

Palmetto Baptist Church: April 26, 2020

The Power of the Gospel over Racism: Ephesians 2:11-22

Turn to Ephesians 2:11-22

This morning I want to show you what the Bible has to say regarding the topic of RACISM and RECONCILIATION.

Title: The Transforming Power of the Gospel: The Gospel alone transcends ethnic boundaries.

Illustration: The Story of the Good Samaritan from the Gospel of Luke 10:25-37:¹

1 A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to receive eternal life?’

2 Jesus answered him, ‘What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?’

3 The man answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’

4 ‘You are right,’ Jesus replied; ‘do this and you will live.’ The teacher of the Law then asked Jesus, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ Jesus answered him by telling this parable.

5 ‘There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

6 ‘Robbers attacked him, took his robes, and beat him up, leaving him half dead.

7 ‘It so happened that a priest was going down that road, but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side.

8 ‘A Levite arrived next, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side.

9 ‘Then a Samaritan who was traveling that way arrived on the scene. When he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them

10 ‘Then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him.

11 ‘The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. “Take care of him,” he told the innkeeper, “and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.”’

12 Jesus concluded, ‘In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour toward the man attacked by the robbers?’ The teacher of the Law answered, ‘The one who was kind to him.’ Jesus replied, ‘Go and do the same.’

¹ <http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/good-samaritan/>

4 Foundational Truths as you turn to the text for this morning:

As a human race, we are more alike than we are different...

1. We all came from **the same blood**. (Acts 17:26)

²⁶And 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,

2. We were all created in **the same image**. (Gen. 1:27)

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

3. IN CHRIST, we will all one day share **the same heaven**. (Rev. 5:9 and 7:9).

^{5:9}And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

^{7:9}After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

4. BECAUSE OF THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL, we can all have **the same access** to God Himself. (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:11-22)

²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^[a] nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

Opening Illustration: I'll never forget the experience of moving into the heart of one of the roughest neighborhoods in Minneapolis with my wife and our 1 year old daughter. I can still hear the same sounds of police sirens, moving traffic, screaming people, and gun shots. (I can count on both hands the number of nights we didn't hear gun shots during the evening over the 10 years we lived in the city.) I remember stepping outside onto the porch of our second floor apartment with Heather to try and see what all the commotion

was only to get spotlighted by a police helicopter flying over our house. We were in a war zone!

But we loved every minute of it. With God's help, with immersed ourselves in urban ministry. Everything was going well at the church and we seemed to be making genuine connections with the teens in the neighborhood. All of the apparent success with the teens came to a halt following a youth activity when we were hit with the reality that we were not as far along as we had hoped. My wife and I were driving the teens home when a fight broke out in the back of the van between two teen girls. After making attempts to verbally confront the problem, I was forced to stop the van and demand that the instigator of the fight exit the van immediately. Upon making this request, the young lady lashed out at me with expletives and accusations of racial profiling. I was devastated. A flood of questions filled my mind. "Is she right?" "Am I racist?" "How can I communicate that I genuinely care?" "Man. We are so different... world's apart!" "Is there any hope of reconciliation?"

A Flood of Questions filled my mind:

Is she right? Am I racist?

How can I communicate that I genuinely care?

Man. We are so different... world's apart!

Is there any hope of reconciliation?

The Apostle Paul addressed similar challenges during his three year ministry in Ephesus. The Lord was in the process of establishing His church in Ephesus. This new body of believers included both Jew and Gentile. Paul's solution ... reflect on all we have in Christ Jesus and live in light of these realities in our interactions with others!

