was just pretending when I listed all those types of Christians that bugged me at the start. I was pretending—I basically listed every type of Christian. I was pretending.... But, of course, I was also not pretending at all. Something in me wants to own it all, be it all... that is, be the best at everything including humility. Something in me is trying to get me entirely alone—king of my own kingdom, my kingdom of *only me*.

You know, Peter and John were competitors. Matthew records how Jesus called Peter and his brother Andrew as they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee.ⁱⁱⁱ And then right down the shore, he called two more fishermen, also brothers, named James and John. So, Peter and John were competitors... And they were both two of Jesus's closest friends—he made them brothers.

So, you get the picture, right? It's the people I love the most that I'm tempted to hate the most. Since second grade, I have had a friend named Alan. We played soccer together, ran cross country together, went to school together—but Alan was always a little faster than me, a little more coordinated than me... and smarter than me.

In high school, I met Mark. No one was as funny as Mark... and I wanted to be Mark. So it made me happy when people didn't laugh at Mark's jokes but sometimes laughed at mine.

My senior year, I got the closest thing to a brother that I've every known. He lived at my house, and he was spiritual—you know, gifts, the whole thing. He even had stories of being miraculously called by God as an evangelist. So, when he'd get caught up in some sin, I'd feel better about myself. And when he did *not* lead people to the Lord... it made me happy... It's hard for me to imagine anything more twisted or evil than that.

St Paul wrote, "We view no one according to the flesh." Now that doesn't simply mean "a body," but "a body in competition with other bodies"—it's what Darwin described as "the survival of the fittest." It's what Jesus described as sin. It's the desire to beat your neighbor, rather than serve your neighbor, sacrifice for your neighbor, love your neighbor. It's the thought that you can win, if only everyone else would lose.

So, Jesus asks Peter, "What is that to you? What is John to you?"

Sometimes people ask, "What difference does our theology make?" And the answer seems so big, I can barely respond.

It hasn't always been this way, but for the last fifteen hundred years, most of the institutional Church would say that the line separating good and evil runs between people that form two distinct groups, both created by God. Some would argue that God decided on this division before he created any of these people, and so he chose some to choose the good, and some to choose the evil. Others would argue that God will decide on this division after he finds out whether or not these people do in fact choose the good or the evil... because right now, he just doesn't know.

But you see, either way, if this is true, then every person you meet could ultimately be someone God loves, or someone God relentlessly torments in ceaseless anger. If you think that God has already

decided, it makes you rather cautious about connecting to another individual whom God might endlessly hate.

And if you think God has yet to decide, it makes you feel like you have to save other people from God, the Savior, *while* at the same time, secretly hoping that those people won't be saved because God might grade on a curve; so, the worse your neighbor is, the better you will look in comparison.

So, Jesus says, "What is that to you, Peter?"

"What is it to you that John will be exiled on the island of Patmos and receive an ecstatic breath-taking revelation of me?"

"What is it to you that Alan is smart, Mark is funny, and Andrew preached a great sermon to people that had never heard of me?"

"What is their difference; what is their individual uniqueness to you, Peter?"

"Is it a gift or a threat; is it a blessing or a curse; is it heaven or is it hell?"

"Does my fiery love for them thrill you, or does it burn you?"

"What is John to you, Peter?"

Well, maybe that question should make us ask another question: "What is John to God?"

Maybe we could just attempt a 20,000-foot, flyover, simplistic answer based on what we've preached the last few years: What is John, what is your neighbor, what are the people in this room, to God-- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

[Image: Slide with words: "What is a person to... " with bullet points of the following:]

- God the Father: The Creator

Listen to Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:14: "I know that whatever God does [*makes*] endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. ¹⁵ That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by" [*been driven away*, ESV].

Well, if you are something that God *does*, or makes, this verse has remarkable implications for you, doesn't it? Nothing can be added to you; nothing can be taken away from you; you have already been; and who you will be already is. You are eternal...

...if you are something that *God has done*.

That verse has remarkable implications for you... and for your *ego*—your ego, which is constantly trying to add to you, take from you, and tell you that you need to be what you've never been.

It has remarkable implications for you and for everyone around you. Let's take John as an example. What is John, to God, his Father?

John (or plug in the name of your neighbor, your enemy, your wife)— If John is something that God has done, then John endures forever. Nothing can be added to John or taken from John. God has done this that all should stand in awe before him. The John that is, already has been; the John that is to be already is; and God seeks the John that has been driven away.

