

A True and Greater Inclusion

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask that you grant us self-knowledge. Father, grant us not so much self-knowledge that we just get really depressed, but help us, Father, to have a proper self-knowledge of who we are in light of you, in light of the real world.

And so, Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with gentle but deep power as we open and look at this confusing passage of Scripture. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So, one of the things that I have to warn people about when I'm trying to help them to learn how to preach better is that sometimes you can give an analogy or an example. And what happens is it doesn't actually help people to think about what's next in the sermon. It gets them thinking about what I've given the example about. And before you know it, they've spent 15 minutes on the example, and they're not paying any attention to my sermon whatsoever because they get sort of captivated or mad or angry or delighted about my example.

So, I'm going to take that risk right now with my opening example. Canada doesn't have universal health care. If you think about it for a second, I used to think Canada had universal health care.

[1 : 26] And then one day, quite a few years ago, I had a conversation with somebody and just asked me to think this very simple thought experiment. Daniel Alfredson, this is when he was still playing for the senators, Daniel Alfredson hurts his leg on an evening, a Saturday evening at 9 o'clock.

You hurt your leg on a Saturday evening at 9 o'clock. Who's going to have their MRIs done quicker? Who's going to have the surgery done quicker? How's that going to work out? And, you know, I have to confess it never dawned on me that, in fact, gosh, Daniel Alfredson doesn't have to wait as long as I would have to wait if we both hurt our legs the same night.

This just sort of came up. And this recognition that we don't actually have universal health care is connected to what can often happen to us when we come face to face with it.

And it can reveal a type of enmity and resentment about others. So a friend of mine, he'd had some sort of minor but important surgery done, but they botched it.

The surgeons botched it for whatever reason. And he went in, and obviously they were looking at it, and they were going to have to redo the surgery. And he was telling me this like a couple of days after he'd been in to see his doctor, the GP or whatever.

[2 : 46] And the doctor told him, because he couldn't actually go see the specialist, the doctor told him that he had to wait a month to call up the specialist, not to see the specialist, but to make an appointment to see the specialist.

And the appointment would then be maybe three months after that. And then, of course, he'd have to wait after that for the surgery. Now, I'm telling you this all very calmly.

He was almost spitting mad about this. And as he's telling me this story, he keeps going. And he's not making any political comments whatsoever.

He says, do you think Justin Trudeau or Scheer or Elizabeth May would have to wait that long just to call to make an appointment? And he was just livid and furious.

And that sort of underlying enmity that we actually do have about social class and other types of things like that emerges when you're faced with something like this.

[3 : 52] Now, why am I mentioning him? One of the things which is very puzzling about this passage of Scripture for us as Canadians is that when we look at this passage about differences and dealing with differences and dealing with the other, what happens is we talk about the text and think about the text out of one side of our mouth.

It's like we have two minds or we are schizophrenic and we forget about one part of us when we look at it. And so we just sort of think, well, you know, this text is just talking about trying to live with differences and living with the other.

But in Canada, we don't have to worry about that because in Canada, we're all one. In Canada, we don't have those types of enmity that exist in other cultures or other places. But we forget. I mean, as I said, my example just right off the top, all of a sudden, he's face to face with botched surgery with those long wait lines.

And the enmity, the anger, is there instantly. It's not as if you had to think about it, think about it, think about it, think about it, think about it. It's instantly there. That at an unrecognized level, there's enmity.

Which is why at the same time, on one level, we Canadians would say, well, I don't know why we need to have Jesus and deal with these things about the other. Because, you know, in Canada, you know, we don't have those things. But on the other hand, we forget all of a sudden about French and English differences.

[5 : 15] As I've been learning from some of my Francophone friends, between Francophone Ontarians and Francophone Québécois differences, and between black and white and everything else like that.

There's lots of differences. And not often hidden, but outward enmity. So this text is talking about something in the very, very real world. What happens when you become a Christian in a world where there is lots of division, where there's others, where people are broken down and separated? And on one level, we try to hide it in Canada, but in many places in the world, it's just right up front. It's right in your face. I've shared with you before, if you haven't, I'll tell you the story again.

