

EPHESIANS

LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

Sermon 3 – Ephesians 2:11-22 – By New humanity

1. What happens when there is more to a 'before' and 'after' story than first meets the eye?

Read again Ephesians 2:11-22

2. What is this passage generally about? Did anything stand out for you? Was there anything you didn't understand which needs clarification?

A little more on last week's 'before' story

we were: dead-slaves-under-wrath, but also: SEPARATE-EXCLUDED-NO-HOPERS

It seems Paul anticipated two questions: how can those who are dead in sin be brought under Christ's rule (answered in 2:1-10) and how can Jew and Gentile be brought together under Christ (answered in 2:11-22)

3. Why so much animosity between Jew and Gentile?
4. From vv11-12, list our situation as Gentiles when compared to the Jews.
5. How do you feel about your 'before' picture with these further insights?
6. Someone comments to you "look – don't be so concerned about people who aren't Christians today – many of them live good, wholesome lives; they're fine". How do you respond?

A little more on the 'after' story

we are now: alive-with-Christ-under-grace, but also: NEAR-RECONCILED-CITIZENS-IN-WHOM-GOD-LIVES

7. Read again v13, then vv19-22. Pick up the main thoughts about our 'after' picture. How do you feel about the deeper insights into our present situation? Which aspect outlined appeals to you or resonates with you the most?
8. What are the implications of all this for the relationship between the Christian Jew and converted Gentile?
9. What are the implications for the relationship between Christians in a church?
10. If we as God's people are indwelt by God's Spirit and are his temple, how should that impact the way we understand our relationship and the significance of gathering with other believers?
11. "Corporate worship is designed to fill and enthrall your heart with the God of glory so much so that all other created glories have no power to capture and rule your heart." Paul Tripp. Discuss the significance of the Christian gathering.

A little more on the 'how' – i.e. – how we got from where we were to where we are

12. What was the main cause of the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile?
13. How did Jesus bring Jew and Gentile together in this significant way?
14. Someone comments 'why do you focus so much on Jesus' death'? How do you answer?

Pray that as God's people at the Anglican Church of Noosa, we might explore more fully the significance of the fact that we are God's living temple, indwelt by his Holy Spirit!

Date: 22nd April 2018
Services: 730, 930, and 930 Peregian (via Tim)
Series: Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel
Passage: Ephesians 2:11-22
Title: New humanity
Outline: **A little more on the 'before'**
A little more on the 'after'
A little more on the 'how'

- Before and after shots...
- That's how we began last Sunday...
- And we saw that understanding just how serious or bad the '**before**' shot is, actually helps you understand and more fully appreciate how magnificent – simply wonderful – is the '**after**' shot.
- But let's imagine that in our 'before' and 'after' shots there was **more** to the story...
- (I'm just completely making this up... let's be clear...)
- But let's say that what we didn't know in regards to the 'before' scenario, was that there was depression... self-harm... there was heart disease and diabetes brought contributed to by obesity... (I'm making all this up ok!!)
- ... but then let's say that to the 'after' shot we can add that the depression and tendency to self-harm was completely overcome, her heart condition greatly improved so as to be no threat and require no further medication and that her diabetes was under control only requiring a modified diet...!!
- ...and suddenly we're saying – oh – wow – you're kidding - I didn't realise all that.... That's an even **more** amazing and wonderful story! ///
- Well I have something like that to explore with you this morning – in regard to **YOUR** story and **MY** story...
- Do you recall that our 'before' story last week from Eph 2:1-10 looked like this... we *were*
- **Dead-slaves-under-wrath**
- And our 'after' shot looked like – still looks like – this: we are
- **alive-with-Christ-under grace**
- so here's where we're heading this morning: (now I warn you – these headings aren't pretty, but they are functional!)
 1. **A little more on the 'before'**
 2. **A little more on the 'after'**
 3. **A little on the 'how'** (we got from one to the other!)
- **So**
- 1. **A LITTLE MORE ON THE 'BEFORE'**
 - You'll remember that God's plan in history and for the universe is to bring all things in heaven and earth under Christ... (1:10)... //
 - Last week we imagined that someone may have raised an objection to Paul – "Paul, how can God bring people under Christ who have turned their back on him"?

