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FMC Reedley
Philippians 3:1-11
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The Integrated Self

Who are you? (Pause)

Snap snap, we haven't got all day. Tell me who you are in 30 seconds or less. Perhaps I would respond with, I'm from Goshen, Indiana, or I might talk about how I am from the Mark family and one of those Kenegys from Oregon. Or I am a Mennonite born of Mennonites. Or some words that describe my theology, Trinitarian, orthodoxy, progressive. Maybe I would say that I am a pastor at the small Mennonite church here in Reedley.

Who are you?

Well, if I was to put things in categories you are belief, action, and community. You are your beliefs, your theology (what is the Bible for you), the way you view the world (Is creation and the creator good, indifferent, or evil), what is the authority in your life.

You are your actions. What do you do for a living, what do you do with your free time. What hill are you willing to die on and what things do you let roll off your back. This is your service to God, this is what you plan to do with your one wild and precious life.

And you are your community. Like it or not, we are formed by our families. We are shaped by the company we keep, the friends we listen to, and the church community that we call home. Community is messy and we don't always agree. But when we choose our loved ones, we are choosing to be vulnerable to. We don't get to choose if we hurt, but who we let hurt us.

Belief, action, and community. You can choose whatever words you want.

Worldview, purpose, and connections

Faithfulness, service, and the kingdom of God.

But in the end what matters is that these things that define us are in agreement. That they are integrated. Because this is the origin of the word integrity, when we feel whole and interconnected.

I'm sure you all remember when you have felt disintegrated. When the aspects of our identity do not match together and we feel disoriented.

Like a climate activist working at a oil field

Or a gay child with a family that disowns them.

Or pacifist as a soldier in a warzone

These examples are extreme, but here in today's scripture we have Paul who felt disintegrated.

Paul was doing all the right things, circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. Paul had it all figured out. He was a Pharisee, acting like a Pharisee, and surrounded by fellow Pharisees.

But then on the road to Damascus when a voice from heaven asked him to re-evaluate his beliefs. "Why are you persecuting me." And we might not have such a transcendent experience in our lives. Many of you have told me stories of how you changed throughout your life. How you grew up one way then because of people around you and a deepening of your faith world view. You changed. Maybe all at once or over time.

But whatever happened on the road to Damascus and the two-three years Paul spent leaning from followers of the Jesus way. Paul changed. And so Paul did not want to be a Pharisee anymore. He probably did not even want to have Pharisee friends anymore. And so to feel integrated, Paul took his faith in Christ and used it to become a missionary of Christ and made many fellow missionary friends along the way.

Beloved, in what ways do you feel integrated or disintegrated in this space? Are your beliefs, actions, and community in alignment? Are you integrated? If not, how are we supposed to get integrated?

I want to give you one more metaphor from the scriptures.

Who are we? Paul proclaims that we are members of the circumcision, servants in the Spirit of God, and citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Paul really is trying to give his people a roadmap, he tells them how throughout his life he changed and so they can change to. But at the end of the day, Paul is calling them into belonging. Being a member of the circumcision, servant of the Holy Spirit, and citizen of the Kingdom of God is not contingent upon us. We do not need to believe the right things or be perfect or worthy of being part of this Jesus way.

For it is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of God. It is God's faithfulness to us that matters. It is the example of Christ that inspires us. We only need to walk the way forward, wherever that may take us. We just need to walk with Paul on that road to Demascus and listen to the voice of truth that comes from God and our own conscience. Paul trusts you that you're

going to make it through this journey. Like Paul, many of us will change and need to re-orient our lives so that we can be integrated. Like Paul many of us will admit that we were wrong. But we can walk this path, because Christ walks with us.