

**Series: Too Messy – As Yourself**  
**Sermon: Two Gods**  
**January 24, 2016**

I didn't think it was possible, but the show *the Bachelor* helped me think about our current series "As Yourself". On Monday, I worked late and on my way home, I called Devyn, my middle daughter. She said (very quietly), "Hey what do you want?" I asked what she was doing. She said (very quietly), "Hurry up dad, the Bachelor is on!" After getting home and getting something to eat, I joined them to find there was a second hour of the Bachelor. This is where Chris Harrison discusses with America all the happenings on the Bachelor.

One girl, Lace actually left the show. She pulled Bachelor Ben to the side right before the rose ceremony and said, "I am mad at myself for the way I've acted since I've been here. I want to offer you more. I just feel like going home might be easier, and just continue working on myself and trying to better myself. You can't love someone else until you truly love yourself, and I don't know if I truly love myself just yet."

This is exactly what we have been talking about. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." We are focusing on you learning to love you, so that you can love others.

I want to remind you of the time when Moses led the people out of Egypt. Two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they come to a mountain called Sinai. God calls Moses to the mountain. God is interested in a relationship with these people. He wants to know if they are interested in relationship with Him. Moses becomes a mediator between God and the people of Israel. They tell God they want to do everything that He commands.

Three days later, God tells them the 10 commandments and He also gives them all kinds of commands for living and relating to God and the other Israelites. He then, tells Moses, Aaron, and 70 of the elders to come up on the mountain. Look what these guys got to experience. Exodus 24:10, 11 says, "There they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there seemed to be a surface of brilliant blue lapis lazuli, as clear as the sky itself. And though these nobles of Israel gazed upon God, he did not destroy them. In fact, they ate a covenant meal, eating and drinking in

His presence!" People are relating to and experiencing God. God is celebrating the establishment of his relationship with the people.

After this experience, God calls Moses to come higher on the mountain and a big cloud enveloped the mountain. Moses was with God for 40 days and nights. While Moses was on the mountain, the Israelites were getting restless. Seven chapters later, we learn "When the people saw how long it was taking Moses to come back down the mountain, they gathered around Aaron. "Come on," they said, "make us some gods who can lead us. We don't know what happened to this fellow Moses, who brought us here from the land of Egypt."

Aaron tells them to bring all their gold and he takes it and melts it down and fashions a golden calf. Look how the people respond, "When the people saw it, they exclaimed, "O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" Look what it goes on to say about Aaron. Remember, Aaron is Moses' right-hand guy. He is second in command. "Aaron saw how excited the people were, so he built an altar in front of the calf. Then he announced, "Tomorrow will be a festival to the LORD!"

This passage is such a contrast. Everyone has had a significant experience with God, but in a very short time, the reality of their relationships with God is very different. You have Moses on the mountain in the very presence of God. He is connected and he is changed. When he comes off the mountain, he has a glow on his face. Instead of everybody being excited for him and wanting to be around a guy who has been with God, they tell him to cover his face, because it scares them.

Aaron and the Israelites have allowed their reality of God to drift to something they have made up. It is easy to drift. It is easy to allow things to get in between us and God.

As a Jesus' follower, we have come to understand that there are 2 paths that are before us: pleasing God and trusting God. The pleasing God path leads to the room of Good Intentions. The trusting God path leads to the room of Grace. I want to emphasize that we are talking about anyone who has accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. So, if you have accepted him, you are on one of those paths and you are in one of the rooms. Last week we spent most of our time in the

room of Good Intentions. We learned that in this room, we tend to wear masks. We are trying to cover up the stuff we don't want anyone to see. We learned that all of us have a spiritual DNA that comes from Adam and Eve that causes us to want to hide, but that is not the way God wants us to live.

I want to take you a little further this week. You have to realize that whatever path you have chosen and whatever room you are in shapes the way you see God. And how you view God, shapes the way you view and relate to the world around you. See I am asking you to do something very difficult today. I am asking you to stand in front of the mirror and just stand there. If you are like me, I don't like standing in front of the mirror. The longer I stand there, the more flaws I see. My hair is getting kind of thin. There are sometimes my daughters will pat my belly and ask how far along I am. The mirror reflects some things I don't like.