"That's who John is to me," says God. "Now what is John to you?" asks Jesus.

You know most of us see a person at one moment in space and time, but God the Father created space and time. For him, you are always finished and always brand new—that is, “eternal.” Even physicists now tell us that if there is a Creator, then for this Creator, that perception of each of us must somehow be true. God doesn’t see one slice of you, but all of you, beginning to end, as if “It is finished.” We have a hard time imagining that, and yet every father or mother experiences something like that.

When I think of my son, Jon, I don’t only think of a successful young counselor in Seattle. I think of that, but I also think of my three-year old in the toy aisle at Walmart, who had just had an accident in his underpants, but looks up at me with those big, bright eyes that reflect my love, and says, “*But you’re still proud of me, right, Daddy?*” And I can scarcely contain my passion for who he is and who he will always be.

You see? That *trust in me*, expressed in that moment, is eternal treasure. It’s inconceivable to me that he could ever not be.... And please understand, I’m just beginning to see.... But the Creator, God our Father, already knows.

[Video: short video clip “Self in Time” plays, describing the dimensions we are familiar with: length, width, and depth, and then discusses the fourth dimension: “duration,” which would look like an elongated snake, with our young, embryonic self at one end, and our deceased self at the other. But because we live in the third dimension, we can all only see 3-D cross-sections of our fourth dimensional self.]

God sees all of you, but he doesn’t see a snake... And yet, there is something snakelike, something evil, in all people, isn’t there?

So where did it come from? Does God “do evil?”^{iv} Well, we’ve seen that evil really isn’t something that’s done, but that which is not done—that which God does not do. God is Love, and “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”^v Love makes you, “you.”

So, is there a “you” that God does not do? Well, maybe there is a “you” that you imagine that you do? And any “you” that you imagine that “you” do, is a false “you,” for God who is Love does everything, and apart from him you can do nothing.

So maybe that “you” that you imagine “you” do is the spawn of Satan, the father of lies, as Jesus calls the Devil in John 8.^{vi}



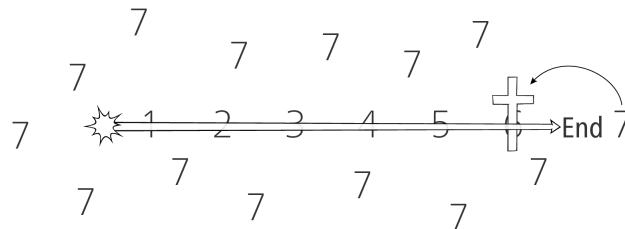
You have a shadow self, but here's good news: There can be no shadow self without a real self to cast a shadow in the presence of the Light. You have a false self, but there can be no false self unless there's a true self that the Devil can tell lies about... no evil without the Good that the evil infects.

So, in the words of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "The line between good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties—but right through every human heart."^{vii}

You have emptiness in you that is evil within you, in space and time; but God will fill you, and has already filled you in eternity—nothing can be added to you, nothing can be taken from you, you've already been and will always be.^{viii}

You are eternal... even if, you're still being created, or revealed, in space and time and don't know it quite yet.

Now, we can't comprehend that, but even physicists say, "It must be something like that," and lo and behold, Genesis, Revelation, and all of Scripture, has testified to this all along. Most of you remember this:



We exist in time like the seven days of Creation, but the Seventh Day is also an eternal day or Eighth day—*Shemini Atzeret* as the Jews call it: God’s Sabbath.

There is a reality in which “Everything is Good,” just as God says at the end of the Sixth Day of Creation. A reality in which, “It is finished,” just as the Word of God says, hanging on the tree in the Garden at the sixth hour of the day, on the sixth day of the week, at the end of the Sixth Day of Creation.

If you didn’t follow all of that, I’m just saying that your neighbor is an eternal treasure that Love is revealing in space and time. Your neighbor is a Love story already written but waiting to be read by all. In the moment, your neighbors are hidden from themselves and from you in the pages of history—yet God knows who they are; he’s already written the book.

God knows that Peter isn’t just Simon the Coward; he’s the “Rock.” And John isn’t just an angry fisherman; John is the Beloved.

If you aren’t created by God, according to the Bible you are nothing but evil; and actually you don’t even exist... there are no self-made men.