When I was in Angola a couple of years ago, very, very, very, very, very poor country, and about a 10-minute walk, this is one of the, if you've traveled in third-world countries, this is one of the things which is curious about the third-world countries, is you can have, like, literally, I'm walking down the street, and I'm having to avoid the garbage, and when I walk, I have to step over the little streams in the street, because that's sewage overflow, and that's how I'm walking, and the road is like this.

It keeps the traffic at a slower speed, because it's so bumpy. But then 10-minute walk from where I was staying was a mall that could have looked like it was in Canada, like it's just weird, surrounded with poverty, and a mall that looks like it was in Canada, with a movie theater that showed the same movies that were playing in Ottawa at the same time.

[6 : 49] And I come up to the mall, and there's lots of security guards, right, because there's lots of poor people in Angola, and because I'm white, and obviously not from Angola, they just let me in.

I mean, there's no, they're not looking at me. I mean, they're looking at me a little bit, because why is this white guy here? Because part of Angola I'm in, there's like, there's virtually nobody who's white, right? So they look at me a little bit like that, but they don't, I mean, I'm just, I'm accepting. But they just, for many parts of the world, they just, the fact that there's differences, the fact that there's hierarchies, they just accept it. They're proud of it. It's in that world that Paul is writing. So in some ways, you see, for an Angola, it might be easier for them to read this text, because they're just open about the fact that there's differences.

Just one more example from Angola. Huge lineup to get gas. And one of the things which was so interesting about the huge lineup to get gas, I mean, I mean a huge lineup to get gas, that twice while I was there, somebody just came and sauntered up to the front and got their gas and left, and nobody commented.

And I asked my guide, and they said, well, they're whatever, they're with the ruling party, or they're, you know, they're this tribal person, and they just go to the front. And nobody disagreed, they just, that's just the way the world works, right?

[8 : 01] So, easier for them than us, but that's what they're looking at. So let's look at the text. It's a long introduction to an important topic, and it's Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11 to 22.

Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11 to 22. And what's just happened before this is that Paul has talked about how we're made right with God by having faith in Jesus.

And it's God's grace that we receive by faith, and our faith is in Jesus, and there's no works, there's no ground for us to boast. And out of that, we are to live a life that reflects that, that we do good works.

But now Paul's going to deal with, well, how does that affect the fact that in the world there's division? You see, in Paul's day, they were very, very open about divisions. There were citizens and

non-citizens.

There were slave and free. There were men and women. They were very open about the divisions. And the divisions mattered. In the city of Ephesus, which is where this is written at the time, there were 250,000 people who lived in Ephesus.

[9 : 09] And the second largest city in the Roman Empire. But how many citizens were there in Ephesus? 250,000 people? There were 1,000 citizens.

1,000 citizens. 250,000 people, but only 1,000 of them are citizens with full rights and protection. And they wouldn't have hid it. It would have been just on display. So what does it mean to be saved by grace and a Christian in a world where there's such division?

That's what Paul is going to walk towards. And if you don't have your Bible, it'll be up on the screen, at least parts of it. Did I do the... Yes, there we go, the right one.

So verse 11. Yes. Now just sort of pause here.

Circumcision, of course, is sort of the defining rite or ritual that you needed to have to become a part of the covenant people of the Jewish people.

[10 : 27] And for Jewish people at that time, and still, I guess, to some extent today, the whole world was divided between Jews and non-Jews. And if you're a non-Jew, you're a Gentile. So what Paul is doing here is he's actually walking towards the biggest problem.

And it's, is God, in fact, behind maintaining division? So that what's going to happen when you become a Christian? You're a slave Christian, or you're a woman Christian, or you're a freedman Christian, or you're a citizen Christian, or you're a former pagan Christian, or you're a former Jewish Christian.

Is that how things are going to work? And you'll notice up there that, first of all, it's not as obvious in English, but in the original language, Paul uses distancing language throughout this.

By which it means that he's saying that not necessarily that he thinks this way, but this is how people think. And he puts a very, very subtle thing in here to get us to think about things in a bit of a different way.

Look again when he says, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, and then called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision which is made in the flesh by hands.

[11 : 35] And what Paul is saying here, basically the same word is used two different ways in the New Testament, and you have to sort of figure it out by context. Usually when Paul uses the word flesh, he means that part of us which is in rebellion against God.

