

The Gospel: Reconciler or Segregator? Joel's Prophecy at Pentecost

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's really good to be with you all today. My name is Alan Tan, born and raised in Winnipeg. So a few of you were born and raised there or spent significant time there? Great. Yeah, a little bit about me, just so you know who's speaking to you this morning.

So I'm second-generation Chinese-Canadian. My dad was born outside Bombay, or now Mumbai, in a Mandarin-speaking neighborhood. My mom in mainland China. They both ended up in Hong Kong and then over to Winnipeg.

So a bit of journey for both of them. So I moved here to study in Vancouver in 2012 to work on my Master of Divinity at Regent College, which I'm about six months away from finishing. So that's exciting for me.

My home church committee is Winnipeg Chinese Alliance Church. And while in Winnipeg, I studied computer science and a minor in philosophy. Worked for about six years in public insurance before moving here.

I had a sense of call to ministry actually when I was 16. And I'm 34 now, so I guess God took time with me. It's the way I like to look at it anyways. And currently I'm an Artizo intern, and I'm working at St. John Richmond with Sean Love, which many of you know.

[1 : 00] He was a youth minister here for a while. And I'm really thankful for this opportunity to share with you guys this topic that's been close to my heart. And has actually been a thread for me throughout my education at Regent College.

So today's topic is the gospel of reconciler or segregator. The themes of reconciliation and segregation, you know, if you were to think of unifying things or dividing things, in a way, if I look back at my life, I'm sort of wired to have thought about this my whole life.

For both my parents, they experienced a lot of separation and coming together and separation and coming together. My dad in India was born during... He was born in 47, which meant he had a British passport.

So when tensions were happening between Chinese and Indians there, his parents sent him away to Hong Kong on his own. And his parents went several years later and siblings. My mom was born in mainland China during the Great Famine in China, during a cultural revolution.

So her dad and siblings split earlier. She was left to their mom. Then her mom fled on her own. And then my mom eventually escaped on her own to Hong Kong. Was reunited with family.

[2 : 05] Couldn't live peacefully there, being that close to the communist government. So then fled to Winnipeg as well. So a lot of leaving and rejoining and leaving and rejoining. Me being born as Chinese can't have brought this topic to my mind.

Living as a minority, how do I understand belonging as well? And sensing a lot of often division and barriers between me and other people in my life as well. I attended a Chinese church in Winnipeg. Multi-congregational. So if you think trying to be one church is hard, imagine you have a Mandarin congregation, a Cantonese congregation, an English congregation. All of different ages. Slightly different theology. Slightly, you know, language barrier even.

And quite different cultures within all of them. And here we are struggling. How do we be one church in the midst of all those dynamics? I went through a church split when I was about 14, which was a very, some, any of you have been through that.

You know, it really hurts your understanding of what does it mean to be the people of God together. How are we supposed to treat each other? How are we supposed to work through conflict and division? And now that I've moved here, I've had two very interesting church experiences.

[3 : 09] Because I was at a primarily Chinese church in the poorest post-a-code in Winnipeg, actually. Surrounded by primarily non-Chinese. So there we're like, you know what, we should know how to welcome other people in.

We struggled a lot to do it. Not for lack of desire or lack of intent, but something was blocking us from doing that. Now I'm at St. John's Richmond, which is a predominantly Caucasian church in a predominantly Chinese neighborhood.

So I've actually completely reversed my environments. And there's a church that says, hey, we want to know how to welcome in those who are not like us. And it's not for lack of intent or lack of desire, but there's challenges that come alongside that.

So in many ways, I've had a lot of personal experiences to wonder, what does it mean to be the people of God? What does division look like? What does unity look like? What does reconciliation look like? And what does segregation look like?

Now, I have a couple disclaimers, which should warn you a little bit. You know, if a lecture has disclaimers at the beginning. But I will say, reconciliation and segregation are loaded terms, even to say them in front of you.

[4 : 09] They're weighty words. And talking about this is hard. And I often think, actually, when it comes to talking about hard things, being Chinese-Canadian does not help me at all, actually. The Canadian side of me, kind of conflict avoidant.

You know, just kind of want things to be okay. Want to be politically correct and polite and respectful. That doesn't help me talk about hard things. The Chinese side of me, indirect culture. That doesn't help.

Confucian values of saving face. You know, you don't want to bring up anything too hard. That causes discomfort and shame for other people. So that doesn't help me either. So I don't know why I'm up here this morning, actually. But to put it shortly, these are uncomfortable things to talk about. And I know that. And surely any of you who have had serious experiences with this know that these are challenging things to talk about. So I think to talk about this does bring up things such as injustice, discrimination.

But it also brings up beautiful things like hospitality and forgiveness and love. So both are going to be ahead of us as we go through this morning. So to begin, let's define a few of the terms we're going to talk about this morning.

[5 : 13] First, reconciliation. The act of causing two peoples or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement. Kind of a coming together again after a division.

It can be kind of on a micro level or macro level. It can just be you and a friend or this can be major people groups learning to coexist peacefully together. Secondly, segregation.

The separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residents in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means.

And you can see the language is kind of loaded to capture things like apartheid and other things, other times of history like that. But another way to think about reconciliation, segregation, if you were to think of them in motion, would it be verbs like unifying versus verbs like dividing.

And what's happening within the people of God. And I think we've all experienced this in small and big ways. This can be who doesn't show up to the family gathering and who hasn't shown up for many years or who doesn't talk to so-and-so.

[6 : 19] So perhaps you've experienced on a church level with church splits. And I know many of you have been part of ANIC for a while and know this in very painful ways in a rift within the church itself.

How do we unify or how are we dividing? I'm sure if we went around this room we would be able to share many of these experiences. But I want to think about how prevalent is this today here in our context, you know, living here in Vancouver.

So what I'm actually going to do is I want to hear a bit from you guys. So what you're going to do is either turn to your neighbor in groups of two or three. And I'm going to have a quote up here that I want you guys to agree or disagree with.

Okay. Now, this is quite a famous quote. And we're not even sure if we're able to attribute it properly. This is 11 a.m. Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. But we'll fill in Canada or Vancouver in this case.

Often attributed to Martin Luther King Jr. And whoever said it, it's going to be helpful to us today. Now, what we're going to do is we're going to come up with a list of reasons to agree or disagree with this statement.

[7 : 20] But to make this more interesting and to make it truly educational, I'm going to force your hand. So this whole side of the room is going to argue that it is true. 11 a.m. is the most segregated hour on a Sunday morning.

