

## #1 – ROOTED IN CHRIST (Hannah Heather)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

### Ephesians 3:14-21

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen..*

1. At the heart of the Christian understanding of the nature of God is an understanding that God is One, but that this oneness does not mean aloneness, for God exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is, as someone once said, "a sweet company" (which doesn't mean he is a manufacturer of confectionary!). In Genesis, the first thing God pronounced not good wasn't sin, but loneliness. God said, "It is not good for man to be alone."
  - *Have you experienced this last year as a time of loneliness?*
  - *How can we help each other and people in our community who are experiencing loneliness?*
  - *St Augustine famously wrote, "Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you." What does it mean to be lonely for God?*
  - *Can you be alone without being lonely? What makes the difference?*
  - *How much do we rely on other people to shape our identity?*
2. Hannah mentioned that the expression "*en christos*", meaning "in Christ" is used around 150 times in the New Testament, and especially by Paul. We have "faith in Christ", we are "made alive in Christ", we "hope in Christ", we have been "brought near to God in Christ", we are made "a new creation in Christ", we have been "blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ", we are "forgiven in Christ", "sanctified in Christ" ... and so much more.
  - *What does being "in Christ" mean to you? Does it mean more than being a Christian?*
  - *What does being "in Christ" have to say about your true identity?*
  - *Who are you, anyway?*
3. Hannah spoke of the various ways by which we establish identity: **Performance** (I am what I do – achievement, career success etc.); **Possessions** (I am what I own – money, house, car, clothes etc.); **Pleasure** (I am what I want – desire, ambition, sexual identity etc.); **Popularity** (I am what other people think about me – measured by Instagram 'likes' etc.). These external measures of identity also tend to be about competition. As **Ecclesiastes 4:4** says, "I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind."
  - *Do any of these identity measures look familiar? Which of the 4 'P's (performance, possessions, pleasure, popularity) do you find most tempting as a way of establishing your own identity?*
  - *How do these competitive identity measures show up in church? How do we stop that nonsense?*
  - *Does it matter if we do good things for bad reasons?*
4. C. S. Lewis said, "Give up yourself and you will find your real self". In **Matthew 10:39**, Jesus said, "Whoever loses their life for my sake will find it." We could say, give up your achieved identity and receive a new identity as a child of God – one who can "be a little monster all day and still help yourself to the water". In Christ you are who God says you are: a New Creation in Christ! In the early days of the church, many who came for baptism had names which linked them to pagan gods, so they were given a "Christian name" to express their new identity in Christ.
  - *Have you accepted a **Pronounced** identity (I am what others have told me I am)?*
  - *What 'old names' do you need to get rid of? Who gets to name you now?*
  - *What does it mean to you to be "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19)?*