But there's another use, usually for instance in the Gospel of John, the other use is used, and that just means flesh is a way of referring to the fact that we are frail and finite.

Frail and finite. And so what Paul is saying here is, just for a moment, people make these divisions between Gentile and not, between circumcision and not, but what really is ultimately circumcision and uncircumcision?

It's something that we do with our hands, on the body, and it emerges out of frailty and finiteness. And in fact, all human divisions, isn't that what they emerge out of?

I mean, people go to war, over religion. They go to war over class differences. They go to, they fight for parking spots. They make distinctions of rank, and they make big deals sometimes about race and ethnicity and language.

[12 : 51] But all of these things, what do they do? If you think about it for a second, they all emerge out of that which is finite and frail. Which is one of the reasons why, when we think back of, when I came to the Eganville, I was a pastorate in Eganville, one of the things that people like to tell me is, if you've ever go to Eganville, there's, the Bonachere River divides the little village of Eganville.

Eganville has about 2,000 people. It divides the village. And on one side of the village is a huge Roman Catholic church that you can see from everywhere. And on the other side of the village, on the other side of the river, there's lots of churches.

There's a big Lutheran church and then smaller churches and smaller churches. And one of the things that they like to tell me was that at, there were many, many years where at the, I'm not making this up, at the Anglican cemetery on the top of the hill on one side of the river, they had a cannon, decommissioned cannon, pointed at the Catholic church.

Now, we all chuckle. And they chuckle. But you know, why do we chuckle? It emerges out of finiteness and frailty, doesn't it?

And it passes. That's what happens with anything that just emerges out of frailty and finiteness, it passes. It's a big, big deal. In whatever, 1930, it's a big deal.

[14 : 15] But now, later on, at best we just think it's really funny. But at the same time, we think it's funny, we don't realize our own ways that we make divisions out of frailty and out of finiteness, out of flesh that has no real ultimate power.

And so, Paul begins by that, but he also adds this other thing, which it seems as if God in the past has made this big distinction based on rules and commandments and ethnicity between one people and all the others.

But now, he's talking to a group of people who are mainly ex-pagans, and he said, so just remember, it begins with therefore, right? Remember, so therefore, you're made right with God by what God has done out of grace through Jesus, and you receive it by faith with no works.

So how does that fit in with this fact that in the world, there's all these divisions? Well, let's look what he says. He says this, verse 13, but now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. And the blood of Christ is just a very graphic way of referring to the fact that Jesus died a sacrificial death.

[15 : 46] And what Paul is saying here, which is very significant, is, well, you know what's at the back of his mind is a particular type of image, which is hard for us Canadians to get into our mind, but it's very important.

You see, when we think about these types of things in Canada, we don't realize that we have two different types of stories. The average Canadian has two stories running as the background story in their minds, in our minds, when we think about these things.

And one of the things that we think about is that the reason we don't really have to take the claims of Christianity very seriously is because, as we all know, evolution is true. And on the other hand, we have this other story going on in our mind that human beings are fundamentally good.

And those are the fundamental sort of baseline stories going on in the back of our mind, and we often express it just out in the front. And we never sort of actually think about them and look at them.

And Paul knows that both of these stories have great, great problems. So, for instance, the idea of evolution, and that means God doesn't exist. A few years ago, Louise and I were out walking after dark.

[17 : 00] This is when we still lived on Robina Street, and we were right by the edge. We walked right by the edge of the green belt. And as we were walking along the grass, the green belt, a big wall of trees in the green belt right over there, all of a sudden, we heard the most fearsome scream and squealing of an animal being attacked.

And for the next, it seemed like a long time, but it was probably only 90 seconds, you'd hear this heart-rending scream of an animal being attacked followed by thrashing and silence and then another scream and silence and thrash, like thrashing, and then this final long scream, scream, squeal, which all of a sudden was cut short.

the strong eats the weak. And when some people talk about evolution being true, they don't really think about the fact that that means that the strong eat the weak.

but if, in fact, we all come to be because the strong eat the weak, well, then, how in Canada can you actually try to understand or believe that the strong should be taxed more or that we should give aid to another country that's tearing itself apart?