And this side is going to say, no, it isn't. Okay. So I'll be passing my handles while I do that. But please turn to your neighbor or in groups of two or three. And I'm going to give you guys about five minutes to talk about this.

And then we're going to send those ideas up here. And we're just going to get them out on here. So go for it. Okay. So what we're going to do is I want to hear from you guys a bit. We're just going to kind of put them out here. Don't feel like you have to say whether your reason is justified or not. This is kind of out of your observations. What have you seen? What's been true to your experience? So you guys are – wait. Did I give you guys the yay or nay side? You guys are – yay. Okay. Why don't we start with the yay? Please, what are some ways you would agree and affirm the statement?

A minority of us are in church. The most of our group is not in church. Okay. So you've been church'd and unchurch'd. Right. My side. And – right.

[8 : 25] Okay. Church'd and unchurch'd. Soccer versus church. Soccer versus church. No. Soccer versus church. I don't know. I'm going to read it to that one a little bit.

They're not taking their kids to soccer, right? Okay. Okay. So there's kind of competing commitments. Granville Island. Competing options.

Politically correct versus politically incorrect. Okay. PC and non-none. Sleeping in. I see you. Sleeping in versus getting up.

Sleeping? I'll consider it a competing option. Sleep is a competing option to churches. And within the church, churches themselves are often segregated by social class.

Social class. Okay. Can you say a little bit more about that? Like, what would be an example about it? The most immediate example, we've been going to the afternoon services at Emmanuel Church over in East Vancouver.

[9 : 29] We go in East Vancouver. A very different group of people in St. John's from this. Emmanuel. Okay. Okay. A couple. Anyone else? These are great.

Yes. Yes. Even within the Anglican church, you know, there's the attic and then there's the...

The others. Yeah. Right. Right. The others. The other side. And this is very much both a theological and a relational rift, right? Even structural now, right?

So, ooh, that one's got several layers, right? We've got theology layer. There's a relational layer. And now it's structural. What else is it?

Is this it? Like, the church is pretty much unified? Society is unified other than this? It's city versus town, too. City versus town? Okay. People deserve cities and towns.

[10 : 26] The United States itself. Yeah, yeah. Different denominations. Denominations, yeah. Huge one. Huge one, right? As church people, we're kind of used to it.

But you try to keep the sign outside the church. Nomination versus abomination. Yes?

But to get back to what Martin Luther King said about 11 o'clock, is some people are in church no matter what. And other people have every reason in the world.

And that's why he says it's the most segregated hour in North America. Because we vote with our feet. You see?

And it's a difficult decision either way. But we feel that we're strengthened in the spirit. And we're here. And some people aren't.

[11 : 26] And it's so deep. We can't talk about it. Yeah. Yeah. I'll put another star. This one's come up a few times. What else do you think Martin Luther is getting at? In terms of race.

Race. Oh, race. Yeah. Race, right? Race, right? That's a somber one.

So you need a little bit of a kind of music to go down. Within one congregation, different ages are in different places. Ages.

Yeah. Knowledge. Yeah. Ages. Okay. We have quite a good list. Let's hear a bit from the nayside. Very good job, guys. I went to a Mennonite church. Yeah.

When I started, it was more pretty homogenous. But by the time I was left, it was a Japanese-Canadian pastor who had brought a number of Chinese young people from his former church. Okay. There have been South Asians, Brits.

[12:22] Wow. So quite a mix. Okay. So in some ways, some I see the opposite, right? You've seen an example where this has gone maybe positively. There's been a removal of segregation here, right?

So ethnicity mixing. Great. Great. At the best, we're trying to...

Oh, sorry. Okay, where were you? I didn't have my hand up. Okay. We'll go with the hand first. The educator, I see. Along the same lines, it's all the mobility. A lot of people have had to make fresh starts in communities, and they'll go and try out churches that are not necessarily the church they were raised in.

And, you know, I've heard of MBC, Mennonite, White Choice, was at the church that I once went to, but everybody was from the back of the different back. Oh, great, great. So I think maybe just the shifting of how people make their connections and lines is away from just traditional denominational times.

Yeah, there's sort of a, I don't know if I can match it. Maybe under city and town, I'm just moving, but I think there's sort of a scattering of the people of God that's happening because of the mobility.

[13:28] I want to put kind of a scattering. Cross-pollination. Yeah, cross-pollination. That's a great one. A melding of everything. The rhymer had a really good answer.

Oh, yes. Please go. Robert Putnam, the sociologist at Harvard, who is not a Christian, argues that the megachurch in the U.S. is the most integrated institution in the U.S., along with the military, you might argue.

And others were mentioning, well, Mike Willingdon is an example of that. Yeah. There were different groups, different entry points that have brought about the Quintet Act.

Yeah, yeah. Church. Right. And sometimes some of the bigger places have the resources to support that. Sure. Yeah. My turn. Thank you. At our best, I think that we are reaching out to those around us who are different.

So whether it's Christmas campers or musical events due by people or just supporting refugees coming in. Yeah. Yeah. Or furniture. You can use furniture.

[14:51] I mean, people are trying. Outreach in fair. Yeah, yeah. Definitely. Okay. And we have quite a good list here. And it's interesting to hear that some are opposite. Oh, Don. Yeah. Where you have global cities like Vancouver, you have churches that attract interracial couples, where they see other interracial couples at that church, and therefore they think, oh, we can attend here.

We're not going to be thought to be odd. Our kids can grow up in a multi-ethnic congregation. That's happening in Vancouver. With Westside, I think it's happening to a certain extent with First Baptist. Right. It certainly happened. It's happened with Redeemer Church in New York City, where I think Redeemer, Tim Kelly Church is about 40% Asian, both Chinese and Korean.

But it's the second, very often the field of the second generations who want still to continue the faith of their parents, but don't want to be in an ethnic church. They want to be in an integrated, multi-ethnic congregation where they feel they can be valued and involved.

Well, that's very helpful, Don. Being from Winnipeg, there aren't very many options for very mixed communities, but yeah, a metropolitan city like that. So these have been very, very helpful thoughts. We're going to kind of have those in the back of our mind, and this is sort of setting the stage for what we want to wrestle with today.

[16:13] And we could probably talk all day about what causes these, right? I mean, there's all sorts of underlying things in here. And there's all sorts of different ways to tackle this question of unity and division, segregation and reconciliation. What I want to do is look a little bit at Peter's sermon in Acts 2 and see what scripturally the birth of the church and the coming of the spirit has to shed in terms of light on this very question.

So I have a handout for you guys. I'm going to have a few slides, but really I use slides very minimally. It's just going to be to show you longer passages of scripture so you guys don't have to flip around in your Bible so much. But I have the handout there, and I'm going to be also listing some scripture references here and there.

