

Aliens, a Peacemaker, and a new Family.

11/6/22

Ephesian Sermon 9

Ephesians 2:11–21 (CSB)

11 So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh— called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands. 12 At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, 15 he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. 16 He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death. 17 He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Aliens, a Peacemaker, and a new Family.

Introduction: Have you ever been in a place and knew that you didn’t belong there?

A. I’ve felt this way several times, and mostly in a city’s Union Station.

1. The first time was in 2003 in Union Station in Washington D.C.

- a. I was in high school, from Podunk Missouri.
- b. It was the first time ever seeing homeless people or being around a bustling city.

2. Another time, in 2019, I was in Denver at Union Station.

- a. I enjoyed Denver.
- b. But it's so liberal and legal marijuana was everywhere.
- c. As nice as it was downtown, and at Union Station, I just felt like I didn't belong.

3. But I will never forget in 2017 being at Union Station in Downtown Los Angeles.

- a. I had meetings in Anaheim and I wanted to go to a Dodger Game.
- b. No Big deal.
- c. I told a friend I was traveling with and said I would take the bus. They told me I was too country to ride the bus to LA. So a friend from there drove.

4. We go downtown, toured Azusa Street, and made our way to Union Station to park our car and hitch a bus to the stadium.

- a. When I stepped into Union Station, I knew I was not in MO anymore.
- b. The people didn't wave. They didn't smile as they walked by. They were either in a hurry or strung out.
- c. They looked different, smelled different, and saw the world very differently for me.
- d. I loved the Baseball game, but I couldn't wait to get out of Union Station.

B. We've all experienced being out-of-place.

1. Another word for that is alienated.

2. But one of the most powerful gestures a human can do is to make someone feel welcomed and at home.

a. To make someone feel like they belong, that is an amazing gift.

b. Many times, Julie and I have been invited to your family gatherings and treated like “one of the kids”.

3. What we strive to do here at this Church is to help people feel like they belong through friendliness and hospitality.

a. We have room to grow in that area, especially as we grow.

b. But if you’ve ever walked into a church and felt like you didn’t belong or were interrupting their private, family get together, then you know how important a welcoming church is.

C. This desire to be welcoming and inclusive stems from the heart of Jesus.

1. We were all sinners, aliens apart from the family.

2. But Jesus brings diverse people together in a way that reflects the God’s original plan for people like us.

First, let’s talk about Aliens.

1. God’s original plan always involved people like us.

A. Genesis 1-11 tells the story of God interacting with all of humanity.

1. Genesis 12 and the rest of the Old Testament tells of God selecting Abraham and blessing the world through the descendants of Abraham.

2. Abraham is both the Father of all Jews while still being a Gentile.

a. Abraham received all of the promises and the Covenant of God before accepting circumcision as the sign.

b. LONG before the Law was given.

3. God's word to Abraham: Through you, all the nations will be blessed.

B. Although the Old Testament is strictly focused upon the descendants of Abraham, there were always people like us in the mix.

1. Women like Rahab and Ruth were not Jewish, yet participated in God's blessings and promises AND become part of the lineage of Jesus.

2. But there was always a wall and division between Jew and Gentile.

C. That wall got bigger over the centuries.

1. By the time of Jesus and Paul's day, there was a major division between Jews and everyone else (gentiles).

2. The Jews were very concerned with who was in and who was out.

a. People always want others to be inclusive, until they are in.

b. And then they want to be exclusive.

c. We want people to invite us, but no one else.

d. We want God to forgive us for our sins, but not that other person.

3. We see a good example of this exclusivity in the example of Peter, who did not want salvation or the Holy Spirit to come upon the Roman Cornelius' house.

2. The Ephesians began life separated from God.

A. Paul says all of the ways the Ephesians did not belong:

1. Not circumcised.

2. Without Christ
3. Excluded from citizenship of Israel.
4. Foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God.

B. But Jesus changed all of that.

1. The Ephesians, and Gentiles, might have started off as aliens.
2. We were foreigners as far as the Jews were concerned.
3. But Jesus changed that.