Like, if the governing story about why God doesn't exist and we don't have to pay any attention to him and how we understand ourselves is that the strong eat the weak and the strong survive and the weak die and the strong just keep getting stronger because the strong eat the weak, where does love and concern for other people come in?

[19 : 00] Like, huh? Like, how does that fit? And how is it that we think that we're fundamentally good when, as I gave in that illustration, all it takes is the tiniest little bit of effect on our lives and waiting times as my friend was telling me about the fact that you have to wait a month just to actually make an appointment that would be three months after that you know what?

And that little tiny thing on one hand not very significant reveals this deep enmity and anger within him. You see, Paul, as he's thinking about all of these things, he has a very, very different baseline

story by which he understands things.

And the baseline story that he has is that all things came to be out of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, living in harmony and unity.

And out of this, in a sense, fundamental harmony and unity, they work together to create all things. And human beings, at some point in time, after they were created good and created to be in harmony with each other and harmony with themselves and in harmony with God, it is out of harmony, it is out of life and love and harmony that human beings are created.

And enmity and hatred comes into the world when Adam and Eve decide that they don't trust God and they want to be like God themselves.

[20 : 41] And if you go back and you read Genesis 3, the second they decide that they want to be like God themselves, well, here's the thing, isn't this how it works?

If both Louise and I want to be God's, aren't we only going to fight? We can only have one God. And if all of my kids want to be God as well, we're just going to fight.

And the fact of the matter is, as you go back and you read that story, as soon as there is this desire to be like God, the first thing that happens is that they realize that they are at enmity with themselves, they feel uncomfortable with themselves, and they're at enmity with God, they blame God for what's going on, and they're at enmity with each other.

Each of them blames somebody else for what's going on, and all of a sudden there's enmity, and enmity has come into the world. And because human beings, separate from God, are just frail and finite, they cannot fix themselves.

themselves. And so what's being described here in this Bible verse is that Christ, the creator and sustainer of all things, God, the son of God, takes upon himself human flesh and enters our mess.

[22 : 00] Enters our mess. If you go back and you read Genesis 1 to 11, this is the other type of story. It's a very, very interesting story. All religion and all spirituality and much philosophy and just the common way of thinking about things is this idea that somehow or another we can still reach out towards God or become like gods ourselves.

That somehow or another that's just going to be able to happen. But there's this ancient story where in Babel it brings that whole first 11 chapters to a significant end. It's very, very comical but very, very powerful story.

The human race is all one and they're traveling from one place to another and they decide they want to make a tower that reaches all the way to heaven. And so they make this tower that they're all very, very pleased at and there's a note of irony in the text.

If you go back, it's not as obvious in English but it's there in the original language. There's a note of irony that God's in heaven and he says, in a sense, it's one of those early texts which show that the Old Testament teaches something like the Trinity.

And it's as if God says, look at those human beings down there. They're doing something that's so very, very tiny, I can't even see it from up here. Remember, they're down there thinking that they've built this tower that's reaching to heaven.

[23 : 19] But God says, look at that, they've made something down there, good grief. I wonder what that is. It's so far away and so tiny, I can't see it. I guess I better go down to see what it is.

And the result of this human desire to reach God is that human beings are scattered and divided.

And so it is that the Bible teaches that just as with our original parents, Adam and Eve, the more that we try to see and be like God, the more that what happens is enmity and division.

And we are frail and finite and cannot fix it. So what Paul is describing right here is that Christ comes down. We who are far off, Christ comes to where we are and dwells among us to accomplish something that we cannot accomplish ourselves.

It's described here. Look at verses 14 to 16. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by nullifying the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Some of you might remember that last week I described, Paul gave this very powerful image of how every human being is like a corpse. Apart from Christ, I had roses up here, and I used the example of every human being is like a cut flower.

[25 : 07] The one thing we know when a baby is born is that the baby will die. That's just as soon as there's a zygote. It's just we're like cut flowers. We're separated from God and we will die.

And I described how Paul earlier describes how salvation works is that everything to do with our salvation is a gift that comes from God. Even our speaking and asking Christ to come into our lives is something that God gives us the power by his grace.