Listen to what James 1:22-25 says, "But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." James is encouraging us to stand in front of the mirror, which is God and His word. If you see something that needs to change, ask God to help you bring about that change.

Today, I want to give you some markers. Markers help us to know where we are. I believe there are markers as to how we view God based on what room we are in. So, let's talk about some markers as to how you may be viewing God.

Let's talk about how we view God in the Room of Good Intentions. Last week, I told you that in the Room of Good Intentions everyone wears a mask. The mask is a barrier to your relationships. It stands between you and your spouse, kids, friends and God. The mask is not just a barrier between me and God, but it distorts my view of God.

Last week, my right eye began hurting in the corner. When I would rub it, it just hurt. About Wednesday, it was really hurting and I noticed that the area right above my eyelash was swollen. Thursday morning, the area was more swollen

and it affected my vision. It always looked like there was a shadow in the upper right hand corner of my vision. The mask you wear affects how you see God.

## **Markers in the Room of Good Intentions**

### **Marker #1 - I do not have a positive view of myself**

Your view of you may be the greatest commentary on your view of God. If you are still thinking, I know God loves me; He has to because that is his job, but I don't think He likes me. You really don't have a positive view of yourself.

In this room of Good Intentions, we are talking about how Jesus followers can think. If you are not a Jesus follower, we hope we can show you why you would want to be a Jesus follower and live in the Room of Grace. But let me say something to everyone in this room who is a human being. Listen to Genesis 1:26 "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us." God created you to be like Him. He created you in his image. Whether you are a Jesus follower or not, you have this likeness of God inside of you.

I remember the days when my girls were very little, before they could even talk. I remember looking at them and saying, "I love you so much." I wanted so badly to communicate that to them. My only hope was that someday they would come to understand how much I loved them. I wonder if God does that with us. I wonder how many times he says, "I love you so much. I want so badly for you to know that."

Paul actually prayed for the Ephesians. Listen to his prayer in 3:18-19 "And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."

### **Marker #2 - I still have the desire to hide.**

Last week, we talked about Adam and Eve. When they sinned, they grabbed leaves and tried to cover, not just their nakedness, but their shame. Even though

they covered themselves, they still went and hid in the bushes. God came walking through the garden and asked, "Where are you?" Adam said they were scared, so they hid. I believe God's heart is that he wanted Adam and Eve to just say, "We messed up. We need your help."

Some of you, who are Jesus followers, are hiding. You don't want people to know what is in the cup that you are drinking. You don't want a spouse to see who you are texting. You would be embarrassed if your kids saw what was on your computer. You have become proficient at lying and being dishonest.

Maybe today, God wants some of you to take a giant step and come out of the bushes. Maybe he is going to challenge you to make a call. Some of you need to have a heart to heart conversation with a family member. Some of you need to get some support by going to a support group. Some of you have wanted to come forward here at church to get someone to pray for you or just to say you want to follow Jesus. God is just waiting for you to take a step in his direction.

### **Marker #3 - The lenses I look through are filled with shame.**

Shame is feeling bad about yourself. Shame causes us to become debilitated lying in the middle of the road when we have been run over by sin. But there is a different word that I want you to hear. It is still a tough word...guilt. It may not sound better, but it is different. Guilt is about feeling bad about what you have done. Guilt is a God-given motivator that can lead us to repentance. Guilt causes us to crawl to the side of the road instead of just lying there to get run over again.

Many of you wish you could start over. Your God has become like the god the Israelites created out of gold. It is a cheap substitute that has little power and does not make a difference in your life. The Israelites made idol worship a way of life. They suffered the consequences of other nations coming in and taking over. It seemed bad, but God was always looking for a way to reconcile with his people.