C. BUT NOW IN CHRIST JESUS (vs. 13).

1. We who were far have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
2. This is why Paul talks about us being saved by grace through faith just a few verses before.
3. We had NOTHING going for us.
4. But **when you have Jesus, you have more than enough.**

We were aliens, apart from the promises and blessings. But Jesus is our peacemaker.

Let's talk about Jesus as Peacemaker.

3. For He is our peace (Vs. 14).

A. Jesus was born a Jew.

1. He was the perfect fulfilment of the Law and Commandments.
2. There was no sin in Him, thanks to the virgin birth.
3. He committed no sin, and thus was sinless and perfect.
4. Upon the Cross, the sinless Son of God became sin who knew no sin. (2 Cor. 5:21).

- a. The Gospel John saw Jesus as the Lamb of God, that would shed His blood as the only perfect sacrifice.
- b. Hebrews tells of Jesus ascending into heaven and offering his sinless blood upon the altar making atonement for our sins.
- c. Thus, Jesus, the perfect Son of God, whose body was pierced by the sinful Romans, shed His blood so that you and I might experience peace and wholeness.

B. Paul has a very specific picture in focus.

1. In Jerusalem, between the temple proper and the Court of the Gentiles, there was a stone wall on which there was an inscription in Greek and Latin: 'No one of another nation to enter within the fence and enclosure round the temple. And whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues.'¹
2. In other words, there was a physical wall that represented the Jews' view of inclusion and exclusion.
 - a. Jews alone could draw close to God.
 - b. The Gentiles would always be limited and restricted.
3. But Jesus abolished such practices and brought peace through the Cross.
4. Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law, creating a new level of peace.

4. Jesus made no effect the law...

A. If you remember back to Exodus and Leviticus, there are a lot of commandments.

1. Those commandments were given to guide Israel in living a God honoring, holy life in the midst of Canaan.

¹ Foulkes, Francis. 1989. [*Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*](#). Vol. 10. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

2. The Law and Commandments pointed people to the holiness of God and their sinfulness.

a. Every sacrifice and offering pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus.

b. Once the perfect sacrifice was made, no more were needed.

B. The good news to the Ephesian believers was: you don't have to be Jewish to follow Jesus.

1. Because of Christ's work, we Gentiles do not have to live by the Law.

2. We don't have to be Jewish to be loved by Jesus.

a. The Law didn't bring peace.

b. The Apostle Paul said it was the Law that showed us our sin but could not save us from our sin.

3. You don't have to become more Jewish to be loved by Jesus.

C. There is a dangerous element in American Christianity that is pushing people to become "Messianic Jews", sometimes called Hebrew Roots Movement.

1. Examples: You say the name YESHUA instead of Jesus.

2. You say YAWHEH instead of God.

3. They demand you celebrate all the Jewish Feasts.

4. Might even wear a Tallit or prayer shawl.

D. I know this because I went down the Messianic Road pretty hard in High School.

a. I love the Jewishness and the history of Scripture.

b. I learned some of the prayers.

c. I attended a few conferences.

d. I love seeing Christ in the Tabernacle and in the Feasts.

e. Someday, I would love to go to Israel and walk where Jesus walked.

f. This was dangerous because, of my personal love of history and rule following, it made sense.

E. There is value in understanding the Jewishness of Scripture but that does not result in Salvation.

a. If being Jewish, and following the Law, was what God intended then there would have been no need for a Cross and the Jewish people would not have crucified Jesus.

b. If this is what we were to follow the Law and become Messianic Jews, then Paul would have told the Ephesians to get in line and start looking like him.

