Ephesians 2:11-22 PM

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[0:00] Heavenly Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening. In Christ's name. Amen.! Please be seated. Be seated. It's nice to see you all. If you don't know me, my name is Aaron. Come and say hi afterwards.

Our Lent series, Lent's the period of time leading us up to Easter. Our Lent series is called The Cross of Christ. So as we head towards Easter, what we're going to do is each week we're looking at a different aspect of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. And this week we're talking about reconciliation. Reconciliation. And our passage is Ephesians 2, 11-22.
It's probably helpful to have it open in front of you, I would think, if you want to follow along. So back in the days when Paul wrote this letter to this church in Ephesus, the church would have had Jews and Gentiles in it.
And there would have been some awkwardness there between those groups. The outside of church land, again way back in the days, Jews and Gentiles, they just didn't really mix, which for reasons we'll come to shortly.
But imagine you're a Gentile, which is a non-Jewish person, and you've been going to this kind of like house church thing in Ephesus, and it's great, you're really enjoying it. And this newly converted Jewish family turns up one Sunday.
[1:24] And this is a family that has lived across the street from you your whole life, and you have never spoken to them. And they've just joined your little church.

I mean, that would be, that's an awkward situation, isn't it? I mean, what do you do? Do you just keep not talking to them? Do you just remain alienated from them? Is this what God wants for his people?
Of course not. God wants reconciliation between us and God. And he also wants reconciliation between people groups. And this is what Ephesians 2 is about, those two things.
Let's get into some details here. But he starts in verses 11 and 12 by reminding people of the alienation, vertical alienation, horizontal alienation.
And he says to the Gentiles, he says, remember, once upon a time, you weren't part of the promises of God. You were on the outside. One of the big story arcs of the Bible is how God chose the Hebrew people to be like his channel for his blessings.
[2:34] And they were marked out for a time as special. And God made promises to them. They physically were separated, different to other groups of people by things like circumcision.

They had these rituals. They had these promises. But the Gentiles weren't part of that. They became part of it through Christ.
But for a long time, they weren't part of that. So Paul says, remember, he says this twice. He goes, remember, remember your plight before Christ. You were separated from God. You didn't know about these amazing promises.
You had no hope that a Messiah was going to come and rescue you. And of course, this is all of us. Let's not forget where we came from.
Let's never get blasé about the fact that we're Christians. That God rescued us. That we also didn't know about these promises. That we didn't believe in a Messiah.
[3:37] I also want you to know in verse 11, just a little detail there. There's something in quote marks. The uncircumcision. Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh called the uncircumcision.

Why is that in speech marks? Because that's the mocking name that Jews called Gentiles. And Paul brings it up to remind us that the Gentiles were alienated from God at one point.

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But also, these people groups, there was drama between Jews and Gentiles as well. So that's how the passage starts. With alienation. With a vertical alienation between us and God.
And alienation between people groups. That's verses 11 and 12. And then Paul takes us to God's solution to that problem, which is the cross. Just slide your eyes down verses 13 to 18.
Starts off, but now. Which is wonderful, isn't it? But now, you're far off. You've been brought near. How? By the blood of Christ. Who has made us both one.
[4:44] Has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. That's vertical and horizontal. By abolishing the laws of commandments. That he might create one new man in place of two.

So making peace. Okay. So that's really dense. And I'm not going to talk about everything. But let's start with one of the really big ideas here. He says, God breaks down the hostility between these people groups.
Between people groups. And between us and God. By abolishing the law. Okay. So, what are we talking about there? Because it's a bit tricky.
Okay. So back in the days, the Jews had ceremonial law. So, it was around things like what you could eat and what you couldn't eat. Who you could eat with. Who you couldn't eat with.
For example, right? And then it was the moral law. The commandments, etc. So these laws were about keeping the Jewish people kind of surgically isolated.
[5:44] From the nations around them. So they wouldn't get caught up in the idolatry of the surrounding communities. But of course, the result of this was people groups were divided.

So I'll illustrate this just to make the point here. Imagine you take your kid. You take your kid to the park before going out for dinner somewhere. And there's another kid there who's playing in mud. And they are filthy. And you say to your kid. And let's say the kid's name is Johnny. You say to your kid, listen, don't play with Johnny. Because you'll just get really muddy too.
And I don't want you to get muddy because we're going out for dinner. We've got this important thing to go to. So that protects your kid from getting muddy. But also creates this wall between you and little Johnny's family.
And every time you see little Johnny, you're like, oh, he's a dirty little Johnny. Dirty family. Let's not have anything to do with him, right? You make aspersions about the whole family. And this is actually what happened.
[6:42] So the law was this good thing. But it did actually make the Hebrew people, God's people, who were supposed to be humble. It made them quite proud. They found a bit self-righteous.

They looked down on others. The Gentiles knew this and were resentful. So lots of social consequences. Again, remember the context. The context is Gentiles in this church, Jewish people start turning up that they have never spoken to in their lives.
Who they might live across the street from. So they're bringing all of this baggage with them. So how does Jesus abolish the law on the cross?
What does that all mean? Because we don't want this kind of carry on, right? Well, on the cross, that means that we, you, we don't have to be ritually purified through a ceremony.
We're made right with God by trusting that Jesus died for our sins. That means the Gentiles, they don't turn up to these Ephesian churches feeling like second-class citizens.
[7:51] Because they don't know the ceremonial law stuff. They don't, you know, they don't feel bad because they don't have the religious provenance of the Hebrew people. The Jewish people can't turn up feeling like they're God's favorites because of all the religious sort of spade work they've been putting in.

