

Introduction: Dismiss the kids. Admiration for the Coppenger family. Thank you's to everyone who made Easter Weekend such an amazing experience. Ephesians 2:11-22. Pg. _____,

“Symphony” Ephesians 2:11-22

Gifts: Christmas 2017 - shopping for Marsha. Big decision: stuff? Experience? Experience, especially if it's with me! Haha. We had never been to see the BSO. Boston Symphony Orchestra. \$20 under 40... Get it! BSO. 7th row...audience left... perfect view of the harp

Parts brought together. Strings (Violin, Cello, Bass), Woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, English Horn, Sax), Brass (Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba), and Percussion (Drums, Cymbals, Xylophone).

To watch these musicians is to appreciate their proficiency. Years of practice and preparation gave them the ability to play with a fluid, perfectly timed beauty. If they missed a note, you would not know it! But it's not just their proficiency, it's also their passion. Have you ever seen someone locked in on every note they are to play, but locked in with the instrument itself. You can see the emotion and the affection as the sound unleashed in what could be described as an intimate, if not almost sensual experience.

But what makes an orchestra an orchestra is when each individual player works together in harmony to produce a beautiful symphony under the direction of the Conductor.

That's what Jesus is doing with his people, known as the church. The church is not a building. It is a community of people who follow Jesus. And...

The Point: Jesus creates a beautiful symphony through the unity of his diverse people.

That's what Ephesians 2:11-22 is going to show us and we will work out different implications of this truth over the next four Sundays.

Read 2:11-22

I. Jesus died to bring a diverse orchestra together (11-13).

Having just covered the gift of God's salvation through the gospel, making us spiritually alive when we were spiritual dead (I told you we celebrate Easter every day and every Sunday!), Paul now shows us how God restores us, not only into a right relationship with himself, but also radically reorients our relationship to one another!

Verses 11-12 unpack what their life used to look like before they met. Verses 13 and following tell what their lives since they met Jesus.

But it's important to understand the distinction between Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews):

- Gentiles did not have the physical mark of circumcision.
- Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and his people (cf. Gen 17:11-12). You belong to me.
- As a result, the Jews saw the Gentiles as excluded from their social group and from their special relationship with God.
- Do you hear the ethnic tension?

Paul wants them 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 as if to say: "Remember how far God has brought you!!" When he tells them to "remember," it carries the idea of continue to remember - keep remembering)

1. **"separated from Christ,"** They did not know God's messiah.
2. **"alienated from the commonwealth of Israel,"** They did not belong to God's people.
3. **"strangers to the covenants of promise,"**
4. **"having no hope,"** and They could not enjoy the hope of his promises. Why?
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.

We were over here living in the land of spiritual death, dwelling in the domain of the kingdom of darkness, the territory of NO HOPE, the place where people really, when you scale it all down, are living for themselves not God. BUT THEN God lifted us into a whole new world through the work of Christ. Now we have been brought near to God in the territory of HOPE, the land of life, the domain of the kingdom of light, the place where people desire to live for God above everything else.

The Gospel Saves us from Spiritual Isolation!

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 good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

We have seen 11 people say Yes to following Christ over the last week and a half!! Story of Kyiesha or the Agboola's neighbors. God is still pursuing people!

What about you?? Have you been brought near by the blood of Christ?

II. Jesus died to create harmonious peace among his people.

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." How can we experience peace in relationships, a sure sign of unity in relationships?

Just want to follow the text...

Jesus is our peace (14)

- Peace is found in him. We can enjoy peace because we have found it IN HIM.
- So many times we think of love, and joy, and hope, and peace as abstract phenomenon floating out there to hopefully be discovered or grasped.
- Rather than understanding that they all find their source in God. If we have him, we have them!

Jesus made peace (15) He is our peace because he accomplished the step that would bring us peace. How did he do it? What is the result?

