



Wednesday Night - Ephesians 2:14-21 (March 10, 2021)

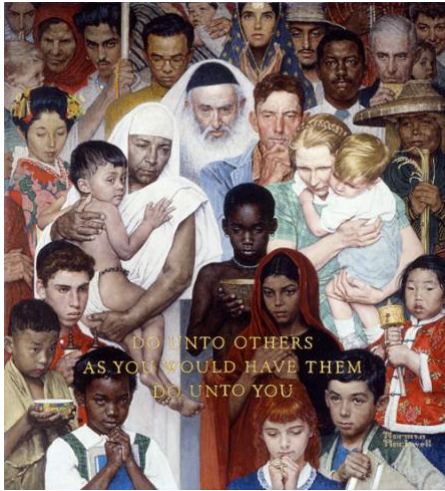
¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, 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. (Ephesians 2:14-22 NIV)

We believe this letter was written when Paul was in prison. We started off in chapter one learning of the spiritual blessings that are ours when we are born again. Paul keeps saying "In Christ" and "In Jesus". What Paul is saying is that Jesus is the source through which all blessings come to us.

In Chapter 2 he talks about salvation and how important it is to understand that it comes through Jesus. We are reminded that we're not saved by keeping the law and by being good. In our study last Sunday we took a look at the gentiles. Paul told us what condition we were in before we came to Jesus. We were without hope. But through Jesus we were all brought "close" to God. We learned that we were once separated and now we're brought near. This was a hard thing for the Jews to handle. Why?

Verse 14 Real peace comes from Christ within us. It is not imposed on us.



For the last month I have been reading a book called Dominion by author Tom Holland. It is a detailed account of history from the fall of the Persian Empire down through the Roman empire and I am now reading about the time around 1100 AD. One of the things that has impressed me most is the drive and the desire for peace in the world. One of the strangest paradoxes to me is that the world tries to bring about peace by war and domination. Whether it is Augustus Caesar or Charlemagne, the drive has always been to dominate others to bring about some kind of peace that the leader or the kingdom thought they could finally bring to the world.

The drive never ends for peace. This is probably at the root of the drive in this age for world government. The idea is that if everybody can be ruled from the top down they'll have to get along....sort of like a parent beating all the kids to stop the squabbles from going on between them. The problem is that the people who want to be in charge are usually ambitious, cruel, and often controlling.

Paul starts off saying, "For He Himself is our peace." That is a BIG STATEMENT. It is saying that Jesus Himself is the great solution. He is the solvent that brings all people groups together. Paul was speaking to this because from the beginning of when the Jews were identified as a people they were separate. There you had them in special relationship with God and outside of that circle were the gentiles.

The Jews had been raised to believe that gentiles were godless. As we studied on Sunday, the Jews called the gentiles dogs and all other kinds of bad descriptors. There was a tension that was now developing in the church because first Jews got saved and then Samaritans got saved. And then, EVEN the gentiles were being saved. That in a way was shocking to the Jews. It would be like a family that was very close suddenly taking on other kids and members by adoption. It could naturally lead to friction between those adopted and the original children in the family. Paul talks about this "wall of hostility" that was between the two groups.

Jews suddenly had to treat gentiles as brothers and sisters in this new family. Remember, first the Jews came to Christ there in Jerusalem. And then, in time, there was a huge flood of gentiles coming into the church. Those early Jews were faced with the challenge of caring for these people in a way that honored God. It was hard for them. We have our own kind of frictions that go on in our churches.

We don't have issues with Jews and gentiles, but we have our own "walls of hostility" in our time. I think God has something to say to all of us through this passage that deals with Jews and gentiles. Paul talks about a "dividing wall of hostility". Many of us have a dividing wall of hostility and Jesus has broken down that dividing wall of hostility. He Himself is our peace!

Think about how much the world wants peace. There can be no peace until we have peace with God. Many has been alienated by his sin. The Bible is written to bring us back into relationship with God. Take a look at Romans 5:1 *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

The Jew and the gentile were both made one in Christ. Note that the text doesn't say that He encourages us to make peace. It doesn't say that He commands us to have peace. It says that JESUS IS THE PEACE in the divisions and conflicts that we have with others. Jesus works that peace in us and around us. Take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:13. *“¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ **For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.”*

God doesn't impose peace from without. He brings peace from within because He is living in the hearts of individuals trying to find peace. There is a blessing you receive when you get into cooperation with the Holy Spirit and you feel the peace of the Lord. We will have world peace when the Prince of Peace rests, rules, and reigns on earth. It is HE that makes us all one. He takes two and makes one by eliminating distinctions between parties. When Palestinians and Jews come to Jesus they are at peace.

God is not interested in human distinctions. There is no unifier like Christ. God made one race...the human race. I think God made the different races as a beauty and glory of His creation. In the same way he made different plants and trees and a variety of landscapes, He made people that look different from one another. This doesn't mean that we all have to mix together to look the same (uniformity). What it means is that when we are in love with Him and committed to Him we can live in beautiful unity. What God made to bring Him glory, Satan uses to create these divisions. God made the races to bring glory to Himself. Satan uses races to divide. When you meet others who are different, if you both know the Lord, you are one in Christ. There is a great comfort when you're with other believers because in Christ we are made one.

How does this work? Because the enmity is abolished in our flesh. Because when you and I realize we are deserving of nothing but death, we realize that we all come defeated and hopeless to God and He loves us and lifts us up equally. There is a humility that comes over you when you know that you are nothing outside of God. You have no superiority over anyone in the body of Christ. We are all saved by grace and not by something we've done. We are all in this together.

v.19-22

This is a beautiful description of the new spiritual structure created by God in the world, the Church. There are no longer foreigners or strangers in the family of God. We are ALL citizens now with all of God's people and we are MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

All the members of this Church are built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. This means that the patriarchs, the apostles, and the ancient prophets all have a word for each of us. God's Word is Holy and it is food for each of us. And this is all built on the oneness of Christ. He is the chief cornerstone. The whole building of the Church is now unified and joined together under Messiah Jesus. And all members of the Church (of whatever race or ethnicity they might be) are knit together with the Holy Spirit of God that lives within every believer.

Let us Pray.