

Ephesians 2:11-22

The peace of Christ creates a new humanity that grows together.

I don't remember which movie it was. But I remember watching innumerable times.

Kids at summer camp with all the expected highjinx, but central to the story was the color war. Divided into red or blue, the camp went to war with each other through challenges, obstacles. Friends pitted against each other. All for the sake of nostalgia and team building. I was let down when I went to my first Christian camp and there was no such war!

The same theme though is in many of our stories (Percy Jackson finds himself in a similar situation). But more than camp settings, it translates to so much of life. In fact, we are conditioned to be tribal. To choose a side, to find those like us and stick with them. Political maps are an adult color wars... you must choose team Edward or team Jacob. Hot-button issues, and the totally mundane. The world system is designed to divide.

The church is not immune... but it is supposed to be.

Paul in this letter to the churches lays out why and starts to lay the foundation for a unity that beats out all attempts to divide.

The peace of Christ creates a new humanity that grows together.

In Ephesians we have a letter written to churches in Asia that have little history with the God of the Bible. In fact, in Gentile or pagan Ephesus, it is the worship of Artemis (Diana) that is popular. Sacrifices were made, idols were purchased... a whole culture shaped by life around the Temple to a Greek goddess.

People far from God... yet when the gospel is preached there it is believed and lives are forever changed. The city is forever changed.

But even so, there are still questions about whether these new converts could be God's people... if they were not Jews. Actually a pretty regular question for the early church.

To that question and our questions of unity today, Jesus is doing something amazing... Says something of our rescue and being remade.

Brought Near by the Blood of Christ

While humanity has always found something to worship... There is only one true God. The awakening to this truth has come to Ephesus as the gospel was going forth from apostles and prophets.

Acts 17:24–28 “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. [26] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for

“In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.” (ESV)

This creator God then in history chose to reveal himself and life with him through a people. Israel was to display God's way, to set the stage for redemption and a coming expansion of God's people. A vision as vast as the stars in the night sky.

The history, the promises, and even the failure of the people in the Old Testament tell this story.

So when Jesus comes, the Messiah promised to reign and renew all things, the promise begins to unfold through his preaching. The message of the arrival of the Kingdom.

Ephesians 2:17 “And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.” (ESV)

Peace between God and man. First half of chapter two, you were dead in sin, But God, being rich in mercy with love, saved you by grace.

And now, horizontal peace, among humanity, the peace and reconciliation brought about by Christ's sacrificial death. "Peace" (eirēnē) appears four times in this passage (vv. 14, 15, 17 [2x]) and is its primary theme.

Paul says "remember," once you were the uncircumcision. Separated from Christ, from the commonwealth of Israel. Strangers to covenants of promise. Without hope, and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:13 "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (ESV)

Not only has the cross of Christ made a way for your rescue from sin and death, forgiveness for rejecting God. By his sacrifice those that were far off, who had no hope of being God's people, who did not belong, are made children part of the commonwealth of his kingdom.

We have been made part of his family (household) and given hope. All by salvation through the work of Jesus.

This was always the plan to be for all people. From the hints of a mixed multitude in the exodus, to the global reset of language at Pentecost the kingdom is for all who would come. Made so by the blood of Christ.

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (ESV)

No longer separation because Jesus has abolished the ordinances that made a distinction between the two.

Christ sets aside the old covenant with its Mosaic law and replaces it with a new covenant for all believers. Consequently, the Mosaic law cannot serve as a barrier between Jewish and Gentile believers.

Ephesians 2:15–16 "by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so

making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.” (ESV)

Christ fulfilled the moral law, keeping all its requirements, but he abolished the Jewish ceremonial law. Thus, the requirements of the ceremonial law (the washings, the Sabbath restrictions, etc.) that had been such a barrier were gone. And since he fulfilled the moral law, taking away its condemnation, all have free access through grace (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:6-15).