Ephesians 1 – Speaks of the GLORIES OF THE GOSPEL

- ☐ Vs. 3 – blessed with all spiritual blessings
- ☐ Vs. 5 – we are adopted
- ☐ Vs. 6 – we are accepted
- ☐ Vs. 11 – we have an inheritance
- ☐ Vs. 13 – we are sealed by the HS
- ☐ Vs. 18 – granted spiritual insight
- ☐ Vs. 19 – unexplainable power

Ephesians 2 – Speaks of the TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL IN TRANSFORMING INDIVIDUALS (generally in verses 1-10; and specifically with reference to the church in verses 11-22)

This morning I want you to see the TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL IN TRANSCENDING ETHNIC BOUNDARIES by observing the following two realities:

I. Apart from Christ we were divided (11-12)

II. In Christ we are united (13-22)

I. Apart from Christ we were divided (11-12)

A. Divided based on physical appearance (circumcision) [11]

- Symbolism of separation from the world
- Picture of salvation

“Paul did not disparage circumcision as an institution. It was to him the God-given sign of the covenant; but if the outward sign was not matched by an inward faith and an obedience of life to the covenant, it became worthless and just a work of flesh (I Cor 7:19; Gal. 5:6; 6:15). The circumcision that mattered, whether or not there was an outward sign, was spiritual circumcision, a putting off of sin and an obedience to Christ (Rom 2:25-29; Phil. 3:2-3; Col. 2:11) [Bible Knowledge Commentary]

Instead of fulfilling the meaning of the Abrahamic covenant (being a blessing to the nations – Gen 12:3; Is 42:1,6; 49:6) and sharing their knowledge of God. The Jews used their physical distinction to create a boundary.

Application:

How many times do we make a judgment call about another person based on a physical difference?

A. Divided based on physical appearance [11]

B. Divided based on spiritual depravity [12]

The fundamental change for the Gentiles was not simply in the way the Jews regarded them, but in their actual condition:

1. without Christ – no access to God
2. without an inheritance – no promise to claim

- aliens – refers to humanities separation from God by sin
- Commonwealth – refers to rights of citizenship
- Strangers from the covenants of THE (original) promise... that special relationship of grace with God and hope of deliverance and future glory

Third, they were **foreigners to the covenants of the promise** (cf. Eph. 3:6). They were deprived of direct participation in God’s covenants and thus had no hope of future glory and blessing as Israel did. Israel’s “covenants” include the Abrahamic (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18–21; 17:1–8), the Palestinian (Deut. 28–30), the Davidic (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:1–4), and the New (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:24–30). These covenants—all

pointing to “the promise” of the Messiah and of blessings through Him—assured Israel of a national existence, a land, a King, and spiritual blessings.²

3. without God – no purpose in life... no prospect of the future, no assurance of life beyond this.

☐ *Atheos* – not the absence of belief in God (many gods) but the absence of belief in the one true God.

I. *Apart from Christ we were divided (11-12)*

II. **In Christ we are united (13-22)**

A. **We are united spiritually before God through the Gospel... regardless of race**

1. Same blood that covers [13] *all of your sin*

☐ *Brought nigh – To both God and others*

2. Same peace provided [14-15] He IS our peace.

“As men and women are brought to be in him, and continue to live in him, they find peace with God, and so also a meeting-place and concord with one another, whatever may have been the divisions of race, color, class, or creed before.” [Tyndale NT Commentary]

- ☐ *making one new man out of two* – OR “he has made both things into one new thing” (original)
- ☐ *the middle wall of partition* – In his book *Antiquities*, Josephus reports that in Jerusalem, between the temple proper and the Court of the Gentiles, there was a stone wall on which there was an inscription in Greek and Latin: “No one of another nation to enter within the fence and enclosure round the temple. And whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues.”
 - Paul was arrested and accused of escorting an Ephesian Gentile named Trophimus, beyond the barrier in Acts 21:29-30.
 - In any case, in Christ it was destroyed
- ☐ *The law of commandments contained in ordinances* – detailed ordinances of ceremonies and regulations about the clean and the unclean – ABOLISHED IN CHRIST!

² Harold W. Hoehner, “[Ephesians](#),” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 625.

- John Stott said: “Jesus abolished both the regulations of the ceremonial law and the condemnation of the moral law.”

THUS CREATING SOMETHING NEW ALTOGETHER!

3. Same reconciliation accomplished [16-17] for *both...*

- Transition from ENEMY to FRIEND
- preaching peace to both near and far [17]

4. Same access granted [18] by *one Spirit* (more on this in chapter 4) unto the Father

- Not just an introduction but an escort before the Throne
- Note the Triunity in this verse! (through Him: Jesus; one Spirit: H.S.; to the Father: God)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ unites us before God!