- ANSWER, ... **GOD** - made **dead** people **alive**... broke their bonds of slavery to Satan, and raised them **up** with **Christ** and **seated** them in the **heavenly realms** in **Christ Jesus**...! //
- But imagine for a moment there was **another** objection...
- "Paul - how can you bring Jew and Gentile together under Christ - given they've hated one another forever?"
- You probably know that the divisions between **Jew** and Gentile ran **deep**.
- A common Jewish prayer gave thanks to God that you were neither a **Gentile**, a **slave** or a **woman**!
- To say that the Jews had a sense of absolute **superiority** over Gentiles is an **understatement**.
- It had to do with the Jews being God's chosen people... and flowing on from that, being '**religiously**' **clean**.... And the Gentiles being most definitely 'unclean'
- An ancient document says that tax collectors made **certain** things **unclean**, **thieves** certain **other** things unclean - but with **Gentiles** - *everything is unclean*.
- So let's understand this: in the 1st century - only two types of people - **Jew** or **Gentile**.
- **Enmity** between these two was **pervasive and part of all of life**...
- Think of **apartheid** in **South Africa**
- Think of the struggles of **Martin Luther King** in **America**
- Think of the **genocide** against **Aboriginals** in **Tasmania** early in white settlement in our own country...
- Think of the divide between **Hutus** and **Tutsis**...
- Or even between **Suni** and **Shia Muslims**... ///
- So the concept of **Jew** and **Gentile** being brought together and unified **UNDER CHRIST** was **unthinkable**!
- Let's see how Paul describes this then... as he adds a little more detail to his 'before' picture of last week:
- Have a look with me at v11 - *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands) - 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*
- note in **v11** that Gentiles were slurringly referred to as the '**uncircumcised**'...
- And in **v12** they **WERE: separate** from **Christ** - separate from the **Messiah**... they had **nothing** to do with him... he wasn't *their* Messiah...
- **Excluded** from **citizenship** in **Israel**... they had **no share** in Israel's **inheritance**... no concept of a **future** with **God**...
- **foreigners** in terms of **God's covenant promises** - God had not made covenant promises to them - he had come to no **agreement** to be **their** **God**....
- And therefore - **Gentiles** had no **hope** and no **God**, says **Paul**.
- **An appalling picture.**
- **A hope-less picture.** //
- **OUR** picture... for **we** are **Gentiles**...
- So we can add to last week's snap shot - not only were we **Dead-slaves-under-wrath**

- But also: **SEPARATE-EXCLUDED-NO-HOPERS. ///**
 - But if that's a little more on our 'before' picture... let's jump quickly to gain a little more insight to our 'after' picture...
- ## 2. A LITTLE MORE ON THE 'AFTER'
- Paul moves quickly to bring relief from the devastating picture he has painted...
 - Have a look with me at v13 - *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*
 - Sweet relief... once **far away** – now brought **near!!!**
 - But there's a lot more to add!
 - Have a look with me at v19... *you are **no longer** foreigners and strangers, but **fellow citizens** with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a **holy temple** in the Lord. 22 And **in him** you too are being built **together** to become a **dwelling** in which God lives by his Spirit.*
 - so **because** of what God has done through Jesus – and we'll get to the details of that in a minute... here is what we see...
 - Gentiles – **we** – were – once **excluded** from **citizenship** with **Israel** – that is – once **NOT** the **people of God**
 - NOW –
 - **NOT foreigners, not strangers, but...**
 - **fellow citizens...** - receiving all the promises God made to Israel that he would be their God and we would be his people... and:
 - **members of God's household...** the household which was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone...
cornerstone of what?
 - **a whole new temple...!** – not a **physical** temple in Jerusalem – but a **spiritual** temple consisting of the united people of God in whom God dwells by His Holy Spirit!
 - Wow!
 - Gentiles (we) **were: SEPARATE EXCLUDED NO HOPERS**
 - But **now:** – **NEAR-RECONCILED-CITIZENS-IN-WHOM-GOD-LIVES!**
 - Once far from **God**, far from the **Messiah**, far from **Israel**, far from the **covenant**, far from God's **promises..** but now **BROUGHT NEAR!**
 - And **consequently**, there is now **NO Jew and Gentile in Christ Jesus. No division. No hostility.**
 - Because God's great **plan?** To unite **EVERYTHING UNDER CHRIST! ///**
 - Now – we need to work out just **how** God **achieved** this... but **before** we **do...**
 - I want you to notice something about **us** this morning...
 - We, gathered **here** as the people of God this morning, are **members of God's household.**
 - We are a holy **temple** in the **Lord.**
 - We are a **dwelling** in which God lives by his **Spirit //**
 - We are not a **religious club**

- We are **not** a **gathering** of **like-minded** people
- we are not a **service centre**
- we're not a **market** place where you can get your 'top-up' for the week...
- we are the **temple of God!** //
- God is as **present** here, as he was in the **temple** in Jerusalem of **old!**
- **Whenever** God's people gather in his name – on the **beach** – in your **home** – at the **picnic spot** – or **here** in **church** – **God** is **present**... and it's a **holy place**...! //
- I think we often under-play in our minds, the **significance** of **gathering** with our brothers and sisters... we think - oh no **big deal!**
- Could it be that we're too **casual** – even perhaps too **individualistic** – about the gathering of believers?? Will I go? Can I be bothered? Does it matter? //
- Friends – when we **gather** – **GOD IS WITH US!**
- We're his **temple!**
- There should be a sense of **awe** and **wonder**...
- Did you see on our church Facebook page last week this quote? - "Corporate worship is designed to fill and enthrall your heart with the God of glory so much so that all other created glories have no power to capture and rule your heart." Paul Tripp.
- **That's** what church – that's what **gathering** with other **believers** – is **meant** to be **about!** ///
- So - we **were**: **SEPARATE-EXCLUDED-NO-HOPERS**
- But **now**: – **NEAR-RECONCILED-CITIZENS-IN-WHOM-GOD-LIVES!** ///
- But exactly **how** did God bring this about...? **How** did he bring about the union of Jew and Gentile under **Christ**
- So, finally