So feel free to take some notes and look up some of those things. Some of them I may go over quite quickly, but they can be interesting for you to look at afterwards. So as I've been wrestling with

this question of segregation and reconciliation, I've wondered where can we turn in scripture to be thinking about this?

And I've always been fascinated with Pentecost. I mean, a lot could be said about Pentecost and exactly what happens there. But I want to set up the stage for what we're going to look at is where Peter actually chooses to use Joel's prophecy.

So he's going back 900 years, using a prophecy from there. He's looking at Pentecost, and he's going to use Joel's prophecy to explain what's going on with some implications for us today, I think. So let me set up a little bit of the background for where we are in scripture.

[17 : 35] So we're going to be looking at Acts, but Luke and Acts are really kind of meant to be one volume together. And the way you can think about it, and I have this in your notes there, is that Luke is sort of the life and ministry of Jesus, and then Acts were transitioning to the life and ministry of the Spirit as demonstrated through the church.

And so I have a few scriptures here just to kind of give you an idea of how Luke is ending here. And Luke really ends in a way to set up Acts. Here we see this is Luke 24, the last chapter, right near the ending. Jesus opened their minds.

This is after he's post-resurrection. He meets them on the road to Emmaus, and then he's chatting with them. And he opened his disciples' mind to understand the scriptures and said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. So basically, Luke ends in a way to, we're waiting for something. We're waiting for something. And this is what kind of launches us into Acts.

So if you look at the beginning of Acts, then we see it kind of mirrors. There's a matching up of the two books together. And the disciples again asked Jesus, they say, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

[18 : 46] And he said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Interestingly, both of these passages mention something about going global. There's something about going to the ends of the earth and all nations. So as we get close to the passage we're going to be looking at today, we're basically in Pentecost, and I've kind of shortened a lot of it to kind of just get a bit of the picture of what's going on here.

So these are all quotations, but shrunk down a little bit. So this is out of Acts 2. When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues. And those there were amazed, saying, How is it that we hear each of us in his own native language, Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus in Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians.

There's a list of people from all these different areas. We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God, and all were amazed and perplexed.

[20 : 06] And then a little bit later, Peter, but Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them. And a couple sentences into his sermon, he says, But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.

He's going to bring in Joel here. Now, why is this an interesting sermon? I think at least a couple of reasons. First, it's the first post-resurrection sermon we hear. We know that Jesus has shown himself disciples.

He's now kind of illuminated them. He's explained many things to them. And so this is the first kind of post-resurrection sermon we get to hear, where Peter is now integrating all these things together and is about to teach us something.

And the other thing why it's noteworthy is just the amazing event of Pentecost itself. I would be confused if I was there as well, and I would want to know what is happening, what is God doing in the midst of this?

So as he pulls in Joel, we need to talk a little bit about Joel. Actually, I want to bring up three quick themes in the book of Joel so we understand why might Peter be using Joel in his own sermon now,

900 years later.

[21 : 04] There's probably about three major themes in Joel. The first is a warning to repent or face judgment. And here's a few words, again, snippets out of chapter one. Hear this, you elders.

Put on sackcloth and lament. Consecrate a fast. Cry out to the Lord. And Joel actually cries out to several groups of people and tells them, you need to lament. Something is wrong here. Another interesting phrase mentioned several times in Joel is the day of the Lord.

Some upcoming event that was imminent. And out of a couple of verses here, For the day of the Lord is near, and as destruction from the Almighty it comes, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble.

For the day of the Lord is coming, it is near. A day of darkness and gloom. So sort of an upcoming judgment, an upcoming time when God's going to meet people with truth. And the third theme, which is very much where our prophecy comes out of, is this promise of restoration and the coming Holy Spirit.

And listen, these are really, really tender words out of Joel. Where the Lord says, Return to me with all your heart. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

[22 : 16] And then he promises restoration. My people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and there is none else. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, etc., etc.

And this is what leads us into the famous passage that many, I'm sure, of you are familiar with. There's a sense of expectation. Something's going to happen, and it's going to involve the Holy Spirit being poured out.

And that passage out of Joel 2 is exactly where, what we read in Acts, and I have it here for us. And this is where Peter preaches Joel's prophecy.

So he didn't hear these words up. In the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, even on my male servants and my female servants. In those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy, and I will show wonders in the heavens above, and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

[23 : 23] The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So on the second half of the passage, we see something that's saying foreboding language in Joel. Something's going to happen. And some of this language, they kind of refer to being, referring to theophany, when God comes, whether on Mount Sinai and other things, what type of signs accompany when God shows up.

And so as Peter looks around, and hears everyone speaking in tongues, and people sense the spear, and they're moved, Peter, out of all the places he could go in his mind, and where God could lead him, he's led to this passage.

And in the midst of something amazing happening in God's Spirit, encountering people, he uses this great language from Joel. And what's interesting is, in here there's, oh sorry, I moved over here. Interesting in here, there's already some languages, again, expanding on the idea of going global. We already saw that in both Luke and Acts. Preach to all nations, to the ends of the earth, Judea, Samaria.

[24 : 34] And here we see that, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. And even before, that I will pour my Spirit on all flesh. And so as I looked at this passage, I mean, there's a lot of things that could be said, about this deep prophecy, and exactly what is being fulfilled.

What I find interesting is that, essentially, God's Spirit's made poured out, but when God gives this prophecy to Joel, there's several groups of people that are included in this prophecy.

And so as I kind of stuck with that, and wrestled with that a little bit, I started noticing that in a way, there are actually four places of potential division, that are actually listed within this prophecy.

When the Spirit pours out, and if you picture something pouring out, whether it's a glass or a container, what sort of walls is this pouring out going to just naturally overflow out of? And as I looked at it, I saw at least four here that I want to bring up with you.

Firstly, is one of gender. Is it just the sons, or those who inherit the land or the greatest share that are included in the promise of the Spirit? No, we see that both sons and daughters.

[25 : 41] We see male servants and female servants. So there's sort of one of the potential barriers we have in our world of gender. The pouring of the Spirit somehow overflows over that. Another one that we see mentioned is age.

We see that young men and old men shall dream dreams. So it's not privy to just a particular generation, those who are older or those who are younger, actually. But there's sort of a sense that the Spirit is available to both.

Thirdly, class. Sons and daughters. We're talking about heirs, those from your bloodline. But we also have the mention of servants, male servants and female servants, those not from your bloodline.

So we see that even in terms of class, those perhaps with very little rights and those with the most rights in that society are both included here. And the fourth one, which is a little more hidden, but some of you may know your Old Testament would realize that within the servants, ethnicity is actually bound in there.