Galatians 3:28

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave^[a] nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Illustration: Garfield talking to me about playing Jesus Christ in a passion play at his church in Jamaica. It didn't make sense to me... Why? Because, in my heart of hearts, I failed to see how the Gospel provides the same access to all men regardless of race!

- I. *Apart from Christ we were divided (11-12)*
 - A. *Divided based on physical appearance [11]*
 - B. *Divided based on spiritual depravity [12]*

- II. *In Christ we are united (13-22)*
 - A. *We are united spiritually before God through the Gospel... regardless of race*
 - B. We are united physically before the world through the local church.**
 1. We have a common citizenship (19a)
 2. We have a common kinship (19b)
 3. We have a common worship (20-22)

In the Old Testament God's glory was in the temple, which represented His presence with the people. In this Age God dwells in His new temple which is constructed not from inanimate materials but of living believers. The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer (cf. John 14:17; Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:2; 4:6; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), who is thus a "temple" (1 Cor. 6:19). But the temple in Ephesians 2:21–22 refers to the Holy Spirit's *corporate* "dwelling" (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16), His "temple" composed of *all* Jewish and Gentile believers.

"By His Spirit" is literally, "by the Spirit," as it is translated in Ephesians 3:5.

In conclusion, Paul has shown that though the Gentiles were formerly outside God's household, they are now one "new man" with Jewish believers. This new entity is like a temple that is structured on the apostles and prophets, with Christ being the chief Cornerstone; it is indwelt by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit.³

Application:

How then should a born-again believer who is committed to the transforming power of the Gospel apply this passage? Below are a few suggestions:

- **Pray for the unreached and unengaged across the world. (11-12)**

7,000 unreached people groups

3,000 unengaged people groups

Reached vs Unreached?⁴

The definition used by mission strategist for people group is "a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these." For evangelistic purposes it is "the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or

³ Harold W. Hoehner, "[Ephesians](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 627–628.

⁴ https://joshuaobject.net/resources/articles/has_everyone_heard

acceptance." (Ralph Winter p. 536) **Current data suggests there are about 17,000 distinct people groups when country boundaries are considered.**

An unreached people group is "a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group." In the middle 1990's mission strategists sought to quantify this definition. They settled on the criteria for unreached as less than 2% true Christ-followers and less than 5% Professing Christian (this includes all forms of Christianity i.e. anyone that would call themselves a "Christian.")...

So how many of the approximately 17,000 ethnic people groups are considered unreached i.e. less than 2% Christ-follower and less than 5% Professing Christian? **The latest estimates suggest that approximately 7,000 people groups are considered unreached.** That means over 40% of the world's people groups have no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize the rest of their people group. Over 42% of the world's population live in these over 7,000 people groups.

Here are some sobering facts about just the [50 largest unreached people groups](#):

- All 50 of these people groups have less than 2% Christ-followers
- Individuals in these groups may have very limited, if any, access to the Gospel.
- These 50 unreached people groups are comprised of 1.48 billion souls.
- One in five people on earth live in these 50 unreached peoples.
- Every group is larger than 10,000,000 in population.
- None have an indigenous church capable of taking the Gospel to the entire group.
- Primary religion: 23 are Muslim, 18 Hindu, 6 Buddhist, 2 Ethnic Religions, 1 non-Religious.
- 44 of these 50 unreached people groups are in the 10/40 Window, 47 are in sensitive countries.

It is important to note that this does not mean every individual within an unreached people group has never heard of Jesus or the message of salvation. There is often a small percentage (less than 2%) Christ-followers in these groups, but the vast majority of the group has minimal, if any, exposure to the person of Jesus Christ and the Good News of God's free gift of salvation. For arguments sake, suppose for every true believer there are ten who have heard of Jesus but not embraced Him. That would mean that in an unreached people group 20% had heard of Jesus and 80% had not. In other words, possibly 4 out of 5 individuals in an unreached group are totally unaware of the Messiah.

