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Sunday, October 4, 2015; Psalm 8; Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

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In today's world, we are constantly living with the possibility of identity theft. There are two forms of this coming from the outside world.

The first affects our electronic devices, our credit cards, our banking statements and our social security numbers, vulnerable to hackers. To protect our identity, we install anti-virus programs, subscribe to periodic credit reports and are vigilant in the way we communicate. We have to protect ourselves against hackers.

In the current issue of Consumer Reports magazine, the cover article, "A Crying Shame", states that seniors and their families nationwide lose \$3 billion dollars a year to con artists. It is a national crisis.

The second form of identity theft is more subtle. This is the type of identity theft that erodes core values, our outlook on life and our self-esteem and makes us question our faith and self-worth. We get caught up in the myths of the culture we live in which puts untold pressure on children and youth.

You have to excel in sports and a multitude of activities; be popular; be top dog; write the right essay; make the right impression; go to the right college; get the right job; drive the right car and live in the right places. They project an image.

Alice Miller in her classic book, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, says very simply that children need to know themselves. A child's identity needs to be nurtured. One's identity from a spiritual viewpoint is not based on having the right thing but on doing the right thing.

Our worldly identity is associated up in where we live, Wilton, and the high school we go to. We are Warriors whereas in New Canaan, they are Rams. The pro teams we root for – Giants, Jets, Patriots, Broncos - put us in a category and leads to victory or defeat. We do not know the identity of the other person. The political party we belong to. The clothes we wear which carry their own advertisements.

We identify with all these affiliations. They might fulfill a social need but they are not the source of our true identity. They separate us from others who are different from us.

What is our true identity? Pay close attention to the answer so you do not drift away from it.

The Psalmist raises this question and asks God,

“What is man that thou art mindful of him?”

What is a human being? Where do we fit into the vastness of the universe? What do we matter? The author of Hebrews refers to Psalm 8 and expounds on it, giving us three answers to this question.

FIRST, he/she is a being of amazing dignity. The answer is given in the question. God is mindful of us and cares for us. He has created us a little lower than the angels and has crowned us with glory and honor. And God has given us dominion over everything under our feet. And the mind of mankind has accomplished wondrous things, in space exploration, in transportation, medicine, agriculture, travel, science, engineering and electronics.

SECOND, the answer to this question is also darkened by mankind's failures. God put everything in subjection to mankind and left nothing outside his control. The history of mankind is plagued by warfare, exploitation, folly, domination and dishonesty. Our strength, our hope, and our faith are drained and tested. The quality of life is threatened. Mankind is seeking to be freed from bondage and warfare. The sins of mankind are done by individuals. They are also done by nations, corporations, institutions, organizations, and groups.

Our prayers go out to the people of Roseburg, Oregon, to the ten who lost their lives, to their families; to those who were injured; to the students and staff of Umpqua Community College; and to the law enforcement officers; and to the EMT and medical personnel. Prayers are also for the assailant Christopher Harper-Mercer and for the parents.

THIRD, we thank God giving us a final answer. This is our hope in the midst of despairing and the answer to human failure.

“BUT WE SEE JESUS.”

God sized up the situation. Mankind was not getting the job done on earth and needed his salvation. We needed to be saved from the destructive, negative energies pulling us away from civility and causing pain in the heart of God. God identifies with us through His Son who as a human being sees our glory and knows our sufferings. They are the source of our salvation and redemption. His son is now in control and sits at God’s right hand. God’s action takes us out of our role as sole governors and puts us in the role as assistants.

The salvation of the world is under the auspices of the Son of man. We now work for his appointed CEO. The hierarchy is God with Jesus beside Him, with the angels as messengers below and then us. The angels are not there to do our work but to provide us with support.

For us to make a difference in the world and for us to live a purposeful life, we need to follow his game plan. This is done by downloading His app, making it our default choice, and working on behalf of the Father, and the Son.

The early Christians, as written in the Epistle Hebrews, believed that their world was upheld and sustained by the power of God through Christ. This is our source of hope. There is no need to be pessimists. We need to trust in Him and stay active on his team.

God needs us to do the job with him and do it well.

This is our identity. We are in covenant with him. God does not steal our identity but gives it to us.