

“Let Us Be One Church in Christ”, Ephesians 2:11-22 (07/18/21)

Recently, I have really been enjoying watching one Korean TV show. It is kind of a makeover program, which is also very famous here, in America. **(Slide 1)** One of them was on the air for 9 years, entitled “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” from ABC TV. The goal of this program was to remodel or rebuild an entire house for those who are in need, for the family of the war veteran, the family of the blind and so on. When they first saw their totally remodeled or newly built house, they were amazed, thrilled, and even cried, filled with a thankful heart.

(Slide 2) And the program that I am watching is the same but has a different format. It is a makeover of the restaurant. It’s titled “Baek Jong-won's Alley Restaurant.” Basically, Mr. Baek who is a very popular chef and powerful owner in the restaurant business helps other restaurants that are about to put up the shutters find the solution to save them from closing down. Think about that for those who have no choice but to close their restaurants, this program would be the last chance and a beam of light in total darkness. Therefore, at first, all of the applicants were ready to accept whatever solutions that they were given by Mr. Baek. They were amazed, thrilled, and excited just with the fact that they were able to get some help from Mr. Baek. However, as this TV show goes on, they find it difficult to make some changes in order to follow the solution. Changing the way they feel, easy and comfortable, and trying the new things is a really big challenge for them. So, even they were losing the joy that they had found at first as they started this TV show. Rather, a lot of complains and regrets come up in their mind. It seems like they totally forget about the original purpose of participating in this TV show. Actually, the purpose was not to get short-term popularity for their restaurant through this TV show, but long-term prosperity for the future. Then, they need to accept all the changes and challenges, and keep going forward and making continual development. Otherwise, there is no point in participating in this program.

(Slide 3) This is the same for having faith. When we first believe in Jesus Christ and encounter him in our midst, we are amazed, thrilled, and filled with joy and gratitude. So, we try to change our way of living by following the teachings of Jesus. However, soon we find out that it is very difficult to maintain it going forward. Then we lose our first love in Jesus Christ and our faith in him. How many things are changed in our life through the faith we have in Christ is important, but it is much more important how long we maintain our changed life - new life in Jesus Christ and keep it going forward.

(Slide 4) Today’s text in Ephesians challenges us by saying “remember that

at one time you Gentiles by birth..... remember that you were at that time without Christ.” Paul encouraged the people of the Ephesian Church to remember how they looked before they believed in Jesus Christ. When they did not believe Christ, they were Gentiles, and they were called the uncircumcision. Originally, they were not Jews by blood, but Gentiles. Politically, they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. Spiritually, they had no hope and did not know who God is. At that time, they just had nothing to do with God. However, to them, in verse 13, Paul said, “but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” In other words, Christ who is our peace made both groups-the Jews and the Gentiles who were dividing, discriminating, and being hostile and closeminded toward each other- into one by breaking down the dividing wall and abolishing the law. By the love of the cross, Jesus reconciled them and made them one in peace.

(Slide 5) In Galatians 3:27-28, Paul said “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” As we believe in Jesus Christ, as we were made one with Christ and one with each other by the blood of Jesus Christ, any discrimination between humans is totally ineffective in us. However, we still live in the world where there is a lot of discrimination among the people. We still try to build a wall and make rules dividing and judging others. Although we confess that everyone is equal under the law, is that really true? We judge other by gender, color, wealth, educational background, age and etc. We are involuntarily getting worldly minded. And we are losing the first love of Jesus Christ who made us one with him and one with each other. Then, we need to remember why God made us one, though we are all different. God did not intend for us just to get along well, but God wants all of us come to him in one Spirit, so that we are no longer strangers and aliens to each other. Rather, we are fellow citizens as God’s people, and we belong to God’s household.

