

Ephesians 2:11-22

Introduction

I. Context

- A. 2:1-10: What God has done for us individually/internally
- B. 2: 11-22: What God has done for us relationally/corporately

II. Two cultural trends

- A. A movement towards spirituality
- B. A movement away from church as an organization/institution/community
Church confronts us with actual people who are messy, imperfect, etc

The Passage

I. Our lives before Christ (v. 11-13)

A. Background on the Jew-Gentile conflict

- 1. Jew = descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Gentile = everyone else
- 2. Beginning with Abraham, God chose the Jews as his special people
 - a. He made covenants/promises to them: “you are my chosen people, my treasured possession”
 - b. He gave them laws that distinguished them from the nations: circumcision, Sabbath, food laws, etc
- 3. Over time, the Jews forgot that their ultimate purpose was to be a light to Gentiles, and they developed a superiority complex
- 4. Animosity/hostility between Jews and Gentiles
Huge religious, racial, and cultural barriers

B. Paul’s description of Gentiles before faith in Christ (v. 1-2)

- 1. 5 descriptions in v. 2 that amount to total alienation from God and his people
- 2. But now in Christ they’ve been “brought near” (v. 3)

II. What Christ has done (v. 14-18)

A. Main point: Christ has brought PEACE and UNITY through his death on the cross

B. Peace between Jew and Gentile (v. 14-15)

- 1. He brought peace by destroying something
 - a. He destroyed the barrier/dividing wall of hostility (v. 14)
 - there was hostility that acted like a wall (not literal wall)
 - on the cross that wall was torn down
 - b. He destroyed the wall by abolishing the law/commandments (v. 15)
 - The law actually created a barrier because it became the standard by which a person was an insider or outsider. It clearly distinguished God’s people vs. not God’s people.
 - On cross, Jesus made the law obsolete by perfectly fulfilling it, and being the perfect sacrifice for our inability to fulfill it.
 - so now Jew and Gentile are on totally equal ground: the law no longer separates them—they are united by faith in Christ.
- 2. He brought peace by creating something

- a. “creating in himself one new man out of the two” (v. 15)
 - He has taken Jew and Gentile and created one new people
 - He didn’t change Gentiles into Jews or vice versa but created something new (analogy: 1992 olympic “dream team”)
 - see Gal 3:26-29
 - C. Peace between Jew-Gentile and God (v. 16-18)
 - 1. Jesus also destroyed the hostility between God and all humans
 - by paying the penalty that God’s holy justice required of sinful humanity
 - 2. Now we all have “access” to God through faith by one Spirit (v. 18)
- III. Our lives after Christ (v. 19-22)
 - A. Fellow citizens with God’s people (v. 19)
 - = one nation, one citizenship, one king
 - B. Members of God’s household (God’s new family)
 - = brothers and sisters of one family with one father
 - C. Building blocks of the same holy temple (20-22)
 - = Stones cemented together, intricately connected into a single temple
 - Apostles/prophets are the foundation
 - Jesus is the cornerstone
 - = Our community is the “place” where God dwells by his Spirit

Application

- I. Let’s celebrate the peace/unity we have in Christ as Christians, and let’s “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)
- II. Some questions to consider
 - A. Where do I need to lean into community a bit more? Where do I tend towards individualism in my faith a bit too much?
 - We come to know God most fully in his community
(example: C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and JRR Tolkien)
 - B. What are those barriers/walls that I still allow to have power in my relationship with other Christians?
 - race, age, socio-economic level, physical attraction, other churches, etc
 - C. What are those specific relationships that are broken and how can I make every effort to pursue peace and unity?
 - We must retrain ourselves to see other person less in light of what they are doing to us, and more in light of what Christ has done for both of us
 - Remember Jesus’ prayer for unity in John 17:20-23

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Read v. 14-15 and explain in your own words what Christ has done and how. Specifically, what is the relationship between the “wall of hostility” and the “law with its commandments and regulations,” and how has Christ dealt with each of those?
3. It was argued on Sunday that Christ has made one completely new people out of Jew and Gentile (v. 15). On the other hand, in Romans 11:17-21, Paul describes the Gentiles as wild branches that have been grafted in to the vine that is Israel. In light of that, how are we to think of this community: as one completely new community out of the two or as Gentiles being allowed in to the community of Israel?
4. Where do you see this move away from the church as a community towards a more private spirituality (in your own life or in the lives of friends around you)? Do you see this as a problem?
5. What barriers do you see separating Christians in your community (race, age, socio-economic, etc)? Which barriers do you still allow to have power in your own relationships with other Christians?
6. In the midst of conflicts between fellow believers, we were encouraged to consider one another less in light of what we do and more in light of what Christ has done for both of us (He is our peace). How did that impact you on Sunday? Do you have any experience of trying that?