Because for Israel, they were allowed to accept foreigners. And some of the ways the servants worked is servants were often foreigners. The Hebrew term for servant there, this is a term used for Hagar.

[26 : 51] This is Sarah's Egyptian slave girl. It's also the same term used for Zilpah, which was Laban gave this to Leah. It was her Syrian servant girl. So that phrase in there, to be a son and daughter of Israel means you're Jewish through and through.

But it also includes male servants and female servants, which could go beyond the normal ethnic bounds of ancient Israel. And so this is very interesting to me.

Why is this in the Bible? Why was this in the Bible 2,000 years ago and as well as 2,900 years ago, even in Joel's time, to be reading about this great promise given to Israel and embedded in this promise is things that are going to tackle the exact two things we're talking about today, which is reconciliation and segregation.

Because those four things, I wonder how deeply those often divide people in our society. And so as I kind of wrestle with this passage, what I want to kind of argue with you today and also talk and hear from you guys is, does this give us a clue to a bit of the heart of God, that the heart of God is naturally a reconciling God?

And that his promises and the way God works intentionally and consistently throughout Scripture breaks down these four barriers. And I think this is the question we wrestle with.

[28 : 11] If we think the world needs to hear the gospel, what is the nature of the gospel? What does the gospel do? We think people need God's spirit. What does God's spirit do when it actually is poured out into groups of people?

So here's where I'm going to put you guys to work again. I want us to brainstorm together, again through those four barriers are listed, and I want you guys to scan your minds throughout Scripture, any story you can think of, Old Testament or New Testament, where you see these lines getting blurred, all right?

Are we ready for this early in the morning? Okay. So, let's try this together. And I'll split the page here. Where do you see examples of perhaps the ways that gender normally divides people that in Scripture you see that being overridden or being reconciled?

Samaritan woman. Samaritan woman. That was great. I'd broaden that out and say Jesus' interaction with all women.

Jesus' interaction, yeah. Right. And I mean, I'm sure some of you guys are already aware that how taboo it was for him to speak to Samaritan woman, an adulterous Samaritan woman, and, you know, to be one-on-one in public talking like that, right?

[29 : 24] So, he's breaking some things that people would have said, you don't do that. Sorry, I heard some other voices. Mary, the vehicle for God incarnate entering our presence.

Mary, that's right. I'm first of all of us. Oh, I got it here. Sorry? Miriam. Miriam. Giles. Deborah. Yeah, yeah.

Okay, we got a lot here. That's right down here. First witnesses to the resurrection. First witnesses, that's right. Yeah, for me, this is one of the ones most interesting.

N.T. Wright, when he looks at that and says, back then, when a woman's testimony did not stand up in the court of law, what did it mean that the first witness to the resurrection? So, interestingly, N.T. Wright calls Mary Magdalene the apostle to the apostles, actually, is the title that he gives here. Yes? Esther. Esther. Esther. That's right. Her faithfulness and the difference of me. Yeah, Tina. Paul's inclusion of several women as much-loved fellow servants.

[30 : 31] Yeah, yeah. That's right. Wow, you guys are very good at this. I'm going to keep going because you guys are so good. Let's move to the next one, actually. So, next one we have is age.

Where do we see age challenged? Little children. Little children. Right, right. So, the disciples don't really have the time of day for these kids, but Jesus does, right? Jesus and the children.

David. David, yeah, that's right. That's right. David. Daniel. Sorry, did I hear Daniel?

Samuel. Samuel, yes. Samuel, yeah. Yeah, called as a young boy, right? Moses, you know, serving God most effectively in the last third of his life after 80. Yeah, yeah.

Excellent. Paul telling Timothy not to let them look down on him because of his age. Yeah, don't let anyone look down on you because you're young, yeah. Yeah, the little boy's faithfulness.

[31 : 32] Yeah, the little boy's faithfulness. Yeah. And Sarah and Abraham are age. And I love that you guys are not just picking up on young, right?

Perhaps in our society we've done the opposite where we glorify youth, right? Sumi and then Anna. Sumi and then Anna, right. Excellent. Okay, okay.

So you guys have done very well on this one. I think this is the hardest of the four. When I've done this lecture with other groups, that's the one people struggle with. Next one, class. Or socioeconomic class.

I mean, there's, you know, kind of your station in life. Yeah, Jesus choosing Matthew. Jesus choosing, sorry? Matthew. Yeah, tax collector, right? And the lepers.

Disciples. Lepers. Paul encouraging Philemon and Onesimus to...

[32 : 29] Yeah, it's the slave, right? The Reconciler. Right. One way the world sees you as a slave, but because of the gospel, something's different.

You're not supposed to see it that way, right? It's very interesting. Year of jubilee and release.

And the Good Samaritan. Good Samaritan, yeah. I mean, this one kind of blends a little bit. I'll mention the fourth one because some of these double, right?

With the ethnicity. Yeah. So Good Samaritan kind of, you know, also falls under here as well. So kind of, yeah. Any other ones? What about ethnicity?

Where do we see ethnicity being? And the hated Romans that accept that Jesus won't heal their children. The Roman centurion. Yeah, the Roman centurion. Right. You say it will be salt.

[33 : 27] Right. Ruth. Yeah. You guys are very good at this. I just, you know. We're all graduates of Regents.

Yeah, yeah. That's right. I can tell. Now, Rahab, I want to spend a moment on. Rahab's very interesting. I'm in the middle of studying Joshua right now with Phil Long who sometimes preaches here. And he helpfully pointed out that Rahab as a Canaanite, her and her whole family are saved. Achan, as from the greatest tribe of Judah in his unfaithfulness, is expelled from Israel. So think about that. The most privileged tribe in a way versus the Canaanites.

That's really interesting. I saw another hand here. Moses and his Ethiopian wife. Ah, yeah, yeah. So what's kind of interesting is if we want to try to look at Acts 2 and this prophecy from Joel and say we have these four things, it starts to actually be quite consistent with what you guys already know about Scripture actually and very well is does God have this nature of reconciling?

And was he even doing it well before Peter's sermon here? And I think the answer is clearly yes, actually. Now when Peter's seeing what's happening before him, he's saying, yeah, something's happening here.

[34 : 45] But what's actually interesting, those of you guys who know Acts, Peter has yet to preach to Gentiles yet actually. So he comes out with this prophecy. He talks about, let's see here, he talks about pouring out on all flesh and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

But what's kind of funny, he doesn't actually believe that yet. God has to work on his heart eight chapters later and say actually the words you kind of prophetically said, you didn't quite get it actually at the time.