“MARIUS VICTORINUS: Christ, he says, “is our peace.” Elsewhere Paul calls him mediator. He interposed himself of his own accord between divided realms. Souls born of God’s fountain of goodness were being detained in the world. There was a wall in their midst, a sort of fence, a partition made by the deceits of the flesh and worldly lusts. Christ by his own mystery, his cross, his passion and his way of life destroyed this wall. He overcame sin and taught that it could be overcome. He destroyed the lusts of the world and taught that they ought to be destroyed. He took away the wall in the midst. It was in his own flesh that he overcame the enmity. The work is not ours. We are not called to set ourselves free. Faith in Christ is our only salvation. ”

Now, both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father. All who trust in Jesus by the Spirit together.

Jesus is the foundation for all unity, not just between Jews and Gentiles...

The cross of Christ which brought together such disparate peoples can surely be the means of reconciliation for those presently divided by ethnicity, nationality, upbringing, economic status, or any other earthly distinctions that wrongly separate us.

The church’s peace is Christ. He is what brings us together, who keeps us together. When he is our peace, we see reconciliation where there was no hope of it. Both vertically, with God, and horizontally, with each other, image-bearers all.

Jesus is reconciling all things to himself and he begins with his people.

As Calvin so movingly said: “Those who were formerly profane and unworthy . . . [have now become] partners with the godly, have now the rights of citizens along

with Abraham, with all the holy patriarchs, and prophets, and kings, nay [i.e., no, better than that!], with the angels themselves.”

We must be a people of reconciliation, of unity, in Jesus. He is our peace. And his peace has a purpose.

This peace and reconciliation is the peace of the Church, not the peace of the world. Peace between Jew and Gentile, the world's races and ethnic groups, rich and poor, educated and uneducated comes only in Christ. This means that the Church has an immense responsibility to be a pocket of reconciliation and shalom in an alienated world.

Built Together in Christ

Ephesians 2:19–22 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (ESV)

Paul is declaring that believers who were once considered foreigners are now, along with other believers (“the saints”), citizens in God’s kingdom (cf. Phil. 3:20). Gentile believers now have a homeland and are therefore fellow citizens of God’s heavenly kingdom. Even more, they have been adopted and granted all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of children of the heavenly Father (1:5; 2:18). Paul uses household language to give confidence and assurance to his Gentile readers that their heavenly Father receives them as children and will protect and provide for them.

If you belong to Jesus, you are being remade by him. Now fellow citizens, saints. Members of his family, given his likeness and brothers and sisters. Joined together as God’s dwelling place.

Before Christ the temple was the central place of worship, now it is the body, the church. Paul is making clear here that individuals are saved but are not meant to stay alone. We are built together.

1 Peter 2:4–5 “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, [5] you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (ESV)

In our text we are growing into a holy temple in the Lord...

What an indescribable privilege that we who have the Spirit of Christ should be counted as the temple of God. Living in light of this privilege leads to joy, gratitude, confidence, and holy living as God’s holy people.

“What a fabulous image! Picture Jesus Christ as the massive cornerstone, and see his vitality as causing the stone to glow. Next the foundational teaching of the apostles and prophets is laid upon and around him. He gives it its shape and stability, and the whole foundation assumes his glow. Then one by one living stones are set upon it, and they in turn radiate the symmetry of the chief cornerstone, forming a luminous, ever-growing temple.”

Makes the church a liminal space (where God is known, experienced, present.)

“Apprenticeship to Jesus is about turning your body into a temple, a place of overlap between heaven and earth an advance sign of what one day Jesus will do for the entire cosmos, when heaven and earth are at long last reunited as one. This is the single most extraordinary opportunity in the entire universe: to let your body become God's home. And it's set before you every single day.”

Practicing the Way, John Mark Comer, P. 39

True for us as individual saints, in spades as the body of Christ.

1 Peter 2:9–10 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (ESV)

We are now witnesses... we are what those that are far off see. That they might come to experience reconciliation and unity, the presence of God. The peace of Christ.

This is what restless hearts long for - Jesus is our peace.

He is creating a new humanity - once strangers remade into family, like him, for the remaking of the world.

The peace of Christ creates a new humanity that grows together.

Repent - of inclinations to put lesser things higher than Christ, forming tribes...

Remember - No longer separated but now his people, for his glory.

Remake - Bring peace, bring Jesus. That many would have access to the Father.

In a world of division and disunity, we have tasted peace. May it define us and shape us into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.