And if you are created by God, you are good—for “everything created by God is good,” writes Paul in 1 Timothy 4:4.

If you are a thing God *does*, you are eternal; nothing can be added to you, nothing taken away from you—you are a universe of wonder, waiting to be discovered in a vessel of clay that will crack and dissolve into the earth from which it was taken.

“So, Peter, what is John to you?” asks Jesus. “Perhaps a temporary problem?”

Well, to God, he is the eternal image of infinite love—1 Cor. 11:7, “A man is the Glory of God.”

[Image: slides showing the following questions and response below:]

What is John to...

- God the Father? His eternal treasure.

What is John to...

- God the Son?

Well, Jesus took bread, broke it, and gave it to John, saying, “This is my body given to you. And he took a cup saying this is the covenant...” Last year, we saw that the disciples would have recognized that as a marriage proposal.

In John’s vision, “The Revelation,” John saw a city coming down, and the City was a Bride made of living stones just as Peter describes in his letter^{ix}

In fact, Paul makes it clear that Jesus is the Bridegroom, and we are his Bride, *and* he quotes Genesis to explain, saying, “...*the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one, and I’m saying it refers to Christ and the church.*”^x

In the beginning, Adam, which means “humanity,” was alone in the presence of God who is Love. In the beginning, Adam, “humanity,” was incapable of love. So, God made Adam, male and female, and began to teach us all about love.

That first Adam looked at Eve and said, “Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,”^{xi} that is “She is me and me is she... She completes me.” You see, her differences were not a threat, but an outrageously wonderful and ecstatic blessing... a communion. And then, Adam and Eve were not simply two bodies but one body.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, “anyone joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him^{xii},” and “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.^{xiii}” And in Ephesians he writes, “There is one body and one Spirit.”^{xiv} He even explains that the mystery of Christ is that the Gentiles—whom he defines as those “alienated from the life of God”^{xv}—the Gentiles are “members of the same body”^{xvi}. This is “the plan for the fullness of time,” he writes, “to unite (*anakephalaaiosasthai*, to bring together under one head) all things in Christ Jesus.”^{xvii}

You see, Jesus saw John and Peter, and indeed, all humanity, as his Bride—and Grooms are attracted to their Brides... and their naked bodies. Jesus saw humanity as his own bride and his own body.

“No man ever hates his own flesh but nourishes it and cherishes it as Christ does the church,” wrote Paul.^{xviii} “The two shall become one flesh.”

Well, if John is Christ’s Body and Peter is Christ’s Body, then Peter is also John’s Body and John is Peter’s Body. And once you see that... it changes absolutely everything.

All at once, every difference is no longer a curse but the ultimate blessing. For my neighbor is not a threat to me; my neighbor actually *is* me. So, I have absolutely nothing to win by my neighbor’s loss. And until all of us win, every one of us loses.

Peter Hiett does not win the race if only his left foot crosses the finish line. In fact, all of Peter Hiett is guaranteed to lose as long as his body is divided or competes with itself.

And so, no man or woman is my enemy. It’s the lies that men and women believe about themselves that are my enemy and our enemy. Darkness, Death, Division, Lies, Chaos, and the Void—each is our enemy. Until we all turn and face the enemy of Love, we all lose, for we all are one body.

Alan, Mark, and Andrew are really no longer a threat to me, for after forty-one years, I’ve come to realize: they are me.

It was twenty-eight years ago that Susan and I moved back to Colorado, and I began to work as a senior pastor. I said to Susan, “I’m going to become a consumer item for religious people. Let’s call some old friends and start a group, and they’ll help me be who I truly am.”

So for twenty-eight years, we’ve been meeting. For years, we did Bible studies, workbooks, prayer times... now we mostly goof around. But I think the biblical word for what we are, and do, is “church.”

And I no longer think Alan is smart; I think we are smart.

I no longer think Mark is funny; I think we are funny.

I no longer think Andrew is the evangelist so much as we are the incarnation of the Gospel.

And we all have wives, which adds all the really interesting parts.

So, what are they to me? I’m beginning to realize: they are me. So, when I see them, I think, “*bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.*”

And here's a shocking realization: When I'm around them (at least in moments), I'm not less of the unique individual that is myself; I'm actually more of the unique individual that is myself. I'm more at peace with who I am... because of who we are: a body.

POP QUIZ:



When is a chicken leg, most a chicken leg?



