



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### **Identity Theft**

**Psalm 139:1-18**

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Identity theft has become a huge problem. Last year, some nine million Americans were victims of identity theft in one form or another, between credit cards and internet usage. But the sad fact is that millions more have lived for years as victims of spiritual identity theft. And most of them don't even know they've been robbed. They've believed the lies about themselves. Maybe you're here this morning, a victim of identity theft. You might be a victim of identity theft this morning, if you think:

- That your identity is determined by your past—either by what you've done, or by what's been done to you.
- Or you've found your identity from your friends and the people you hang out with.
- Or if you really want to get robbed, you've accepted your identity based on your outward appearance, or the music you listen to, or what the media says, or the generation you're a part of, or what you can do, or based on your parents' expectations.

One day a prairie chicken found an egg and sat on it until it hatched. Unbeknownst to the prairie chicken, the egg was an eagle egg, abandoned for some reason. That's how an eagle came to be born into a family of prairie chickens.

While the eagle soars, the prairie chicken doesn't even know how to fly. In fact, prairie chickens are so lowly they eat garbage.

Of course, the eagle grew up thinking he was a prairie chicken. He walked around, ate garbage, and clucked like a prairie chicken.

One day, another eagle was soaring way, way overhead the plains when it spotted this eagle acting like a chicken. It flew down, and because the prairie-chicken-eagle was so clumsy, it couldn't get to shelter in time like all the other prairie chickens. The eagle said "What are you doing?!" You're not a prairie chicken, you're an eagle! To which the chicken eagle said, "No, I'm just a chicken." He wouldn't believe it. But when the eagle showed him how to spread his wings all the way out, he noticed—his wings were much greater than the other prairie chickens. And he was amazed! In time, he began to soar like the eagle he truly was.

I believe every one of us was born to fly on eagle's wings. But some of you think and act like prairie chickens because the world keeps telling you that's what you are. And this identity theft stifles you. You miss out on soaring for God—using all your capacity to bring God glory and make Him famous. Whatever your business, like Jesus said: Don't just fish for fish, follow me, and I'll make you fishers of men!" There are many here who are brilliant but never think to bring it to bear for making an eternal difference in the world because you're a victim of identity theft. Don't fall for it! God wants you to be all He made you to be—for His purposes!

The apostle Peter writes (1 Peter 1:14) "*As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.*" In other words, "stop living like eagles who think they are prairie chickens." You are no longer ignorant. You know who and what you are. You are born again through the living and

enduring Word of God. Now live that way. Spread your wings and fly. Your identity is important!

**Behind every action is an identity.** I'm going to get a divorce. I'm going to get drunk. Your actions are based on how you see yourself and God: What I'm doing will make me happier than what God says. If you are here believing that "You're not good enough, or God can't accept you, or you can't trust the Bible," you must recognize it for the identity theft it is. That's not God's voice! That's not what God has said! Because of the nature of God, God can only give you his best for you. Whenever we sin, we're acting on a false identity of who we are or who God is. There's an identity behind everything you do. If you go have sex outside of marriage you're seeing yourself in a certain way that causes you to do it.

**Behind every identity theft is a lie that I'm believing.** When you fall for another identity, at that moment, you think it's the best thing to do. You've been deceived. You've forgotten who you are and who God is. But you think it's the best thing to do. "Why did I exaggerate just then? Why did I lie just then? Why did I cover up just then? Why did I accuse just then? Because at that moment I thought it was the best thing to do. It was a lie, but I had been deceived. When your kids do something dumb or rebellious, at that moment, they are being deceived. When we look around, we can see behavior. What is the lie behind our identities? When you see someone who is arrogant and prideful, what is the lie that they are believing?

**Change always starts in the mind.** All through the Scripture. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The way you think determines the way you feel. The way you feel determines how you act. We must change our beliefs first. The battle for your identity always starts in the mind. You must see the false identity for what it is.

**The Bible word for changing your mind is "repentance."** (This isn't the guy on the diag soapbox with the sign saying "Turn or burn!") It doesn't have to do with just changing your behavior. It is meta-noia. Change your mind. Changing your beliefs, your values, the way you look at life. Change your identity, based on what the Creator of the universe thinks of you.