Unengaged means there are definitely no missionaries, and in all likelihood no outreach, no church, no Christian materials, and few, if any, Bibles in these people groups

Unengaged People Groups

Data from the [International Mission Board \(IMB\)](#) of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest denominational mission board in the world, suggests that there are possibly over [3,000 ethnic people groups](#) that are not only unreached, but also completely unengaged meaning there is no known active on-site church planting effort underway and few if any know believers.

The [Finishing the Task](#) initiative suggests this number may be significantly lower. It is a great injustice to think that 2,000 years after Jesus gave the Great Commission that many people groups have no witness in their midst. To say that a people group is unengaged means there are definitely no missionaries, in all likelihood no outreach, no church or fellowship of believers, no Christian materials, and few if any Bibles in these people groups.

While it is certainly possible the Lord has been supernaturally at work among an unengaged group without outside involvement, this would not be the typical way He has ordained for the spread of the Gospel. He commanded the Church to go. There are millions of individuals in these unengaged people groups that have never heard of Jesus or His work of redemption.

- **Accept your role in global missions.**

Ephesians 2:17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

- Goer
- Sender
- Disobedient

In his book, *Astonished by God* (a collection of the final sermons preached by John Piper to his congregation at Bethlehem Baptist Church after 33 years of faithful ministry), he has a chapter entitled *The Call to Global Missions* where he lays out Ten Biblical Convictions Regarding Global Missions. He starts the chapter describing the role each member at Bethlehem plays in global missions:

“Holding the rope has long been a powerful image for missions work. It comes from William Carey, who blazed a trail to India in 1792 and saw his mission as that of a miner penetrating into a deep mine – one which had never been explored, and with no one to guide. He said to Andrew Fuller and John Ryland and his other pastor friends, “I will go down, if you will hold the rope.” And John Ryland reports, “He took an oath from each of us, at the mouth of the pit, to this effect: that ‘while we lived, we should never let go of the rope.’” (Peter Morden, *Offering Christ to the World* [Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster, 2003], 167.

We are, all of us who believe, either goers, senders, or disobedient – those who drop into mines, those who hold the ropes, or those who think it’s not their business.
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Preaching to those who are near: MAY 2020 – Month on Mission!

May: A Month on Mission

Summary:

A month set aside to focus on the mission of the Gospel – to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). During this month our church body will focus on all aspects of being a missional church (being a good neighbor, serving our communities, and impacting the entire world) all for the goal that we would make disciples of all nations. During this month there will be a special emphasis on the “GO” of the discipleship process through engaging our neighbors locally and internationally. We will strategically create relationships that provide opportunities to share the gospel and care for those in need (especially during COVID-19).

Week 1: (May 1-9)

1. Missionary Presentation: Scotts (**May 3**)
2. Gift Cards to Healthcare workers (**May 5**)
3. Launch of the Art of Neighboring (**May 6**)

Week 2: (May 10-16)

1. Missionary Presentation: Spitzers (**May 10**)
2. Blood Drive (**May 12**)
3. Week 2 of the Art of Neighboring (**May 13**)

Week 3: (May 17-23)

1. Missionary Presentation: Duarte (**May 17**)
2. Food Drive
3. Week 3 of the Art of Neighboring (**May 20**)

Week 4: (May 24-30)

1. Missionary Presentation: David and Darlene Sperr (**May 24**)
2. Community Group Outreach (**May 26**)
3. Week 4 of the Art of Neighboring (**May 27**)

Week 5: (May 31)

1. Missionary Presentation: Schulmans (**May 31**)

● Preach the Gospel to yourself daily (vs. 13-18)

- All have the same capital to please God through the blood of Christ (13)
- All have the same peace offered through the work of Christ (14-15)
- All have the same reconciliation through the cross of Christ (16-17)
- All have the same access through the provision of Christ (18)

The gospel truths should impact the way you view people who are from a different ethnic background. Realize that we are more alike than we are different. Engage in authentic relationships across ethnic lines. Reject the concept of “US” vs. “THEM.” Because of the gospel, WE ALL ARE UNITED!

- **Trust God to build His church. (19-22)**
 - Frame the church according to Scripture
 - Watch God grow the church.