When it's severed, battered, fried, and sitting on your plate?



Or is a chicken leg, most a chicken leg when it's attached to the body of a living chicken?

[Image: Colonel Sanders holding bucket of chicken.]

What is your neighbor to you? Something to bite and devour in order to feed your own ego? Or is it a member of your own body, which is, in fact, Christ's Body.

[Image: cartoon of Colonel Sanders standing at the pearly gates, which is adorned with chickens. His thought bubble says: "Uh-oh..."]

And Jesus is like a giant chicken... and whatever you did to the least of these—the people in your life—you actually did to him, and even yourself, because even *the least of these* are members (legs wings, and thighs) of his body.

The Gospel is that even you—the proverbial Colonel Sanders—are part of his body, and he died that you would believe; so instead of consuming your neighbor, you would commune with your neighbor in his love that is life. And, of course, Jesus is not a chicken.

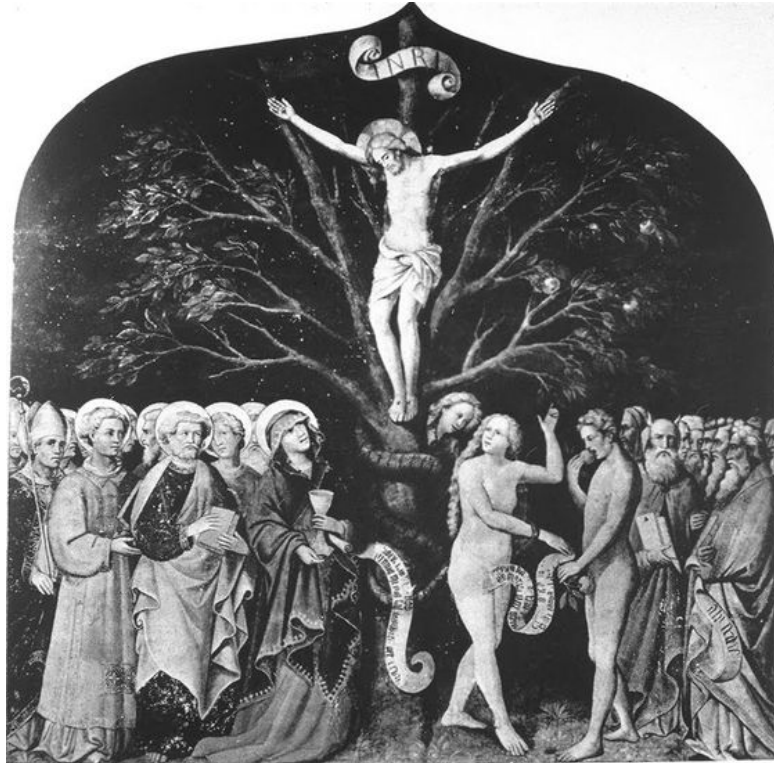


Figure 1 "Mystery of the Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena (1420)

Jesus is the man, the *eschatos* Adam, hanging on the tree in the garden at the edge of time and eternity, and we all are his body and bride.

[Image: Slides depicting the following questions and responses:]

So, what is a person to...

- God the Father? Eternal Treasure.
- And what is a person to God the Son? His Own Body, Himself
- And what is a person to God the Spirit?

Well, on the Tree in the middle of the garden, at the edge of time and eternity, God the Father fully indwelling God the Son, delivered up his Spirit, his Breath. That's the Spirit that fell on the early church at Pentecost, and they all began to share everything in common; not because they had to, but because they wanted to... because they loved LOVE.

Jesus said, "You will—" [indicative tense, stating what will happen]—"You will Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And you will Love your neighbor as yourself."^{xix}

Well, we just saw that our neighbor actually is our... "self." So, maybe we will love them as our self.

But now, how could we love our self, or our neighbor self, if we've already loved our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength? You see, the only way I can love my God with all I am, and all I have, and still be able to love my neighbor is if God is actually in my neighbor.

And check this out: If "God is Love," and thus real love is God, I can only love if God loves through me... I don't make love; Love makes me.

You see, it's only possible to love my neighbor if God is in me, loving my neighbor...which is, in fact, God in me, loving God in my neighbor.

Which means that I have been caught up in the great dance that is God himself—three persons and one substance, the dance of Love.