3. A LITTLE MORE ON THE 'HOW'

- Look with me again at v13 - *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*
- so there's the clue as to how he has brought Jew and Gentile together under Christ: it is by the blood of Christ – that is – it has something to do – **everything** to do with **Jesus' death on the cross**...!
- well – "how did **that** change anything?" we might ask
- look with me at v14 - *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.*
- The big barrier between Jew and Gentile was the **law** – with all its 'clean' and 'unclean' laws...
- That's what made Gentiles so obnoxious to Jews.
- But when Jesus died on the cross, God "**set aside**" the **law**...
- Even clearer in Paul's letter to the Colossians : *he cancelled the written code... nailing it to the cross... with Jesus...* (2:13-15)
- Cancelled it? Yes, because the law was no longer to be the basis on which people related to God... rather **JESUS** and his **reconciling death** was to be the basis on which you relate to God!!

- Have a look with me – half way through v15 - *His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile **both** of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*
- So both **converted Jew** and **converted Gentile** are reconciled to God on **exactly** the same basis...: by what **Christ did**...
- ...and by means of that **great levelling factor**, God says he *put to death their hostility*... because (v18) Paul says it's through **Jesus** *we both have access to the Father by one Spirit*.
- Ok – so let's review and make sure we get this...
- The **wall** between Jew and Gentile was the **law**
- The **wall is removed** – the way of the law to get right with God – **cancelled**.
- So – both Jew **AND** Gentile now need a way of getting right with God.
- The **one** means for that to occur? **Jesus' death** on the **cross**!!
- Therefore – **both** are **reconciled** to God **ONLY** by Jesus...
- ...and seeing how they are **both** reconciled to God **only** by **Christ** – there is a **perfect unity** –
- ...they approach God in the **exactly** the same **way** –
- ...with **nothing** in their **hand** – nothing on the table – they are both **entirely dependent** on the **grace of God in Jesus** – and so therefore are **ONE HUMANITY** – **Jew and Gentile together** – **under Christ!** ///
- So - we were: **SEPARATE-EXCLUDED-NO-HOPERS**
- But **now**: – **NEAR-RECONCILED-CITIZENS-IN-WHOM-GOD-LIVES!**////

- But there's a very important question to answer...
 - **So what??**
 - The Jew/Gentile divide has **never** been an issue for us...
 - We're **2000** years down the **track**...
 - Yet friends, there are important implications... 3 in fact:
1. There is only **ONE way** for everyone on planet earth to be reconciled to God... and that is through the generous and loving sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ...

That is the great **levelling factor** for the whole of humanity...
No one starts with a position of privilege before God... **everyone** needs the saving work of Jesus on the cross to bring them to God!
 2. If that be the case, then it not only wipes out **Jew and Gentile division**, but **all** human division!

• In terms of getting right with God, there is both a **levelling** factor and a **unifying** factor in this

• Or how he puts it in Galatians: *So in Christ Jesus you are **all** children of God **through faith**... There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are **all one in Christ Jesus**.* (Galatians 3:28-28 – see also Col 3:11)

• It follows friends, that you cannot know Jesus, and then be **separate** from **other** people who know Jesus on the basis of their skin colour, their race, their ethnicity, their gender, their tribal affiliation..., their 'working class' background or their 'privileged' background... for **we are all one in Christ Jesus**...
 - We **approach** him on the same basis – with **nothing**...

- We are **reconciled** to God on the same basis – **Jesus’ sacrificial death for us!**
 - we **receive** him on the same basis – **his grace!**
3. this then **makes a mockery of the petty divisions** which divide and sometimes brings down churches
- Jew and Gentile reconciled to God and unified on the basis of Jesus’ death... - he died to put to death the hostility between Jew and Gentile.... and then Mrs Brown and Mrs Smith **don’t talk** to one another because of
 - how the tea is served or
 - how the music’s played
 - or how cold the air conditioning is
 - or because of something said 7 years ago that she’s never got over
 - or she was overlooked for something or other
 - or... whatever!
 - Friends – if there is something – **anything** – dividing you from someone else here today... it has to stop **today**...!
 - For we **saved sinners... reconciled** to God through **Jesus... all one in Christ Jesus...!**

 Brothers and sisters: we were

- **Dead-slaves-under-wrath**
- But now are
- **alive-with-Christ-under grace**
- furthermore, we Gentiles **were: SEPARATE-EXCLUDED-NO-HOPERS**
- But **now: – NEAR-RECONCILED-CITIZENS-IN-WHOM-GOD-LIVES!////**
- Gathered as his people – we are his **temple**... he is present – this is a **holy** gathering which ought to fill us with **awe** and **wonder**...
- Gathered as his people... we are **one** – **one new humanity** – **reconciled** to God, only by one means – **Jesus’ death on the cross**... !
- *Now in Christ Jesus you were once were **far away** have been **brought near** through the blood of Christ...!*