Verse 16 summarizes God's goal. He says that we would be reconciled to God. We would be one body through the cross. Okay, so a bit of a summary here.
So the text starts by reminding us of our alienation. We are alienated from God. We were. People groups who are alienated from each other. And then the cross.
Which led to this multi-layered reconciliation. Between us and God. And between us and people.
So, okay, Paul continues in verses 19 to 22.
And what it is, he kind of double clicks on this idea. And he puts meat on the bones of this idea of this new people group. Under God with no division. Where Jesus kind of glues us all together as a community.
[8:57] And what does he say? Well, he uses a number of images to illustrate this. If we look at verse 19. There's a lot in there. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens. But you are fellow

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citizens with the saints.

And members of the household of God. So a couple of images are in that sentence there. First he says you're like citizens of God. Citizens of a kingdom.
So no outsiders. There's no outsiders here. If you're a Christian. We're all citizens. Everyone's a citizen. So I'm a Canadian citizen. This is my fifth legal state in Canada.
My first was a student visa. Back 20 years ago. Student visa. And then my second legal status was a postgraduate work permit.
Which meant you could work. You could stay here for as many years as you studied. The third legal status. Because that ran out after like three years. The third legal status.
[9:59] Which was the dodgiest of all of my legal statuses. Was called a visitor's permit with religious workers exemption. Which is it's like I talked to somebody about this.

And they said it's as good as like like a they use this illustration. They said it's like the permit you get if you're like a dancer wanting to come to Canada or something. It was like really weird. Like this really sketchy tenuous kind of visa.
You never knew where you stood really. You know. So fourth was PR. Permit resident. And fifth citizenship. And every permit outside of citizenship.
It always felt. I always felt a bit unsafe. You know like I'd just be kicked out of here at any point. Do something stupid. And I'm gone. It's wonderful to be a citizen.
Being a citizen in God's kingdom. That's an incredible thing isn't it? But being part of a family. That's another thing altogether.
[11:04] And verse 19 says we're not just citizens of God's kingdom. We're members of and the phrase is the household of God. So God is not just your king or your sovereign.

As in the first imagery. He's also our father. And you and I are his children. And that's even more intense isn't it? You're not just a citizen.
You're a child of God. Isn't that wonderful? And that relates us all in a very special way doesn't it? That means the person sitting near to you. Who could be 50 years older than you. And they could be a different race. And they could have a different primary language.
That person. That person's your sister. That person's your brother. That person's your brother. The last image in verse 20 to 22.
[12:02] Let's look at that. And again he's trying to add layers to this idea of what does it mean to be reconciled to God and be reconciled to each other. Verse 20 to 22.

So we're not just part of God's kingdom.
Not just part of his family. The images that we make up. It's like a building. A temple. It's like we are. We're like blocks on a church. That are cemented together.
And God lives in us. So God is not just a distant sovereign. He's not just a present father. He is in us.
Like blood in our body. All right then. There's a lot more going on in this passage. Which I'm not going to get to. But I do want to finish with a bit of a question here.
[13:06] What does this all mean for us? What are the implications? And forgive the sort of clumsy end here. I just want to finish off just by with some bullet points. Which I hope will be helpful for you.

The first is this. Remember through the cross. That Christ saved you. And we should never be blasé about that.
We should never forget that. And remembering is an active thing. It requires our attention. Because it's easy to turn up to church. We've got our people.
I've got a job. We've got some stuff. We've got some communities. We've got a chat. It's nice. Do you know what I mean? We've got a nice thing happening here. But let's not remember. Let's not forget.
That we are saved people. That we are saved from something. To something. And remembering that. Actively remembering that. Is fertile soil for gratefulness.
[14:03] I think. Okay. Second. Like the Hebrews. We are not immune to creating barriers. Based on status.

Based on race. Based on class. We cannot say. Well look. We're all citizens. Brothers and sisters. And then put up walls. Here.
And say. I'm going to chat to these people. But not those people. They're too different. You know. Not like me. That dishonors God. It pushes back.

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It rejects Christ's work on the cross. Now when you walk around Granville Island. It's mostly like retail. Right. But there are some workshops there. And there's one.
I remember. Peering in the window. Of one day. And it looks like. What they make. Is those little scale models. Of buildings. You know. Like some like big massive development. And they make a little model of it.
[15:00] For people to look at. This is. This is what the church is. The church on earth. Is supposed to be like one of those. This model. Of what life will be like.

In God's. New creation. So when people come here. We want them to experience that. A sense of what God is. Planning to do. Ultimately. With the world. And how. We relate to each other.
Okay. Third. You know. One of the ways. God's goodness. Shows up in our life. Is. By making us part of a diverse community. God takes people.
Separate people. People who are different. And makes them into one body. The church. That means. We can't say.
Well I don't really want to be part of a church. It's not really. It's not really. Like a thing. You can't say.
[15:58] I just want God individually. It's not really part of a deal. God wants to. Wants to transform us individually. That is true. But he wants to transform us.

Socially as well. In a community. Which is what. It's good to. Come regularly. It's good to participate. Midweek. It's good to be all in.
And fourthly. Fourthly. A reminder. Because of the cross. God is near. Let me ask you this question. Who's the most powerful person you know?
Like. Just have a think about this. The most high profile person you know? Or this.
How many friendships would you have to leverage to get to somebody with real power? I am four friendships away from Donald Trump.
[17:01] It's true. Isn't that wild? It's completely bonkers. I have a good friend. Whose best friend lives next door to a Supreme Court judge that Trump appointed. I can't do anything with that.

Obviously. You know. Like I can't leverage that relationship. But. But God. God has supreme power.
God is your king. He's your father. He dwells with us. And he is near. And no matter what. Is happening in your life.
No matter what is going on in your life. You have access. To this God. He is only a prayer away. And all of this. Because of the cross of Christ. Amen. Amen.

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