- Love is who God is and what God does.
- Love is a decision to offer your life to your neighbor, to bleed for your neighbor.
- Love in you is the judgment of God in you, his Spirit in you, drawing all things together.

Together on Pentecost, Peter, John, and all the disciples were built into a house. *Not* like the Tower of Babel built by men, in which every stone is dead, and every stone is just the same. But the Living Temple, in which every stone is different and alive and bound together in Love that is eternal Life, flowing from one to another, like blood flows from one body part to another and back again to the heart. The Life is in the blood; the Breath is in the blood; the Spirit is in the blood.

So, what is a person to God the Spirit? His Temple—So a person is the place where you are called to worship God with Sacrifices and Offerings. A person is God's temple, which is his home, or her home (God's Spirit is described as male and female in Scripture)^{xx}.

[Image: Slide depicting final question response:]

So, what is a person to...

- God the Spirit? ...HOME.

And the most amazing home that there is. In Scripture, God has the Israelites construct a tent, or tabernacle, that then becomes a stone temple that Jesus somehow destroys and rebuilds; that John sees descend from heaven as a bride; that is a body, that is you. The temple is a description of the human soul.... all souls and your soul.

In the depth of the temple is an inner Sanctuary, and behind the curtain, the breath of God, Spirit of God, Life that is God. When a person comes to Christ, for Christ has come to them, that curtain is ripped from top to bottom, and the Spirit of God wells up in them as the fountain of Life and begins to fill that temple from the inside out. The True Self fills the emptiness of the False Self with infinite Mercy, which is the very substance of the eternal God; God is forever at home there.^{xxi}

[Peter points into congregation at person.] That's Andrew. Andrew is like a brother to me. I didn't pick him; he showed up at my house. He's different than me; I don't think we've voted for the same person for at least a decade or more. He's different than me, but Andrew *is* me. When I see Andrew, I see me, and when Andrew sees me, I think he sees himself and that recognition is joy. As they say in the East: "the divine in me recognizes the divine in him—*Namaste*."

As Paul writes in Scripture: "We regard no one according to the flesh, no one according to a human point of view. Even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer."^{xxii}

And now, this is what's most amazing to me—Andrew confesses his sins to me, as I confess my sins to Andrew; so I know that Andrew is made of dirt. And yet, in Andrew I have encountered the Spirit of God. (When I pray, I often picture my head resting on Jesus's chest, the way my head rested on Andrew's chest the day I was tried and excommunicated from my old denomination. He held my

head to his chest when they announced their verdict... I don't think it was just Andrew that did that.)

Andrew is like treasure buried in a field; a pearl found in a slimy oyster. Andrew is like the stinking manger that contains the Christ child; he's like a tomb from which I get to witness the resurrection of the Christ.

So, what is a person to...

- God the Father? Eternal Treasure.
- And, what is a person to God the Son? Himself.

[Image: Continues with question/responses:]

And, what is a person to God the Spirit?

- His own Body, wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger.
- His own Self, rising from billions of tombs and all coming together in absolute joy.

So, Jesus turns to Peter and asks, "What is that, what is John, to you? A problem, an accusation, a threat, a curse? ...Or Christmas and Easter and a Kingdom?"

"What is John to you, what is Andrew to you, what am I to you?" asks Jesus. "Am I hell, or am I Heaven?"

"What is that to you?" asks Jesus, and then he says, "Follow me."

When we follow Jesus, we will find him in our neighbor and discover that we all are One, and that One is an eternal treasure—a Body, a Temple, a Great Banquet of absolute joy.

- "So, what is that to you?" asks Jesus.
- "What is your neighbor to you?" asks Jesus.
- "What is Chris Lindenmeyer to you?" ...What a great question, Jesus.

Listen to Ephesians 4, beginning where Karl left off last week, verse 4:

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says,

**"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men."**

⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood [literally, "the mature man" (or *Adam*)], to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...

So, what is *Chris Lindenmeyer* to you? I hope you would see him as your shepherd. I hope you would see that he has been sent by God to ask you this question: “*What are those folks at the Sanctuary to you?*” And sent to help you answer the question not just with words, but all that you are and all that we are.

God has been pretty clear to me over the years that he’s asked me to preach his Word...And yet, I think he’s also been clear that the Sanctuary isn’t to simply be a podcast, or a video, or a book, but the Sanctuary is to be a church.