- How?
 - He broke down the barrier! Physical wall in the temple. More than that it a metaphorical picture of the entire Jewish way of living life and the Gentile way of living life that included keeping certain ceremonial and civil laws that have now been fulfilled in Christ.
 - Jesus, in his death,
 - Pic: Berlin Wall - How many of you remember the wall coming down in 1989? That wall not only separated people physically, but represented the clash of ideologies of communism and democracy.
- What is the result?
 - He has made us one (14). We're united.
 - More than that: "he has created in himself one new man in place of the two."
 - What an amazing picture! The church forms a new humanity.
 - 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 something far greater: "as if one should melt down one statue of silver and another of lead, and the two together should come out gold."
 - The body to which Paul refers to here is the church universal: all believers at all times in all places. In the church there are no ethnic barriers.
 - We both together have access to God the Father in the Holy Spirit (18)

Jesus preached peace (17)

- This was always God's plan! I love Zechariah 9:9-10!
- "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey . . .
And he shall speak peace to the nations." (Zechariah 9:9-10)
- What does this mean?
 - The message of peace must be a communicated ("A Christian is either a missionary or an imposter." - Spurgeon)
 - The message of peace must be accepted by faith
- What are the implications for Redemption Hill?
 - 1) Jesus is the basis of our unity. Christianity community is not simply hanging out! It is found in Christ. The deeper our focus and commitment to Christ, the deeper our unity and relationships in him! So grow deeper with Christ and grow deeper with Christ together.
 - 2) In Christ, the language of "us and them" is thrown out the window.
 - Jesus takes everything that could ever divide us as human beings, and one by one, places them in the garbage.

3) Everyone is welcomed in our church.

- This is what I love about our church. Look around! Thank you for loving people just as they are.
- Here, in this family, there are no barriers when it comes to: Color of your skin, your age, money in the bank, how many degrees hang on your wall, what color your collar is when you go to work, which team you cheer for, the style of music you enjoy, who your parents are, who you voted for, your accent, your immigration status, how many followers you have on Instagram, YOU ARE WELCOMED HERE... and so is everyone you'll ever meet in Greater Boston!

T: 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?

III. Jesus died to produce a symphony as he dwells in us (19-22).

“So then,” or “consequently” “as a result of that,” this is what is true of you!

“The passage reaches a crescendo...” here (O’Brien) Paul says: because you have been brought near, because you have been made one, reconciled through the cross, because you both have access in one Spirit to the Father. . .

Paul provides Three Images for the Church in verses 19-22:

1. 1. God’s people are citizens of the kingdom

Why people desire U.S. Citizenship? Permanent residence, the security of belonging and staying in this country. Federal benefits and programs. Your children will be citizens. Voting rights. You can run for public office.

Take those reasons put a huge exponent on the end of all those benefits AND responsibilities... :)

1. 2. They belong to the household of God

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 more time together. I love the “lunch bunch.” They just had a party for Jonathas. 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

Context: N. T. Wright says here that Paul takes “. . . one of the central symbols of Judaism and turn it inside out.” Why was the temple so central in Judaism? God had promised to live there. Wright continues, “It was, many believed, the place where earth and heaven met. . . . But now Paul is declaring that the living God is constructing a new temple. It consists not of stones, arches, pillars and altars, but of human beings” (N. T. Wright, *Ephesians: 11 Studies for Individuals and Groups*, 26).

The cornerstone was the first stone laid and it was laid very carefully because every other stone would be laid and measured by this stone. Thus, the cornerstone not only gives guidance, but it also gives stability.

- Jesus is the one by which all things are measured.
- The apostles and prophets built the foundation as they went forth proclaiming the gospel in alignment to the cornerstone
- Now all succeeding believers are built on this foundation, causing their lives to be o The growth of the temple takes place “in Christ” and the temple exists “in him.”
- The purpose of this temple is to continue to grow into a dwelling place for God by his Spirit.
 - o We grow, not individually, but as we are carefully fitted together with others stones.
 - o The focus here in Ephesians is not individual growth but corporate growth.

APP... Involvement. Participate. Receive and Give. In Christ we give and receive.

In light of these truths, How will you Respond? Continue coming on Sundays? Attend NEXT. 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:

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 God are displayed to the universe.”**

Will Redemption Hill be a place where “the manifold wisdom of God is revealed” (Ephesians 3:10)?

One of the ways God boggles the mind and moves the hearts of people is they see people have very little to nothing in common in the natural realm have everything in common in the supernatural realm.

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” JOHN 13:35