And Paul gives these powerful images that it's as if I'm lying there dead or I'm the cut flower and I ask Christ to come and it's as if Christ puts his arms around me and holds me and completely and utterly becomes in a sense we're both different but he becomes at one with me.

And I described last week how on one level of course the cross is something that took place once at time in history but because it's God the son of God who has taken on flesh who's dying it's also something which is taking place outside of time and therefore is available to everybody who lives in time.

And what happens is that Christ comes and takes me who is dead and he unites himself to me so that what happens is on the cross I die with Christ.

[26 : 36] And after the cross I am co-made alive with Christ and I am co-raised with Christ and I am co-seated with Christ. Christ and in this profound act of identification of Jesus with me who has come down from heaven and is united to me.

In this profound act of uniting the sin that deserves punishment becomes his and the righteousness that is his becomes mine.

And now Paul takes this further image. It's not as if there's a Muslim way to become a Christian and then there's a special gospel for Muslims.

And it's not as if there's a slave's way of becoming a Christian and so there's a gospel for slaves.

And it's not as if there's a citizen's way of becoming a Christian so there's a citizen gospel and there's a male way and a female way or anything.

No, no. In every single human being there's that same thing. But now Paul takes this very very different image. Because the fact of the matter is I don't know the depths of my own hostility and enmity towards others.

[27 : 49] I don't know the full depths of the enmity that I have at myself and my past and different parts of me. I don't know the full extent at which I am at war within myself, at war with my wife, at war with my kids, at war with my church, at war with the citizens, at war with creation.

I don't understand the depth of the hostility and the enmity that I have. And what happens is it's just almost as if a parent who loves their child who's getting so angry and they just hug their child and hug their child and hug their child until the enmity and the hostility and the anger and the screaming somehow comes another to a stop.

But in a far more profound way that Paul illustrates it, the enmity that I have towards God and the enmity that I have towards others and the enmity I have towards myself that Christ embraces me and I become one body in him and it's as if all of that enmity, all of that hostility, all of that is swallowed up by him in his death upon the cross.

Like some of us, as we get closer to Christ, begin to know even now in small ways on this side of the grave, the ways that our anger and enmity and hostility are swallowed up by his love.

But when we see Christ face to face and the full depths of our enmity and hostility and anger are made clear to us, we will just stand amazed at what Christ has done for us.

[29 : 30] It's all swallowed. It's all consumed. It's all dealt with as he clutching us to himself. In all of the divisions.

And he doesn't do this just one way for one group and a different way for another group. It's just everybody with their own different hostilities and their own different differences which we all think are so important. They're all dealt with and swallowed and consumed in Jesus who's come from heaven.

He's not finite. He's infinite. He is love himself. He is light himself in which the darkness cannot survive. He is love himself.

And it's a work of the full Trinity. You see this whole thing about how Paul, remember I said how Paul has this other story and you look here and you'll see how the whole Trinity is at work in this profound act of peace.

Verse 17 and 18. And Jesus came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

[30 : 46] See that? The Holy, the Trinity working together through Jesus. All human beings have access in one Holy Spirit to the one Father. See this is the profound thing which we see in the Gospel.

We don't have to puzzle over how in a world where the strong eat the weak we should love one another. And we don't have to puzzle over how we can have this fervent delusional idea that we're perfectly good yet at the same time our friends say look at how they hurt me and we do these wrong things and we get upset with people's pride.

In terms of how God created human beings to be we were made to be at peace with ourselves, at peace with each other, at peace with the creation out of the Father and the Son's eternal love for each other and the Holy Spirit.

And in redemption we see the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit moving and working to bring an end to peace, to bring an end to hostility and enmity that we might be at peace. And then the text continues to give us an idea and an image of what it will be like as we live now and as we move towards the future.

Look at verses 19 and following. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

[32 : 19] Just pause here for a second. Paul uses the language stranger as a legal term in the Roman empire as is aliens. So strangers are people who had no rights whatsoever.

Zero rights. Zero rights. Aliens had in Ephesus a limited number of rights and protections and obligations but they were very, very, very limited.

But you are fellow citizens. Citizen is the third class. I don't know what the full statistics are to the 250,000 people in Ephesus. A thousand only were citizens. I don't know how many had the status of aliens and how many had the status of strangers.