- And a church is a group of people that together incarnate his Word.
- A church is to be the difference that theology—*theos* (God) and *logos* (word or logic)—a church is to be the difference that the logic of God makes.
- A church is to be a place where the Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.

I think I’ve been asked primarily to preach, and Chris has been asked primarily to shepherd the flock, the group, the community life.

Only Jesus can build his Church; yet Jesus can and will build his church through us. And that’s why we are going to commission Chris, right now.

[The church commissions Chris into the ministry of the Sanctuary.]

Communion

[Chris prays and leads the church in communion.]

BENEDICTION

What I’m asking:

1. Go out of your way to get to know Chris.
(Wed. night? Lunch or Dinner, and he’ll be in the back right now.)
2. Participate in Community Life as Chris begins to offer opportunities for you to experience it.
3. And never look at anyone the same way again.

Thomas Merton was a Trappist monk. In 1965, he published an account of a mystical experience he had one day in Kentucky:

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers...

This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. And I suppose my happiness could have taken form in the words: “Thank God, thank God that I am like other men, that I am only a man among others...”

I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could

overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun...

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed... I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other... ^{xxiii}

We must not worship each other; but we must worship God in each other, his temple. So, believe the Gospel, and Worship.

Endnotes

ⁱ He asks him if he love him more that "these"—these what, we're not sure (Maybe all the miracle fish he just caught, maybe something else). He asks him three time, just like the three times Peter had denied him.

ⁱⁱ <https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-gospel-according-to-you-and-your-neighbor/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Matthew 4:18-22

^{iv} "I form light and create darkness;
I make well-being and create calamity [*rah*; normally translated "evil"]
I am the Lord, who does all these things." – Isaiah 45:7

People will often quote Isaiah 45:17, to point out that, according to Scripture God makes, or creates, evil. It's true that Scripture says this and yet evil is not something that God "does," for "everything created by God is good" according to Paul in 1 Timothy 4:4. How can this be? Well notice that God "forms" light and "creates evil" in the same way that God (who is Light) creates darkness. Darkness is simply the absence of light. Darkness is not something that Light does. However if the light were to create something other than the light, that something would cast a shadow (a place of darkness) in the presence of the light. In the same way evil is not something that the Good does, but if the Good (God alone is good) were to create something other than himself, perhaps that something other would cast a shadow called evil. It would cast a shadow until it was filled with the Good or the Light and began to radiate goodness and light. We are all destined to be filled with God, which means everything will be good and everything will be light... although each of us will have knowledge of the dark, the evil. We will know evil, yet constantly choose the Good, which is Love and Life. We will be the image and likeness of God.

For a more thorough discussion of this topic see the chapters titled, "The Abyss" and "The Abyss in me" in my book The History of Time and the Genesis of You. (<https://smile.amazon.com/dp/B08CPG3B1P/>)

^v 1 Corinthians 13:7

^{vi} John 8:44

^{vii} And it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either-but right through every human heart-and through all human hearts. . . . All the writers who wrote about prison but did not themselves serve time there considered it their duty to express sympathy for prisoners and to curse prison. I . . . have served enough time there. I nourished my soul there, and I say without hesitation:

"Bless you, prison, for having been in my life." - Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, as quoted in Malcolm Muggeridge, *The End of Christendom*, p. 47

viii In Eternity we are entirely good, and everything is good, and yet we have "knowledge of the evil," that we might endlessly choose the Good (who is God) in Freedom.

- ix 1 Peter 2:5
- x Ephesians 5:30-31
- xixi Genesis 2:23
- xii 1 Corinthians 6:17
- xiii 1 Corinthians 12:13
- xiv Ephesians 4:4
- xv Ephesians 4:18
- xvi 1 Corinthians 3:6

xvii *Anakephalaioo* (*anakephalaioasthai* in Ephesians 1:10) is translated into Latin and from Latin into English as "recapitulate," which is the basis of the "recapitulation theory of the atonement," first promoted by Irenaeus in the 2nd century.

