

“A New Community of United Disciples”
We Are the Church Series
Ephesians 2:11-22

Intro: Charles Bridges said, **“The Church is the mirror, that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene, in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed to the universe.”**¹ Will Redemption Hill be a place where “the manifold wisdom of God is revealed” (Ephesians 3:10)?

The Point: The gospel creates a new community of united disciples who belong to God and one another.

I. The Gospel Saves us from Spiritual Isolation (2:11-13)

- Verses 11-12 unpack what their life used to look like. Verses 13 and following unpack what their lives now look like.
 1. Paul instructs these Ephesians gentiles to remember their plight before they were included in the people of God. Simply put, they were spiritually isolated. He uses dark strokes to describe their condition in verse 12: 1) **“separated from Christ,”** 2) **“alienated from the commonwealth of Israel,”** 3) **“strangers to the covenants of promise,”** 4) **“having no hope,”** and 5) **“without God in the world”**
- **“BUT NOW IN CHRIST JESUS...”** There is a stark contrast. Everything has changed. Once you were far off; now you have been brought near. How? have we been brought near? “Through the blood of Christ.” Paul points to the cross time and time again in this passage. He uses phrases like “the blood of Christ,” “in his flesh,” “through the cross” to all point to the substitutionary death of Jesus. This is why w

II. The Gospel Creates a New Community United in Christ (2:14-18)

- Paul’s whole argument in verses 14-18 is that God has created a new spiritual community in Christ.
- One of the key words he uses to describe this new reality is “peace.” Notice that Paul says Jesus is our peace in verse 14, that he has made peace in verse 15, and that he preached peace in verse 17.
 - **“He has made us both one”**
 - Here’s the beauty of the gospel: The work of Christ on the cross not only reconciles us to God, it also reconciles us to one another.
 - Jesus “has made us both one.” This is the essential unity of the church.
 - **“He has broken down [in his flesh] the dividing wall of hostility”**
 - **He has “created in himself one new man in place of the two” (What a radical statement!)**
 - The church is a new humanity, made up of those who belong to God’s people.
 - John Chrysostom explained this reality by saying that it was not that Christ has brought one up to the level of the other, but that he has produced a greater: “as if one should melt down one statue of silver and another of lead, and the two together should come out gold.”

What does it mean that we are one? / How are we one?

- Jesus is the basis of our fellowship. The most important thing about me is Jesus. I belong to him. He defines me. He is who I’m living for. He gives meaning to everything!
- **“he makes one man out of the two.”** To me, this is the key passage arguing for diversity in the church.
 - App: **Redemption Hill = A Thumbprint of Our Community.** We want Redemption Hill to be a thumbprint of our community, plain and simple.
 - In Christ, the language of “us and them” is thrown out the window.

¹ Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980), 1.

- The glory of God is displayed when people of completely different backgrounds and when people who were once enemies, come together as one in Christ.
 - Do you want Redemption Hill to be a diverse church? If so, **what are you willing to do about it? Who will you bring to RHC?**
 - Jesus takes all of the things that divide us and he crushes them in the cross.
 - **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)**

III. The Gospel Brings Great Benefit for God’s People (2:19-22)

- “So then,” or “consequently” “as a result of that, this is church. Paul provides **Three Images for the Church** in verses 19-22:
 - 1. God’s people are citizens of the kingdom**
 - 2. They belong to the household of God**
 - “Those first Christians of Acts 2 were not devoting themselves to social activities but to a relationship—a relationship that consisted of sharing together the very life of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They understood that they had entered this relationship by faith in Jesus Christ, not by joining an organization. And they realized that their fellowship with God logically brought them into fellowship with one another. Through their union with Christ they were formed into a spiritually organic community... We must grasp the idea that fellowship means belonging to one another in the Body of Christ, along with all the privileges and responsibilities that such a relationship entails.” (Jerry Bridges, quoted in *Why Small Groups?*, Mahaney, ed., 22)
 - What can we do to live like a family? Let me give you two practical encouragements:
 1. Live out the “one another” commands of Scripture: **Love (John 13:34). Serve (Gal. 5:13). Forgive (Eph. 4:32). Bear Burdens (Gal. 6:2). Encourage (Heb. 3:13). Teach (Col. 3:16). Admonish (Col. 3:16). Offer Hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9). Pray (James 5:16). Rejoice with & weep with (Rom 12:15). Care (1 Cor. 12:25). Honor (Rom 12:10). Greet (Rom. 16:16). Be kind (Eph. 4:32). Confess (James 5:16).**
 2. Spend time together. How can we get to know people in the church? How can we get to know other people in different Community Groups? The goal is to cut through the superficiality and live like a family as followers of Christ.
 - 3. They are a holy temple in the Lord**

In light of these truths, **How will you Respond?** Continue coming on Sundays? Get Involved in a Community Group? Pursue Church Membership? Other Steps? All of the Above?! -**Take a step to go deeper and get more involved in the life of this church.**

Conclusion:

- We are in this thing together, and this church will only thrive when we really get that. We are a COMMUNITY transformed by the gospel. If there are only five people out of fifty who really get that, then we are going to sputter along as a church. On the other hand, if there are forty-five out of fifty who are engaged together, as one new humanity, living like a family, living out the one anothers of Scripture, about the same mission, following the same Christ, then we will be in a position to really push forward with what God has for us. And “the manifold wisdom of God” will be on clear display as we the church, truly lives like the church, a community of united disciples of Jesus Christ.
- In conclusion, let me ask you:
 - **do you love Jesus?**
 - **If so, do you love what he loves?**
 - **Jesus loves his church!** (Ephesians 5:25)