

## Preaching Peace in a Pandemic

*Eph. 2:11-22*

The passage we are going to look at today is **extremely relevant to us**, I think, for two reasons.

1. “Researchers found that more than half of Americans have called on God to end the spread of COVID-19, including some people who rarely ask for divine help... the coronavirus pandemic is influencing people’s relationship to their faith, the American...survey reported.”<sup>1</sup>
    - a. So here’s a good questing, how can we as the church play apart in this time?
    - b. **Paul will tell us what he thinks about being a church looks like vs attending one.**
  2. **Paul gives us a solution for racial and cultural unity** in the church.
    - a. Racial problems in Paul’s churches was a real issue because before that, God’s people had all been Jews, and **then Jesus shows up and now gentiles like myself are able to join the church.** In these new churches—you’ve got Gentiles sitting next to Jews, and Gentiles had their own customs and fashions, and Gentile music preferences, and Gentile political viewpoints.
    - b. It was a mess
    - c. And now 2000 years later it’s still a mess.
- **And from scrolling through my IG I can tell how some of you seem very passionate about racial reconciliation, but I wonder how are you living that out?** Not just protesting but as a person.
  - **Today we will be in the book of Ephesians 2:11-22.** In this passage Paul was dealing with a church that was going through some racial tension because some of them where Jews and some were Gentiles. And as a church they were **divided**, some groups thought that they were better than another and this caused **division** and **hostility**, and **tension**.
  - Paul knew that the only solution was the gospel of PEACE. And through this **message** they may start to heal and be united as one.

**Read: Ephesians 2:11-22**

**Pray**

- Paul wants to show us how can we achieve the Peace of God and racial Reconciliation of others.
- Today I’ll shows us how we can **find this reconciliation** and **be at peace** in what Jesus has done for us.

### Finding Reconciliation

#### 1. He brought us near by the blood of Christ (v12-13)

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. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Paul said, **before God there is only one category of people: Sinners.** We have all equally rebelled and have turned away from God. There were no “good people” or “bad people”; “winners or losers”; “people who have it together” or “dysfunctional people”; there’s only bad, dead, children of Satan, sons and daughters of disobedience.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.deseret.com/indepth/2020/4/4/21203565/coronavirus-utah-covid-19-prayer-religion-faith-church-mosque-synagogue-god-research-pew>

So if we are honest with ourselves there is pockets of racism and prejudice in our hearts, there has been hatred and violence, and grudges that we hold against others. That's why when it came to God, we were all separated, excluded, foreigners, hopeless, Godless, far from home.

If you want to talk about **justice**, let's talk about how

-it would have been **fair** that God left us where we were,

-it would have been **fair** that we would be judged for our own mistakes and sins.

-It would have been **fair** that we deserve wrath.

Then in verse 13 **BUT NOW** in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Don't you see that in this world it's an eye for an eye. You shed someone's blood, so now your blood must be spilled. This is justice. Someone unfollow you, they are going to pay, you unfollow them then tell all your friends to unfollow them. That's fair

But then Jesus comes along and said, "you have sinned and rebelled against me, but instead of me **shedding your blood** for judgment and justice, I will **shed my own blood for you**, and call this love and forgiveness."

Because sin deserves a punishment, so Jesus paid it with his own blood. "*Jesus payed it all, all to him I owe, sin has left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow.*"

because Jesus has shed his blood for you, now you are able to be reconciled to God

## 2. He made peace through the Cross of Christ (v14-18)

-For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, -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, -and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. -He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. -For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

You may ask, "how can we have peace if we don't fight for it?" "We can't stand **oppression and injustice**, we have to take things in our own hands." when has this ever worked out in the bible.

- We are in a society that tells us that violence will give us justice. And history has proven that to be ineffective and dangerous. If justice is not achieved through peace, then it's not the kind of justice that you want.

- -For he himself is our peace.

You may ask how can 2 pieces of wood(cross) fix racism?

- Because the solution is never raising one group of people higher than another. This is not **justice** this is **pride**.
- What's one message the world needs to hear from the church in this time?
- because at the foot of the cross we are all equally dead and desperate for help.
- Chris Green "*The only reason we have skin issues, is because we have sin issues*"
- who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

By taking on the sins of the world, Jesus also took up on himself any hostility, prejudice, judgment, hurtful racial jokes, and wrong accusation against us to the cross. -by setting aside in his **flesh** the law with its commands and regulations. All of the hatred and division is now displayed on his flesh.

He did this so that <sup>15</sup>His purpose was to create in himself one **new humanity** out of the two, thus making peace, -and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility

- This new kind of man resulted in *peace*, because in his death and resurrection Christ has removed anything which would have made us feel superior to others and giving us something glorious in common that far exceeds our differences.
- That's why through the cross there's only one kind of sinner: **dead**; only one type of believer: **alive in Christ**, fully adopted into God's family. By faith alone.

Think about this, Jesus died on the cross for us to be united as one family. His body was torn apart so that the body of believers can come together. That's why we need to be together as a church even if it's online. Distance doesn't matter, the church matter to God. And it should matter to you. <sup>17</sup>He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

### 3. He joined us together on the corner stone of Christ (v19-22)

-Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, -built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.-In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.-And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

We have seen that over these few months that the foundation of the nations has been shaken to the core. Our healthcare system is inefficient, our government is corrupt, our economy is crashing, our systems are failing, even our own health and lives are in danger. What will you stand on in this time? **Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.** I think God is trying to get our attention. To build our house not on sinking sand but on him our corner stone.

**Each member of the church, Paul says, is a key part of this building**—each one of us is a **precious stone**; not a brick, where everybody is the same—but a precious stone where we are all unique, placed in this building.

God has place different **spiritual gifts** in each one of us because together we are his holy temple. This is a concept that should forever change how you see church: The place where the spirit of God has chosen to reside is here. This is where **you experience his presence and his power. He has put his gifts** in every member—not just me.

So **when we pray, God doesn't usually "zap"** power straight down from heaven to accomplish his will. He moves a member of his body to do the work, through their spiritual gifts.

**That means if you disconnect yourself from the church, you are disconnecting yourself from the power of God.**

That's why, when people ask, "How much should I be involved in the church?" the **answer is: to the extent that you want God to work in your life.**

In fact, I'd be so bold to say that you have no right to ask for the help of God if you intentionally separate yourself from the source of help.

**I believe there special blessing and spiritual gifts that God has given to each cultures and racial groups.** And when we are able to be united as one and worship as one we will reflect heaven. When all nations, tongue, tribe are around the thrown.

- **If you want God to work in your life, you have to be part of the church.**

I have a feeling that God want to talk with us about finding reconciliation in him, and some of you need to reconcile those relationship that you have broken, and also reconcile your relationship with the church. And that's only possible through Jesus, God has:

1. **He brought us near by the blood of Christ (v12-13)**
2. **He made peace through the Cross of Christ (v14-18)**
3. **He joined us together on the corner stone of Christ (v19-22)**

We have found reconciliation in His gospel and have been unified as believers.

Think about it: A group of Asians getting together is not miraculous—that happens all the time.

But when you have a group of people who have little in common except for a common experience of **grace**—that points to the **power of the gospel**.

Jesus own disciples where from different backgrounds and people. Think about **Simon the Zealot** and **Matthew the Tax Collector** they are both on different political sides. Simon wants to overthrow the roman government; Matthew works for the roman government. They probably had some spicy conversations around the campfire. **Later: Nicodemus a teacher of the law and Marry Madalyn caught in adultery both on opposite sides but now have one thing in common.** But people wondered, "Why do these people love each other so much? It's because they have been **brought together by the spirit of peace.**