(Slide 6) During the Old Testament days, on the Day of Atonement, which was called “Yom Kippur,” the high priest of the year was allowed to go into the sanctuary and worship God there alone. But now, by the love of the cross in Jesus Christ, anyone can come to God. By the peace of Jesus Christ, there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and they became the one new body in God. And today, we continue this oneness in Jesus Christ as church. If we truly believe Jesus Christ and we are saved by his blood, we are not only made one with Christ but made one with the neighbors we have from him. This means, we no longer come to God having hatred, division, discrimination, or judging others.

(Slide 7) In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus said, “if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift at the altar and go. First make things right with your brother or sister and then come back and offer your gift.” Also, 1 John 4:20-21 said, “if anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn’t love a brother or sister who can be seen can’t love God, who can’t be seen. This commandment we have from him: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also.”

(Slide 8) Last week in Europe, the Euro 2020 was finished. It was set up to play last year but postponed this year because of Covid-19. It was fun that the title is the Euro 2020 but was finished in 2021. Again, we could see all the drama made by 11 players. If you are a soccer person, I know you may spend many of your afternoons watching them. Think about the winning team. Do you know which was the winning team this year? Even if they have Ronaldo (Portugal) or Harry Kane (England) who is the world’s best soccer player, if the team could not become one, they could not win. One great player alone cannot make the winning team. All of the players on the team need to work together as one. Italy was amazing with playing as one team.

(Slide 9) Think about the Orchestra and think about the Choir. Although each one has a good sound, beautiful voice, if they don’t mingle together, if they don’t play or sing together, they cannot make a good harmony. This is what we need to do as church – the body of Christ. Through today’s gospel reading, we know that there were countless people who were following Jesus Christ. So many people gathered together when Jesus comes. Wherever he goes, the crowd came before him bringing all kinds of problems. It was the start of the church, and it looked the same with our church back in the old days. If we just opened the church door, then all the people in town came and worshiped together.

(Slide 10) As soon as the town formed, the church is also formed. As the town grows, the church also grows together with it. Everyone in town was baptized, confirmed, married in church, and grew and lived with church. Then why not anymore? What value of the church have we missed while so many people left church and lose their faith in Jesus Christ?

(Slide 11) We may rethink the church through the text of Ephesian. First, the center of the church should be only Jesus Christ, and everything is centered on him. Verse 20-22 said, “You are like a building with the apostles and prophets as the foundation and with Christ as the most important stone. Christ is the one who

holds the building together and makes it grow into a holy temple for the Lord. And you are part of that building Christ has built as a place for God's own Spirit to live." In other words, as part of the church, each one of us can be joined together as one church only in Jesus Christ. He is not only our cornerstone, but also the one who makes us to be the dwelling place for God. Secondly, we all are under construction in Jesus Christ. No one is perfect, only God is perfect. As verse 21-22 said, in this process, we all are joined together and built together in Christ Jesus. We all walk in the journey of faith with Jesus together. As one church, we are going forward to be like Jesus as we follow what he taught us to do by loving God and loving one another. Thirdly, we are the church, and we are the community. As Christ is our center, we are the one church, one community, and one body. We all are joined together and built together. We are one in God, in Jesus, and in Spirit. No walls between us, no discriminations in us. Each one of us is a precious child of God and important part of the one body, the church. These three values should go together. If we lose one of them, we cannot be whole and cannot go forward.

Are we really all centered on Jesus Christ? Is Jesus the only head of the church? Is each one of us all connected, built, changed, and keeps going forward? Are we really one in Christ and one with each other? Are we gathered just in this physical building or are we becoming one building in Jesus Christ? To be the church, the body, and the one community in Jesus Christ, we not only have the pleasure of participating in this makeover journey but also, we need to keep going forward. In Christ Jesus, we are continually changed, restored, and transformed. By restoring the joy of salvation and gratitude for everything that we have in Jesus Christ, as one church, the community of faith, everyday let us go forward together toward the perfection of Jesus Christ. Remember, we are one, as God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are One. Praise God. Amen.