And I think that's interesting. It's humbling and it gives me hope, you know, that I may not fully see this thing yet or always understand the way God naturally does this.

Now my computer is frozen here but I'm going to just keep going ahead here. So I think this begs the question as we move on to section four there is if God has been doing this throughout scripture, we've got to look at our own communities and do an assessment.

To what degree are we reflecting this heart of God, this natural nature of God that seems to be doing it. In scenes we're doing that all the authors that God uses through scripture are including these people, right?

[35 : 57] And I think there's challenges. I think if we look around our church we do see a lot of places of division and even within those four listed we talked about are still huge fighting points and places where churches still divide over these questions and sometimes churches divide even over smaller things such as music styles.

You know, that didn't come up when we mentioned the list but there are places where music style divides churches or it divides congregations within a church, right? One or the other. Sometimes people go, sometimes people show up at different times for that.

And what I want to talk about as I've been reflecting on this I think there are four major threads worth mentioning that I think we have to really ask ourselves okay, how is this crept into a church and what is our assessment of it?

The first one I want to talk about is the homogeneous unit principle versus reconciling communities. The homogeneous unit principle is dated back to Donald McGavern, a missionary in the early 1900s.

Now, it's easy to criticize someone in the past, right? But let's consider what his task was. He was going to plant churches in India and if you know India, there's a huge deep-set caste system that's existed for a long time.

[37 : 09] And so that means depending on what type of person you are and what type of caste you belong to, some people would even want to touch you, hence the term untouchables for those even in the lowest caste. So as he looked about how do you plant a church in this type of environment?

Do I plant a church and try to invite one person from every single caste? He realized, no, there's no way to do that. So what I need to do is I realize that maybe the gospel works in a way that when a homogeneous group of people encounter it, that's going to be the best way to do it.

So he's quoted as saying things like, men like to become Christians without crossing racial linguistic or class barriers. People understand the gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people. And they prefer to join churches where members look, talk, and act like themselves. And so MacGavons, it's pragmatic, right? I mean, if you were to plant a church in apartheid South Africa, would you start off the bat and say, you know, we need to get whites and blacks back together, or would you try to start somewhere else?

So I have sympathy for where you began, but I have to really question, is that the final game plan? And what sort of things happen in history when groups of people consistently are not seeing each other on a regular basis and are in separate communities?

[38 : 21] And wouldn't the love of God mean something for these untouchables? Isn't part of their salvation and redemption that they will be reconciled to their fellow brother and sister in the human life here and now, and not just one day in heaven?

So what's challenging, though, is that principle is really very much still alive and well, even a hundred years later. And it's a challenging one for me, that one, because if you look at a lot of church plants, they're still kind of run under this mentality, and a lot of church plants are actually very homogeneous, as far as I've seen, in metropolitan cities, who some of the and kind of makes sense.

It's kind of easy to go to a place where everyone talks like me, eats the same food, watches the same TV shows, knows the same education, right? And this kind of leads to the second one. So the first one, and that one's quite huge, and a lot of people in the area of missiology are very much challenging that and saying we need to move away from that actually and think about having reconciling communities.

The second one is consumerist comfort versus radical service and hospitality. It's kind of comfortable to go somewhere where it's comfortable. And on Sunday morning, that's sometimes just what I want, so I'm kind of guilty as charged for this one.

I don't, you know, I'm not quite ready to face reconciliation necessarily at nine in the morning. So I think we have to think about this one a little bit too, is what do we come to Sunday for?

[39 : 43] Are we coming to receive something or are we coming to serve and to give? Because consumerism says we come just to receive something. A radical service and hospitality says it's going to cost me something to be with the people of God.

There's one great American pastor who wrote an article for Christianity today, Corey Widenber, who has this great idea of the 75% rule. He says whenever you go to a church, you should only be happy with 75% of the service because then you know the other 25% you don't like is for somebody else who isn't like you.

Those few songs isn't for me. That preaching style isn't for me, but I know it's for my brother or sister sitting beside me. The way we, it's too loud or it's too quiet, it's too stoic, it's too flamboyant. He says aim for 75%. This way you know that the church actually is able to serve people unlike yourself. Really brilliant, I think. A third one is individualized faith and salvation versus the people of God.

And I think coming out of the Reformation, rightly so, people are very concerned about what does the individual have to do before God? How do we be justified and innocent and how does God's blood sanctify us?

[40 : 48] But I wonder if that emphasis has meant that we've gone away a little bit from the idea of God making a people for himself. So it might be one thing that this person over here is saved, this person over here is saved, this person is cleansed, this person is cleansed.

But what if we had an opposite picture of God making a nation and you coming under his umbrella, you coming under his priesthood and his holy nation? I think when we start flipping that around a little bit, then we start focusing more on our relations with each other.

Not just me and God, but what does it mean for us to be the people of God? Do we look like a holy nation when others look at our denominations or they look at the way we divide over things? And for this, I love 1 Peter 2.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. I mean, that's the line about reconciliation. Once you weren't a people, you didn't belong anywhere. You were alienated and now you are a people. You know, it took me a long time of praying the Lord's Prayer to realize how corporate, all the pronouns in there are plural.

[41 : 53] I'm not just praying for forgiveness of my sins. I'm praying for the church down the street, church halfway around the world, my city, my country. When I pray for deliverance, I'm asking for that. When I pray for forgiveness, you know, I get forgiveness from God just as I forgive those around me.

That's a very corporate exercise that involves reconciliation, to forgive those around us who have wronged us. The fourth one is considering whether our human inclination is towards pride and fear rather than humility and love.

And I think sociologists, you know, I've been going from a scriptural basis out of Acts, but I think sociologists are helpful to notice that there's something that happens in natural human dynamics, you know, when it's those people on the other side of the railroad tracks or those people who live in that neighborhood, that people naturally get a little bit fearful of the unknown when we're not regularly running into certain people, it can be confusing.

You know, I'm just going to shut this off. Yeah, so sociologists will say, you know what, human nature kind of has a natural distrust for the other.

That's part of human nature, so we need God's gospel and we need a different image of what it means to be the people of God. So those are the, if I had to, you know, try to choose four of the threads that I think are getting in our way perhaps as a society and as a church.

[43 : 18] Those are some of the things. And what's the cost of this? If some of these areas are still causing us to be communities of segregation rather than reconciliation, what is the cost? And this is where the cost is quite high and is chilling actually, I think.

The first one is that church can propagate segregation and disunity. We only have to think of, read history for about five minutes to find examples of this, you know.