God is not only interested in us starting over, but allows us to start over. He is not interested in any Jesus follower going back to the way things were. He is trying to create something new and different. Listen to Hosea 2:15 "I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope. She will give herself to me there, as she did long ago when she was young, when I

freed her from her captivity in Egypt.” He is talking about the people who made a golden calf. He is talking about people who made idol worship a way of life.

God does not want you to experience shame. He is interested in guilt producing repentance. Let me say it again. Guilt is not about feeling bad about yourself. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, “For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow.” Repentance means I want to go home. It is about receiving forgiveness and finding new meaning.

Maybe you identified with some of those markers. There are some other markers that we need to be aware of. You are only going to find these markers in the Room of Grace. Let's see what some of them are.

### **Markers in the Room of Grace**

#### **Marker #1 - You trust that you are now “in Him”.**

Have you ever been waiting to hear if you are “in” or “out”? A letter comes and you can’t wait to open it or a friend comes up and says you are “in”. Can I be the friend that tells you if you are a Jesus follower, the God of the universe says you are “in”? Not just “in”, but “in Him”. Because of what Jesus did on the cross you are “in Christ” and that ought to mean something.

Neil Anderson, founder of Freedom in Christ ministries, says, "In my experience professing Christians who struggle with fear, anger, depression, compulsive behaviors, addictions, bitterness, mental torment, interpersonal relationships, and so on, have one thing in common: none of them knows who he or she is in Christ."

A lot of Jesus followers know that God loves them. You trust that Jesus death on a cross saved you from going to hell and one day when you die, you will get to spend eternal life with him. That is only half of the story. Listen to Romans 5:8, 10 “But God demonstrates his own love toward us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through his death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life.” His death made such a difference, but do not forget

that 3 days later, he came back to life. Because you are “in Him”, 1 John 5:12 says, “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son does not have life.”

Eternal life is not just something we get when we die and go to heaven. Eternal life is something that we get the moment we accept His grace. In Romans 8:11, Paul says, “The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by the same Spirit living within you.”

“In Him” ought to mean something right now.

### **Marker #2 - You trust that you have a new identity.**

Your first identity is that you are a saint. Most of us don’t feel like a saint. You probably think of St. Patrick, Mother Teresa or Billy Graham. Those people have done so many good things, but the word saint in the Bible isn’t defined by doing good things. It is your trust in the good things that have been done for you.

Many of you have heard of Paul. In the New Testament, many of the books were actually letters that he wrote to churches in cities like Ephesus, Corinth and Thessalonica. In Ephesians 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus...” In some of his other letters, you may not see the word saint, but listen to the phrases: to all who are beloved of God in Rome; to you, in Corinth, who have been called by God to be his own holy people; I am writing to all of God’s holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus.

Most of us don’t refer to ourselves as holy, blameless, sanctified. We like the term sinner saved by grace. Have you ever said that about yourself? In that phrase, I think most of us emphasize the sinner part. What if we starting saying, “I am a saint by God’s grace who is trying to sin less.”?

Helen Musik is a teaching pastor at Quest Community Church. She also is an adjunct professor at Asbury Seminary. She tells the story of teaching a small class of students on Spiritual Formation and it came to the time when the final was to be taken. They sat in a circle like they had done all semester and she passed out

the final asked them to write their names on their paper. After that, she asked them to turn their papers in. She told them that they would all be getting an “A” for the final. She was trying to emphasize the mercy and grace that we experience through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Do you know that a couple of students got upset? Others couldn’t believe it, but some got mad.

I don’t think we get mad, but surely there is more I have to do. I know God has made me good, but I’ve got to be better. Some of us are going to have learn to trust that you have as much God as you’re going to get. He has declared you are righteous because of what his Son has done. He lives in you!

Can you trust that God sees you as completely righteous, holy and blameless?

Another identity that you should trust is that you are a child of God. Because of Jesus, you have a position in the family of God. Colossians 1:13 says “We have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved Son.” If you are Jesus follower, the goal is not to change you. You have already been changed. You are part of the family. Jesus followers are not trying to become children of God; we are children of God who are becoming like Christ.