F. Instead, Paul focuses on how Jesus, the Great Peacemaker, made peace where there was no peace.

a. **Jesus took two separate and distinct pieces and made a unified whole with the Cross at the center.**

Biblical peace is more than a personal sense of tranquility and well-being. It carries the idea of harmony, first with God and then with those around us. It includes the idea of order and wholeness, of disparate areas of life and people groups coming together with a cessation of conflict and a sense of security.²

b. This same peace is proclaimed to those who were near (Jews) and those who were far (everyone else).

c. Jesus is the Savior of both Jew and Gentile.

Jesus, the great Peacemaker, brings the aliens into the fold and creates a new family.

² Osborne, Grant R. 2017. [Ephesians: Verse by Verse](#). Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

5. One, Unified, Family.

¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So, then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit. ³

A. Paul stresses the unity, where there used to be division.

1. One Body
2. One Kingdom (citizens)
3. One Building.
4. All made possible through One Spirit and One Cross.

B. We sin against God when we add division where God has declared unity.

1. Diversity is different than unity.
2. It is possible to be distinct and still unified.
 - a. Marriage is a great example:
 - b. Two individuals become One flesh, yet have distinction.
 1. Julie and I are one, yet have different tastes, likes and desires.
 2. This week was a great example:
 - a. We went to Texas Roadhouse and had amazing steaks.
 - b. I ordered mine Medium...she ordered hers WELL-Well done.
 - c. Yet, we both were in unity that we loved the experience.

³ [*Christian Standard Bible*](#). 2020. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

- c. We did not replace the Jewish people, but joined with them through Jesus.
- d. We are distinct, yet unified through Jesus.
- e. Before the Cross, only the Torah and circumcision would bring unity.
- f. But now, through Jesus, we are unified.

C. Jesus tore down the old dividing walls to build a new Temple, the Church.

1. Jesus is the cornerstone.
 - a. Cornerstones had to be perfect, because if they weren't the building would not be right.
 - b. Jesus is perfect and we build upon and from him.
2. The foundation is the apostles and prophets.
 - a. This is not the Law or Torah, but the Word and ministry given to the Apostles and prophets and the other offices.
 - b. He emphasizes this again in chapter 3 and 4.
3. What is in view here does not seem to be only Scripture, but the gifts that God gives the church.
 - a. Ephesians 4 says "and God gave some to be Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints and "build up the body of Christ".
 - b. Again, we see the building analogy.
4. Jesus was serious when He told Peter "Upon this rock I will build my Church."
 - a. God is still building and perfecting the body and building we call the Church.
 - b. What's the purpose?

D. Notice Vs 21-22:

21 In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

- a. For God's dwelling in the Spirit.
- b. Just as the Tabernacle and Temple of old held the Spirit and presence of God, now through Christ we are being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.
- c. This is not an individual promise:
 1. In view is not our individuality.
 2. In view is the unity of the corporate body.
 3. Do we need the Church?
 4. Absolutely, because we are being built together for God's dwelling.
 5. To reject the fellowship of believers is to reject the body of Christ and His dwelling.

Conclusion: No One Belongs Here More than You.

A. For the past several years, this phrase has been on our door and our wall.

1. I have seen other churches use similar phrases, but I remember when Whitley Hart told me that she believed that should be our motto.
2. We try to live that out, because it reflects the heart of Jesus.
3. In our natural state, we are aliens.
4. We were excluded because of our sin.
5. But Jesus made forgiveness and salvation possible and available.
 - a. He has seated us at the right hand of the Father, a platform we did not deserve.

b. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

c. Jesus brought peace and gave us a new family.

B. This morning, I'm reminded that one of the attacks of the enemy is to remind you of your past.

1. By doing so, we forget what Jesus has done for us.

2. When that happens, we stop living with Jesus and start living for ourselves.

C. Perhaps the past few weeks have been brutal for you.

1. Crisis after crisis.

2. Tragedy after tragedy.

3. Pain upon pain and disappointment upon disappointment.

D. If so, I remind you who you are in Jesus.

1. The enemy's attacks are real, but so too is the victory in Jesus.

2. Only Jesus can bring peace where there never was peace.

E. Today, I want to pray prayers of encouragement, strength, and hope for you.