Whether it's South African apartheid, a treatment of First Nations people. You know, here in Vancouver, they had mistreatment of Chinese railroad workers with a head tax. The Japanese

internment, 22,000 actually in Canada.

I didn't know the number was that high. 22,000 lost their homes and jobs and shipped into interior BC. And was that an act of love or distrust and fear? You know, you have to wonder. And I have no doubt that God did not abandon those people and the church was active, but was the church doing everything it could also?

Was it on our radar that we need to be places of reconciliation? And today might be subtler. We don't have an apartheid. We don't have some of these things. I think it is more subtle today, but I wonder if some of those threads are still in our society and they breed mistrust, fear, and misunderstanding.

[44 : 33] It's interesting that some governments are quite aware of this. The government of Singapore has realized, yeah, if you spend long enough time away from a whole other people group, bad things happen. So for their people, their public housing, Singapore primarily has three ethnic groups, Indian, Malay, and Chinese.

So their public housing, they split it right down third, third, third. If we're going to build this complex, we want a third to be Malay, a third to be Indian, a third to be Chinese. It's not perfect, but they're saying bad things will happen if we don't do this, actually.

People need to see the people I don't like. I need to see them over and over again and actually helps me see them as truly human again as opposed to someone to fear. And I think the chilling potential follows that we actually fail to reflect the heart of God and we fail to reflect the gospel if we don't have this idea in mind that we're supposed to be reconciling our communities.

So it's a chilling one and I've been on both sides of that. I think Vancouver primarily is Asian and Caucasian are the two ones and I've been on both sides of that and it's frustrating and it's challenging.

But I want to suggest a few ways forward. I think there is some hard things here, but I think one of them is us looking even here at Acts together. As you guys listed out, do you realize how quickly you guys filled out those two sheets, by the way?

[45 : 51] And you immediately were able to see throughout scripture, throughout time, God is doing this. So it's already in motion. We don't have to get the ball rolling. God has been doing this throughout time. So I think one place we start is a renewed vision of God.

Like that God actually does this. This is part of the heart of God. He breaks down these barriers. His spirit overflows beyond these natural compartments we may have.

And not just in Acts, but throughout scripture. And so Peter didn't understand it, but God was doing something bigger than Peter's imagination at the time. And I think that's hopeful for us.

And I think we should know that the church was born out of one of the greatest segregations, which is that of Jew-Gentile. You know, talk about a far gap. People who didn't eat the same kind of food, didn't follow the same kind of rules, circumcision, you know, a lot of markers that separated those two groups of people.

And if you start reading New Testament with that light, you start realizing Paul's like, no, you, you guys have to sit at the same table. You want to sit at different tables. You want to share the Lord's Supper separately.

[46 : 56] But if you do that, you're going to miss something. You're going to miss something about being the people of God the moment you do that. And so think of the Galatians 3.28, there's neither Jew nor Greek, there's neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And Paul there almost recaptures all four of the things we talked about within that one line, right? Ethnicity, class, gender. He doesn't talk about age there, but he hits all the other three. The third, or sorry, the next way forward I think is some humility and lament.

And I think segregation has to break some hearts. You know, I think, if you think of some of the most segregated times in human history, people had to get out on the streets, people had to be upset about it.

It wasn't okay to just treat it like, well, that's the norm, that's the way human nature is, and we're just going to settle for that. It took people to get worked up over it, actually, and to care about it. The third is to get our hands a bit dirty.

I love the title of Jesus, Prince of Peace, but I feel like it can be misleading. Because I think any of us who have gone through hard relationships know what the price of peace actually is, and it's a costly, costly one.

[48 : 07] And Jesus is willing to pay that price. But I sometimes wonder if I'm willing to have courage to do that. We're not going to do it perfectly. Some of these divides we've talked about are not easy. I'm going to make mistakes. And I've made my share, I mean, speaking of cultural ones, I've made my share of cultural mistakes, and sometimes in cross-cultural interactions I do the wrong thing, and I realize later on that was not the right way to communicate to that person, or I did something offensive, you know.

But, yeah, reconciliation means getting hands dirty. And it means getting the issues of justice, power, privilege, apologies, and forgiveness. That's part and parcel of it. But as hard as some of the things may seem, I think within, and I want to talk a bit about gifts and then stories of hope around this topic. I think some of the gifts available to us is you'll know the heart of God in a new way.

When some of these barriers are broken, you'll see the power of God's love that transcends the things that we would normally divide up. We can think of the Beatitudes, blessed are the peacemakers. What if Christians were known as peacemakers around the world?

You know? Secondly, I think we would be really experience the richness of the body of Christ when we break some of these barriers.

[49 : 26] I realize how much I need to be around people who aren't like me. Does that line make sense? I need to be around people who aren't like me. And that's actually very, very, very helpful to me. And you may jot down 1 Corinthians 12 beside this one, you know.

Because does our church actually look like where the eye cannot see to the hand, I have no need of you? You know? If one part of the body suffers, does the other part of the body actually realize?

Because that's the picture painted for us that Paul paints for us, you know, of Scripture.

And if one member suffers, all suffer together. So what does that mean if we have churches where segregation or injustice exists? If one member suffers, all suffer together.

If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you, you are the body of Christ, individually members of it. So the third area, I think, and this is kind of a list of gifts, is love, forgiveness, hospitality, healing, community.

Reconciliation, I think, is what all our hearts actually long for. Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with others and with creation. It's the reversal of the fall. This is exactly, it may sound like really hard work, but this is the good work to do.

[50 : 34] This is the reversal of the fall. Many of you know, and we've talked a little bit about the England communion. Deep state of disconnection, there's segregation, there's rifts. And just this past January, there was a historic meeting, kind of deciding the state of future things.

And Dr. Packer met with us at Artizo interns to talk a little bit about his take on it, which we appreciated hearing. What was interesting is who they brought in to help with the conflict negotiation. You have a historic meeting, the first of its kind for hundreds of years, I don't even know how long.

And who do they bring in? They brought in Jean Vanier, a Catholic theologian, who's thought about what does it mean to bring the mentally and physically disabled into community. And I want to read you a little excerpt from, and I have a few listed texts at the bottom.

His text, *Becoming Human*, is, I mean, the title alone says a lot. He wonders about this idea of segregation and fear. And let me read you a short portion from this.

And he's going to talk about why we automatically distrust others. What's this sort of human inclination towards that? And he writes, One major reason for our mutual distrust, for our propensity to gang together in mutually exclusive groups, is that most of us experience love in only the most imperfect way.

[51 : 53] When I discover that I'm accepted and loved as a person with my strengths and weaknesses, when I discover that I carry within myself a secret the secret of my uniqueness, that I can begin to open up to others and respect their secret.

