

Living Lent | Day 30

Identity Verification

Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?" But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins." "Who are you?" they asked. "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning," Jesus replied. "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father. So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." Even as he spoke, many believed in him.

John 8:21–30 NIV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

Shortly after Jesus scattered the accusers of a woman with a scarred past, those in the crowd became more curious about the identity of the one who dismissed the law professors by simply writing a mysterious message in the sand.

A short time later, as Jesus resumed His teaching He announced, "I am the light of the world" (v.12). This again caused the Pharisees again challenge His declaration and question His true identity.

Identity verification has come a long way since the time of Jesus. Often, one or more printed documents are required to confirm one's identity. In the United States, acceptable identity documents include a state-issued driver's license or identity card, a social security card and a United States passport.

There are also more advanced ways to authenticate one's identity including digital

fingerprint scanning, facial recognition, voice recognition, and DNA comparison. Rather than pulling out a heavenly ID card or scanning an incarnate fingerprint, Jesus identifies Himself by His words and actions. John's gospel underscores that Jesus is not of this world, He was sent on a redemptive mission by God the Father, He forgives those that others condemn, He is a light that shines in darkness, He is one whose aim is to please God, and He is one whose identity will be widely known once he is lifted up or raised.

Just as there were those who came before Jesus claiming to be the Messiah, there are many more who came afterward claiming that they were the Christ. Perhaps a greater dilemma has been the misrepresentation of Jesus by the people professing to represent the Christian faith. Too often Jesus is portrayed as the accuser, or He is depicted as a mascot for one's preferred political party.

There are some surefire ways to identify Jesus. Jesus is the one who says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more!" (v11). Jesus is the one who brings light to the dark spaces and places in your life. Jesus is the one who, like God who sent him, doesn't abandon you in the tough times in life.

During Lent, as we revisit the gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, let us sort through the urban myths and superstitions about Jesus, and let us rediscover and reaffirm His identity as the Son of God who was sent to deliver us from our sins.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

Dr. Barry Howard serves as the Lead Pastor of The Church at Wieuca, a diverse, mission-driven congregation in the Buckhead Community in North Atlanta. The Church at Wieuca has been serving the Community of Buckhead and beyond from the corner of Peachtree and Wieuca since 1956, providing Christian hope and inspiration to generations. The congregation of Wieuca has as its stated aim to bring about life transformation that leads to transformed individuals, families, communities and ultimately a transformed world. The Church at Wieuca has stood in the gap in reaching out to help the Children of Morningstar in the past and continues to do so now. Dr. Howard and his wife, Amanda, reside nearby in Brookhaven, Georgia. Barry also serves as a columnist and leadership coach for the Center for Healthy Churches.

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