He has therefore, in His work of recapitulation, summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam ...the enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of woman who conquered him. ... And therefore does the Lord profess Himself to be the Son of man, comprising in Himself that original man out of whom the woman was fashioned, in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm [of victory] against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death - Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

This idea was also central to the theology of many of the church fathers:

Like Origen, and mindful of Paul (1Corinthians and Romans), Gregory insists on the Adam-Christ parallel in his discourse on the foundations of apokatastasis [restoration]. If death entered the world due to the sin of one human, another human's obedience heals the consequences of that disobedience, and by means of his resurrection all humanity rises with him; thus, Christ annihilates the death that had been brought about by Adam's sin (Contr. c. Apoll. 21, GNO III,1, 160-161). Both Adam and Christ can recapitulate all humanity because humanity is a unity, a whole. This is a concept that Origen had already hammered home in his anti-Valentinian polemic. Throughout his *In illud* Gregory identifies the body of Christ with the whole of humanity, therefore also identifying the Church, which is the body of Christ, with all humanity at least in the perspective of the telos [the perfection, the end]. I have demonstrated elsewhere how this notion is drawn from Origen, 317 and how Gregory relies on Origen for his core argument that the salvific submission of Christ to the Father refers, not to Christ's own divinity, but to his "body," that is, all human beings. This constellation of concepts rests on a strong basic notion of the unity of human nature, which in Gregory's words, forms one and the same "lump" or "mass" ..., one and the same "fullness" or "totality" ... This unity is, not by accident, especially emphasized by Gregory in connection with the unity of humanity at its first creation and the unity will be restored in the final apokatastasis... The totality of humanity was included in the first human being, and it is included in Christ as well. It is not simply the individual human being that is in the image of God, but also, and primarily, the full totality of humanity. The full realization of this being in the image of God will take place at the eventual apokatastasis, when the totality of human nature will be reconstituted into its perfect unity and will make up "the body of Christ." ... This super-body lives by its union with its Head, who is Christ, whose life is shared by the body itself (De Perf. GNO VIII,1, 197-198). This is because the body shares the same substance and nature with its Head. And since the whole human nature, the body of Christ, "forms, so to say, one and the same animated being," the resurrection of one, i.e. Christ, "extends itself to the whole totality" (Or.cat. GNO III,4, 78)... Indeed, the world will come to an end when the number of human beings will be completed, and the body of Christ will be entirely built up. The perfection of this body will be reached in the telos, when every part of it has been made perfect. Then every single part will perfectly reflect all the characteristics of the head; thus, if the Head is Peace, Holiness, and Truth all the parts, too, will be peace holiness and truth (De perf. GNO VIII,1,197-200). In Homily 15 on the Song of Songs Gregory emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the unity of the body of Christ, that for which Jesus prays in John 17:21-23 (a pivotal text for Origen's notion of eschatological unity as well). Gregory cites Eph 4:3-4 and sees the accomplishment of the unity of the body of Christ in the transformation of all into one body and one spirit. - Ilaria L.E. Ramelli *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 416-419

"Salvation...this discovery of ourselves is always a losing of ourselves—a death and resurrection. 'Your life is hidden with Christ in God.' The discovery of ourselves in God, and of God in ourselves, by a charity that

also finds all other men in God with ourselves is, therefore, not the discovery of ourselves but of Christ. First of all, it is the realization that “I live now not I but Christ liveth in me,” and secondly it is the penetration of the tremendous mystery which St. Paul sketched out boldly—and darkly—in his great Epistles: the mystery of the recapitulation, the summing up of all in Christ. It is to see the world in Christ, it’s beginning and its end. To see all things coming forth from God in the Logos who becomes incarnate and descends into the lowest depths of His own creation and gathers all to Himself in order to restore it finally to the Father at the end of time. To find “ourselves” then is to find not only our poor, limited, perplexed souls, but to find the power of God that raised Christ from the dead and “built us together in Him unto a habitation of God in the Spirit” ([Ephesians 2:22](#)) - Thomas Merton, *No Man is an Island* pp. xv-xvi

xviii Ephesians 5:29

xix Mark 12:30

xx “Spirit (ruach) is a feminine noun in Hebrew. In Proverbs Wisdom is personified as a woman through whom all is created. In the New Testament all is created through the Logos which becomes flesh in Christ. “In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” writes Paul.

xxi The Eternal temple of the living God fills the old stone temple, just as God takes from you your heart of stone and in that place reveals his heart of infinite mercy.

That old stone temple is like the false self that you think you built, and the living temple is the true self that God has built and is revealing in space and time... His eternal home.

The Spirit of God is the eternal treasure in the earthen vessel that you call your neighbor.

xxii 2nd Corinthians 5:16 RSV and ESV

xxiii - Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* pp 153-154