We are not saved by how we behave. We are saved by how we believe. I didn't save myself. Jesus save me. I became a child of God by the grace of God. Now that I am a child of God, is there something I could or could not do that would change the fact that God is my heavenly father? No, because we are blood related! My relationship with God is not based on my sinless perfection, but on his sinless perfection.

Because you are a child of God, who has a position in the family of God, God, the Father, has desires for you. His desire is that you make progress by maturing and becoming complete in Christ. Don’t ever let your progress or lack of progress cause you to question your position with God. Rebecca and I have been married 27 years and there are ups and downs in marriage. Some days or weeks are challenging, but it doesn’t cause me to question whether we are married or not.

### **Story of Stephanie Fast**

Stephanie Fast has never known her father. He was probably an American officer in the Korean War. She doesn't know when or where she was born. At age 3 she remembers her mom being sad and sorrowful because her mom had to make the choice of keeping her as her child or giving her up. She remembers her mom crying and holding her all night. You see, biracial children were an ugly reminder of the war. She looked different from other Korean children. She was known as a half-breed. Her mom put her on a train and told her that her uncle would pick her up. When she got off the train, no one was there and no one came.

After waiting all day someone came and told her to move along and called her a *Toogee*. It means half-breed, garbage, dust, bastard child, alien devil. She couldn't remember the name her mom gave her, but *Toogee* became her name.

For the next several years she was homeless. She would eat grasshoppers, locust and field mice. Other children taunted her and adults would shoo her away. Stephanie said, "I believed I was worthless. I was dirty. I was unclean. I had no name. I had no identity. I had no family. I had no future and no hope. Over time, I begin to hate myself. I was always looking and hoping for someone to say, "Oh, be my friend. You can belong to us."

Two times she was almost killed for stealing. And then she was rescued by Iris Erickson, a Worldvision nurse from Sweden. Miss Erickson was there to rescue babies not older children, but as she tried to leave this little girl behind her, her legs felt really heavy and she heard voice say "She's mine."

Stephanie ended up at the orphanage. She was able to help with the babies and get them ready when someone wanted to adopt them and take them to America. One day a couple came in. She remembers the man being like Goliath, larger than any man should had ever seen. The man came in and picked up babies and he would kiss them and hug them and put them under his chin. And then he saw her.

She was dirty. She had lice. She had a lazy eye. She was malnourished. At nine years old she weighed less than 30 pounds. The man came over and put his hand on her face. He began to stroke her face. And then something happened. She yanked his hand off of her face and spit on him twice. She ran in the closet and he hid.

The next day the man and woman came back. They asked for the little girl. She thought she was in trouble, but they said they wanted to take her to their house. They were missionaries in Korea. She didn't realize that she was being adopted. She thought she was going to be there servant. They cleaned her up. They got her healthy. They kept feeding her and tucking her into bed, but never putting me to work.

Then one day a little girl said to her "you smell American." She didn't know what she meant? She told the girl that those Americans are really funny. They haven't put me to work yet. They're really treating me nice. The girl looked at her with a surprised expression and said, "Stephanie, don't you realize that you're their daughter?" The idea had never occurred to Stephanie. She said "No, I'm not their daughter". The other girl said, "Yes...You...are...their...daughter!"

Stephanie let that sink in for a moment. She ran to her house thinking "I'm their daughter, I'm their daughter, I'm their daughter. That's why I've been treated this way. That's why no one's beating me. That's why no one's calling me a *Toogee*. I am their daughter." She ran into the house to her mom who was sitting in a chair and said I'm your daughter.

With big tears in her eyes, her mom looked at her and said yes, Stephanie, you're my daughter! God would love for some of you to realize that today.

## **Conclusion**

These markers are so important. We have got to learn to trust these markers in the Room of Grace and let go of the markers in the Room of Good Intentions. God's dream is that you would live each second of your existence with a confidence that he relentlessly and passionately loves you. His dream is that you would willingly risk loving others because you know God has risked everything in loving you.