This morning I want us to renew our minds by looking at the ancient words of *Psalms 139*.

*Psalms 139:1 "O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.*

- The word used for "Search" in the Hebrew literally means "pierced through", like seeing right through a person. We sometimes think we can see through a person; but with God, it's fact. God sees right through you.
- It also can be used in the idea of searching for treasure, as though God is searching for something wonderful to bless in your life.
- God sees through and through, at all times, in all places, outward deeds, and innermost thoughts. We all live under such an eye. Whether you think it's thrilling or threatening depends on the way you live, and if you've taken care to give your life to Jesus to redeem and cleanse.

*2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

- God observes our most casual acts, and God is interested.
- The way it's written in the Hebrew, it really says "YOU know Lord, you alone know."
- Twice the Gospel writers said of Jesus "He knew their thoughts."

*3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.*

- There is not a step you take that God doesn't know—from your first step out of bed, to work, to school, to lunch, and home again, and finally back to your bed.
- God also knows every step you take, and every move you make—from your first wobbly steps as a toddler to your last wobbly steps as a senior citizen.

*4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.*

- We often forget right away what we've said. But God knows every word.

- Jesus himself said in Matthew 12:6 *“But I tell you that people will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

*5 You hem me in-- behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.*

- The words for “hemmed in” are also used when talking about besieging a town. God hems us in on every side so there can be no escape. No little disguises can deceive him. We use them all the time on each other but God sees through them.
- God sees through all the games we play to exploit each other too.
- But God can’t be deceived. I thank Him for that! I’d rather be in his hands than my own.

*6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. 7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

- Instead of trying to shrink God’s omniscience, he reveled in it.
- God is present everywhere, including both sides of the grave.
- That’s the craziness of wanting to escape life. It does not solve problems. It simply hurls people into eternity, face to face with God, with all their problems unresolved and their guilt aggravated.
- Did you ever think about the fact that the sinner will meet God in hell as well? Revelation says “The dreadful sentence will have been passed: ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still...’ (22:11). Death does not change your character. Those who are lost will be slaves to their attitudes, consumed by their lusts, with no way to satisfy them, even in death.. God will be there...only as judge.

*9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.*

- Jesus himself said *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”* How awesome is that? In that strength, women and men have dared all kinds of dangers to spread the gospel to the remotest parts of the earth.
- What would you dare to do, and where would you dare to go, if you knew God would be there with you?

*11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.*

- The trouble is, that people *“love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.”* It’s under the cover of darkness that most of the world’s crimes are committed. It hides you from another person, but not from God.

*13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

- David knew nothing about embryos and medical science, nothing of the process of how a baby grows inside a womb, but he knew enough to be awed at the process.
- Today we know every living creature is made up of microscopic cells. Look at your thumbnail. Now say “I’m thumb-body.” Your thumbnail contains up to 400,000 cells. Each cell is a world in itself, containing an estimated 200 trillion tiny molecules of atoms. Each cell is a microscopic universe. And all these cells put together make up a living creature.
- I don’t believe it’s just the result of chance. David says it *“You created me.”*
- Do you treat people around you like the miracles they are, or are you careless?

*17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.”*

- God creates us, and God doesn't stop caring for us after we're born. He thinks of you all the time. God constantly cares for you. He is concerned for you. God's thoughts for you are more than the grains of sand in the world. The Creator of the universe cares about you personally!
- And people have no idea. How sad that so few people in this world ever come to realize how loved and identified they already are. How criminal that other systems of thought and philosophy have robbed billions of people of this comfort; because they also rob God of our appreciation and love.

Don't let anyone rob you of your identity. Your identity—your eternal identity, is wrapped up in God. What God thinks of you, and what God has done for you is enough. And it will set you free! *Who* am I is an important question. You need to answer this, or someone else will answer it for you. Won't you determine once and for all that your identity rests in Him, and let that guide you all the days of your life? And let your identity be a testimony about God.

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