But Paul here says this remarkable thing. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

[33 : 24] So Paul gives, so the congregation would have had men and would have had women. It would have had slaves and free. It would have had citizens probably and non-citizens.

And it would have had because it was a world city and a port. It would have had people of different races and different ethnicities. It probably had Romans and Greeks and it probably had some Jews and it would have had other different people.

And what he said is the way you have to understand yourself is that there's not a slave church and a citizen's church and a black church and a white church and a woman's church and a man's church.

The way you are to understand yourself is that given that Christ has so embraced you, so embraced you at the deepest levels of your soul and spirit, so embraced you, become closer to you than you are to yourself, closer to you than your own breathing.

And in being so close to you, the enmity and the anger and the hostility and the jealousy and the pride that you have is in a sense swallowed up by him and dealt with by him in his death upon the cross.

[34 : 37] And a righteousness of Christ which is not your own, that his perfect relationship with the father, his perfect life love and light, that somehow now clothes you.

This has been so powerful. And it's not, and it's how every single human being is made right with God. And so God himself has in effect for every Christian created a brand new human being.

And so how are you to understand how to live? You are to live in such a way that you are modeling to put to death the divisions that the world believes are so important.

Why? Because whether you are a slave in Ephesus or whether you are a freed man or a citizen, every single one of you is equally a citizen in Christ's kingdom.

What else are you? Whether you are a slave, whether you are black or white, whether you are Greek speaking or Roman speaking or some other language, whether you are old or young, every single one of you in Christ should understand that they are a child in God's household.

[35 : 57] Your father has a household and you're all part of it. And then he gives this third image and you are to understand yourself as that God has chosen you and he's now made you a living stone.

And he's chosen you and he's chosen you and he's chosen you and he's chosen you and he's chosen you he's chosen you he's chosen you. You're each living stones and he's taking these living stones. He's taking them and he's not making you like a temple.

Doesn't say like he says he's making you into a temple. A temple where he dwells. One temple that he's building out of living stones.

And a temple is where people go to meet God and it is through that temple, these living stones unworthy as we are that the world can meet God. You see one of the things which is so interesting in this text is that when he says that Christ came and preached peace to those who are far off in here what he's saying is that when you and I, when this church when we proclaim Christ it's Christ proclaiming.

Because we're his temple. So as we're gripped by the gospel as we're truly gripped by the gospel as it becomes real to our hearts all racism and all prejudice should wither and die.

[37 : 34] And as we are gripped by the gospel as it becomes deeper and more real to our heart when we understand what Christ has done for us our desire to build bonds of affection between other churches should grow.

And as the gospel grips us as we understand that the story which is the true story of the world and of the universe is not that the strong eat the weak and somehow or another we developed but that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit created human beings and when we had fallen and brought enmity into the world the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit act to bring redemption and out of that redemption there is to be this one new humanity which is every person who's in it is part of God's one household that we're all citizens in one kingdom that we're all living stones in one building and if you think about it for a second in the book of Revelation you see that there is no temple because the entire world becomes in a sense God's dwelling place and we are in that world so we know that from the past and the present and the future there is just citizens in one kingdom one new humanity and that as we draw close to Christ racism and prejudice should die where the gospel is not real to our hearts but when you stand in such a story gripped by the wonder of what God has done for us in the gospel when we look at the world when we look at the world not only do we pray for the bonds of affection between churches to increase but if Christ so acted to bring an end to hostility so will I so will I so should we please stand

Father some of us know we have anger problems and others of us don't think we do and some of us Father know that we struggle with enmity and prejudice and racism and class consciousness and some of us don't realize that those things are probably going on in our minds and our hearts and our lives in different ways and we give you thanks and praise Father that Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves and that when he unites himself to us that he comes closer to us than we are to ourselves and he knows and experiences the full depth of our prejudices and our angers and our enmity and our anger and hostility and he tastes it full with nothing left out and he deals with all of it in his death upon the cross out of love for us that we might be your children in your household citizens in your kingdom living stones in your temple where you will dwell

Father we thank you for the cross we thank you for Christ make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel learning to live for your glory and this we ask in Jesus' name and all God's people said Amen