

I Am What I Am – Pr Jim Sprengle, Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021

- I. **1 Corinthians 15:10** – ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain.
- II. **I read a strange news story the other day...**
 - a. The headline was, “‘Missing’ woman mystery solved.”
 - i. The article said, “A group of tourists spent hours...looking for a missing woman [in Iceland], only to find her among the search party. The group was travelling through Iceland on a tour bus and stopped near a volcanic canyon.”
 - ii. [One of the group members got off the bus, changed her clothes and freshened up after the hike. When she got back on the bus no one recognized her]
 - iii. “Soon, there was word of a missing passenger. The woman...who didn’t recognize the description of herself... joined in the search. [Some 50 people searched by foot and vehicle, and the coastguard was almost brought in] But the search was called off at about 3 a.m. when it became clear the missing woman was in fact accounted for and searching for herself.” ¹
 - b. After reading this story, I laughed because when we went to the Holy Land, we were always losing someone – trying to account for all the pilgrims needing to get back on the bus.
 - c. In a not so humorous way, how many people in the world are absolutely clueless what their real identity is... they are lost!
 - i. *They have no idea that THEY are the ones being described, and they just can’t see themselves, or recognize themselves as that person.*
 - d. The Bible clearly describes humankind... after sin entered the world through the first people... Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:1ff)
 - i. “The heart is deceitful... who can understand it?” Jeremiah 17:9
 - ii. “For I was born a sinner-- yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.” Psalm 51:5.
 - iii. “I know that nothing good dwells in me...” Romans 7:18
 - iv. “You were dead in the trespasses and sins...” Ephesians 2:1
 - v. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” Romans 3:23
 - e. Unfortunately, most people don’t want to hear this kind of description – they say, “That doesn’t describe me! It must be someone else. I’m pretty good!”
 - i. I don’t hurt people (except that one Facebook post, or that time I yelled at my loved one... or maybe that time I ignored the phone calls of a friend who needed me...) but I USUALLY don’t hurt people.
 - ii. And I definitely don’t steal (except maybe when I fudge a little on my taxes... or maybe throw a few extra condiments in my bag at the

restaurant... or keep the extra change a cashier gives me) but I USUALLY don't steal.

- iii. And I love my neighbor... (except when they don't agree with my political views, then I kind of hate them... or when they're annoying, and then I don't want to be around them... or when I actually have to spend time helping them, then I make up excuses that I'm busy) but I USUALLY love my neighbor.
- f. A time comes when it dawns on us though... it's 3 a.m. and we are looking for someone else by the description we've been given... and we realize... it's ME!
 - i. I'm the one... I'm the person that's being described... I'm broken and I cannot fix myself
 - ii. I'm deceitful, sinful and even dead (spiritually speaking)... I'm not capable of saving myself.

III. **Paul gives us some good news in his letter today.**

- a. It starts with a reminder that he preached the Gospel... the Good News which saves us.
- b. Basics of Christianity time – what is the Gospel?
 - i. As Paul says, Jesus died for our sins on the cross, He was buried in a tomb, and rose again on the third day (vs 3-5)
 - ii. The Gospel, or the Good News of our salvation, is that Jesus – both God and man – died to pay for our sins, was buried, and rose again on Easter morning to defeat death for us!
 - 1. As God works through that message – that Jesus died and rose to save us – some people come to the realization:
 - a. It's me! – I cannot fix myself – but Jesus can!
 - b. It's me! – I cannot save myself – but Jesus can!
 - 2. That's called faith... God in His power and work helps us to see Jesus as our Savior
- c. This is the Good News we celebrate today!
 - i. Of all the days we praise God and worship Him, this is the day that means the most – because today God brings it all together
 - ii. The resurrection really happened, as Paul recounts the many witnesses to Jesus being alive after His death and burial...
 - 1. All the Apostles and disciples... and even 500 people at one time – many who were still alive when Paul wrote his letter!
 - 2. Don't forget the power of an eyewitness in even our courts today – ONE eyewitness account can put someone behind bars for life – or even get someone the death penalty.
 - 3. 100's and 100's of people saw Him brutally tortured and executed on the cross, then saw Jesus alive... they had very

little to gain from telling everyone what they saw – in fact many of them were persecuted, shunned, and even executed!

- iii. Yet, the Good News cannot be hidden, changed, or even killed... because God gave us a record in the Bible
- iv. We who believe are sure of these events because the Holy Spirit has opened our eyes to who we truly are...
- v. We are God's favored ones – loved and forgiven by the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - 1. Listen to what 1 Peter 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"
 - 2. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

IV. **So what does Paul write today?**

- a. "By the grace of God, I am what I am" (vs 10)
- b. He was acutely aware that he was a sinner saved by grace.
 - i. Paul even wrote to Timothy, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." (1 Timothy 1:15)
- c. And yet, God calls us much, much more than sinners... He loves us so much that He even gave His only Son in death for us, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
- d. Listen to how the Bible describes you... and know that this is who God sees!
 - i. You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)
 - ii. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, (Ephesians 2:10)
 - iii. You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons (Rom 8:15)
 - iv. Jesus said, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:40)
 - v. Jesus also said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in Me will live, even after dying." (John 11:25)
- e. Our God has described YOU in these ways... our loving and gracious Creator... and Redeemer.
- f. By God's grace I am what I am... God's own child, chosen and rescued.
- g. He is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia! Amen

¹ QMI Agency, Publishing date: Aug 28, 2012