The fear of others begins to dissolve. Inclusion, friendship, and a feeling of brotherhood, sisterhood, begins to emerge. As we become more conscious of the uniqueness of others, we become aware of our own common humanity.

We are all fundamentally the same, no matter what our age, gender, race, culture, religion, limits, or disabilities may be. We all have vulnerable hearts and need to be loved and appreciated.

We have all been wounded in our hearts and have lost trust in what is deepest in us. We all want to be valued and to be able to develop our capacities and grow to greater freedom. until we realize that we belong to a common humanity, that we need each other, that we can help each other, we will continue to hide behind feelings of elitism and superiority, behind the walls of prejudice, judgment, and disdain that those feelings engender.

Every human being, however small or weak, has something to bring to humanity. And as we realize that, he writes, as we realize that each person, big or small, has a role to play, we start to really get to know others.

[53 : 18] We begin to listen to each other's stories and things begin to change. We begin the movement from exclusion to inclusion, from fear to trust, from closeness to openness, from judgment and prejudice to forgiveness and understanding.

It is a movement of the heart. We begin to see each other as brothers and sisters in humanity. We are no longer governed by fear, but by the heart. And this is the man they brought in to negotiate. And because, I think, largely because of his heart for reconciliation, everyone expected people to walk out of that meeting at Canterbury, but I think it was the first couple days everyone stayed in the same room and said, we have to figure it out.

And what's really beautiful is he actually got the primates to wash each other's feet. That was one of the places he started. And you guys know better than me, actually, some of the deep rifts and pain in that community. And that's where he started.

And I wonder how deeply humanizing that was to everyone in that room. So those are some of the gifts, and I want you to hear those words. Those are some of the gifts when we work at reconciliation. The last gift is eschatological.

[54 : 26] This is moving towards the kingdom of heaven. Many of you know the famous verse of Revelation 7-9, where there's a great multitude, a number from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

That's the picture we're going towards. And I want us to be peaceable with each other when we get there, you know? Let me end with a few stories of hope for us.

Because this is hard stuff, and as I read the literature, a lot of people are like, reconciliation is not for the weak of heart. This is challenging stuff. I think the Jew-Gentile one in Scripture is one that's inspiring to me.

As you read New Testament, I think that's really important to notice in Paul's letters, his heart for unity, especially in Ephesians or Galatians. I'm always moved when I read about post-Rwandan genocide as well.

You think about the amount of hurt that happened in that area, and Christians there are realizing, I don't want to see that person who killed people of my tribe or even my family, but Christians there are realizing we need to go to the same church, and we need to go break bread together.

[55 : 34] And that was a test for a lot of the Christians in Rwandas. Will I break bread with the person who has killed my family members? What does reconciliation look like for them?

Or should we just segregate, and Hutus and Tutsis be in our own churches, and we don't have to deal with it? But some Christians there are choosing, no, we're going to miss something if we don't. It's painful, but we're going to do it, and it's been 20-odd years, but they're still working at it, you know?

And I think that's beautiful, actually. There's something that could happen there. So I think there's some peace there. InterVarsity does this great trip to Israel. Some of you guys have heard of this trip?

They send a group of Canadian teenagers, and then they get a group of Israeli teenagers and Palestinian teenagers, and they put them all in one room, and they just hang out for about a week. And there's fear, and there's issues to work through, but they just stick it out, and they stick together.

And there's some crazy stories from that. You know, some kids are afraid to fall asleep, worried that someone's going to kill them in their sleep, and they work through that fear of the unknown. I'm closer to home. I'm working at St. John's, Richmond, as I mentioned, and one of my projects this year is to begin a home group, and I have a home group that's really fun because it's intergenerational and intercultural, and that's been a real gift for me.

[56 : 44] So we have a couple South Africans, so they understand some divide, you know, that sort of thing. So our oldest member is 60, our youngest is 23, and then we've been, and it's not

perfect, but we're learning, you know, and it's interesting that as I've painted this picture of what, let's make a group that doesn't have to be all the same age or all the same culture, and you know, people have been receptive to that.

One great story from the States is the Church of Christ right now, they have this ministry called the Strength to Love, and they take ex-convicts and help them reintegrate into society.

And in the States, as you may know, the prison situation is very complex because a lot of these prisons are for-profit, so you have prisons that actually benefit the more people come in. Now, what this ministry has felt moved to do is they said, let's not just reintegrate our members, we're going to get one of our members on their board, we're going to start buying shares in the prison that exploited us, and that's going to force a conversation because we get to sit at the table and we get to talk about what kind of food are we going to give these prisoners, how are we going to treat them?

And so I think it's a brilliant and beautiful story of one small, so it's a very small ministry, and they only got one guy on the board right now, but I wonder how powerful is that to have a voice into that area?

And so I want to encourage you with these stories to know that reconciliation is both small and big. It can just mean calling up that one person you haven't, you know, you've had a real problem with. [58 : 10] It can also mean big. It can mean blacks and whites learning to coexist together. One Auschwitz survivor has this brilliant quote. She writes, I call anger the seed of war.

I call forgiveness the seed of peace. And in that way, we all get to plant these small seeds around us kind of every day as we do that. I want to leave a little time for questions, and then I kind of have just a closing verse I'd like to read to us.

But what's been resonating with you guys? What questions do you have? What are some areas I'd love for us to spend a few minutes engaging that? Yes, please. One of the really big things that divides us that is awfully difficult to explain to people who are wondering what is Christianity all about is that we are not one.

We haven't even reconciled with people that don't worship our way. You know? What kind of Christian are you is sort of the next question that comes.

And I just, this has been such a fascinating discussion honestly, Alan. And you clearly have a context there that God is using. So what would be your thoughts about that?

[59 : 21] Yeah. It's, you know, it's almost similar to the homogeneous unit principle in that short-term gain doesn't pay off. And I think God is playing the long game. So you might see two churches, one church and it seems like an irreconcilable difference.

And you're like, you know what, maybe it's just better. And I think there's some, I think God understands human nature and makes allowance for us too. But what I find interesting is sometimes very small seeds of segregation have a terrible cost 100 years later, 200 years later. So the question is what are we saving ourselves from, right? If I have a conflict with someone and I'm like, it's just not, not worth the effort. Do I consider what seeds I may be planting for down the road?

And I think if you look at, especially the large-scale segregation that's existed, the cost to repair it, some of them we don't even know. Consider the First Nation situation. We, I don't know what the cost is to fix that.

I don't know. It doesn't sound like it's a one-generation job. I can say that. It's probably not a two-generation I don't even know. You know, so I think the cost is, I think it, yeah, I think it's thinking about what is the actual cost of things.

[60 : 33] And it is hard. And I know some of you in this room have worked towards church unity, you know, Dr. Packer especially. And I think it's not really on our radar. It isn't. And so I think there's a question of how much more should it be on our radar.

Yeah. Yeah. Yes. We're taught that our workplace is not a one-size-fits-all so you can't always act the same way towards each person. Each person is different. But division, it kind of happens. It kind of doesn't. Like, my family, my mom's family is from southern China near Hong Kong. Okay. And so the Japanese came in and they thought they were racially superior to the Chinese. Yeah, yeah. And we're from Macau and then some of the people from Macau are not crazy about the Vietnamese. Yeah, yeah. And then yet, at the same time, if you're half Chinese, half Portuguese, that's kind of neat.

Right. It's kind of nice and it's not a big deal. Yet in North America, mixed people, it's kind of a bit of a big deal at times in South Africa.

[61 : 30] So some cultures, it's okay. Sometimes it's not. Yeah, and so, like you said, some of those places are ridden with bad history, right? Japanese and Chinese and things like that and what's challenging is, yeah.

And what, you know, my dream is is that Christians would be known as peacemakers. Imagine if in Israel-Palestine and the issues there they said, you know what's going to fix the problem? Let's bring a bunch of Christians in because they get reconciliation.

They've been doing it for 2,000 years. You know, imagine if we as a church fulfilled that and people actually invited us in. It's similar to Jean Vanier. Christians were known as peacemakers and were invited into these places.

Wouldn't that be something, right? Yeah, I saw that. Oh, okay. So, this is a long, difficult question, but I'm going to go for it. So, so, I understand the reconciliation idea, but what do you do as a Christian in an environment where people say all roads lead to faith and you have to embrace that as a culture?

How do you be separate and distinct yet inclusive? Yeah. Yeah, and when we brought the denominational one that could have come up, right? Well, what if there's a denomination that really believes something I don't think is God's truth?

[62 : 43] You know, I don't actually think it's biblical. And I think there is a line for that. There is a point where you say, you know what, this is my belief and you do fall outside of that. What I'll say is interesting, though, in a democracy is that we may need to keep good relations, though.

So, take issues around sexuality today. I think in a democracy, Muslims may be our allies in that conversation, actually, right? Because if a vote is a vote and there's a platform is a platform, Christians might want to think, have we kept good relations with those outside of our supposed borders because in a democracy, they may be our friends, actually.

So, I think there's both, like, we need to say, this is Orthodox Christianity and I think Jesus stands for that. He'll correct where there is. But, I think it's also easy for us to distrust or grow suspicious of people of other faith when in a democracy, they may be our friends and allies.

and we, we probably need them to be our friends and allies, actually. So, I think the earlier conversation about how much effort should we put into this, I'm glad there's some Christians doing interfaith dialogue because we need to kind of know, hey, what things do we agree on?

Oh, we agree on morality, that's good. We have some idea of how to treat each other and we want to stick by it. I think several religions can get on board with that. too. Yeah?

[64 : 04] A few things. And one sister response to Sandra's question. In Book of Philipines, we see Paul addressing two groups.

Same book. One is telling two women the personal conflicts to put the differences aside and reconcile. But, in the same book, Paul is calling the false teachers, the false apostles, the dogs. Yeah, yeah. So, there could be a, I mean, one thing to reconcile. Yeah, that's a good link. Yeah. Reconciling, I mean, rather to reconcile another thing is about truth.

St. Augustine say, I don't remember, but, there must be a, I don't remember what St. Augustine say. Sure, no, but your point is, your point is well made. Your point is well made, right? And I think scripturally there is, so this reconciliation is nice and all, right? But, especially false teachers, when the gospel gets perverted or something, Paul locks down.

[65 : 10] There you say. Yeah, into an ecumenical meeting in which the gospel truth gets compromised for the name of ecumenicalism.

Yeah. That's the rule that we can take. A comment I want to make, we take, for example, racism, language barrier, cultural, all that is a fallout to the sin from Babel, and of course, Pentecost reverses that.

But again, kingdom is already, but not yet. Sin is still in play, so that's why it's still hard for us. Yeah, absolutely.

We cannot fulfill what Pentecost and the Holy Spirit meant to do to reverse what was done due to our sins in Babel. No, that's very helpful.

And we can't do it, and we shouldn't try to do it on our own either. And this is going to be a God work, right? We need to be a God work, right? That's why we continually need to be sanctified. And this is going to be a God work, and that's where I think this topic, we need to, I think, start small,

because this can feel overwhelming.

[66 : 19] And I imagine if you lived in apartheid South Africa, this would just sound overwhelming too, right? But how do you start small? And we need people moving on a small scale and a big scale, so we need some Wilbur forces out there, and we need someone just to love someone across the street from us, you know?

And these are all seeds of that. Yeah? One last question. One last question. Okay. I was thinking that we just can't omit prayer, because there's so many things that are so overwhelming. Yeah, yeah. And prayer is the only thing we can do until we see God moving us to become the peacemaker in the situation. Absolutely. Absolutely. And I'm very encouraged that all of you guys came to engage with this topic.

This is not an easy one. But I think, yeah, we're seeing what, it's hinting at what God's doing, and God will accomplish it. Like, he's able to do the stuff that feels impossible to us.

I'm just going to read just a short passage in closing, and then I'll end this off. I was originally going to have this up on a slide so we can read it together, but unfortunately, these things always happen at the worst times, right, when a computer crashed.

[67 : 20] I want to read you out of Ephesians 2. As Paul writes to the Gentiles, I think most of us in this room, I guess then, we can, by extension, receive these words as well, and to think about the reconciliation we've experienced already, and to be thankful for that, to know that we can reconcile because it's been given to us.

It's a gift given to us. So hear these words. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 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 abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that he might create 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.

And he came and preached peace to you who are far off and peace to those who are near. For through him we both have access to one spirit to the Father. 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.

And let me pray for us as we end. Loving Father, we thank you that you are good and you have worked throughout history and you are making and redeeming a people for yourself.

God, we see your fingerprints where you've been at work and we give you great thanks that we who are far off you have brought near. Lord, and help us to know how to extend that same love and hospitality that you did to us to those around us.

[69 : 13] Give us wisdom, shrewdness, and perspective on how to do that. Thank you that you do not abandon us to fear and segregation, but your kingdom comes to make humanity whole again.

Thank you for each one here. Thank you that you do not leave or forsake us and that you love us. In your son's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.