

Our Mission:

*To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus*



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

Once again, we witness how this division between Jew and Gentile was undermining their unity in Christ. Paul is clear, even if the Council in Jerusalem was not, Christ is the means by which all people are joined as equal citizens in the Kingdom of God. If we truly trust that Christ has reconciled all to God, then we must trust that he has reconciled us all to one another.

Theology Connection:

The church has a tendency toward good order. This leads us to believe there is a right way and a wrong way of engaging this faith. Relationships, however, are rarely orderly, but instead they are often a bit chaotic. They require imagination, introspection, and often depend upon the grace of forgiveness. Paul is suggesting that rather than trust in our designated good order we might need to listen for the Holy Spirit, trusting in forgiveness when we go astray.

Application:

What if we were to treat everyone as if they were our brother and/or sister in Christ? What if we made that our prayer at the beginning of each day? What if we pushed aside all other identifying markers and sought to see people solely through the perspective of the cross... as people redeemed by God's love? Do you think we might be different? Can we imagine the world might be different? Can we try?

The Text: Ephesians 2: 11-22

¹¹Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹²remember 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.

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

¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

¹⁵by 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,

¹⁶and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

¹⁷He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

¹⁸For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,

²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

²¹In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

²²And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

ADULT

It happens in the neighborhood and at work, and it may be true of our families as well. Something goes amiss, and we choose up sides. In light of today's text, might we take a few minutes to try to see the situation from the perspective of the other? What is it like to walk in the other's shoes? That's what God did in Christ Jesus; might we try the same? Can the love of God lead us across whatever divides us one from another?

YOUTH

Please read Ephesians 2: 11-22

My understanding is that the former world was divided into two hostile groups of Jews and Gentiles. But the cross brought both groups together reconciling into a third group, the new humanity in Christ.

"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:14-15).

What does this text mean to you?

If the church is God's instrument for reconciliation between peoples of all kinds, how can it prove itself to the world when reconciliation is difficult even among its own members?

What steps can we the church take to improve relationships among our own ranks?

Let us pray: Dear God, we have so much to be grateful for. Thank you for helping us find our way so we are no longer divided. Please help us continue to break barriers between each other so we can unite in love. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

CHILDREN'S

Today's scripture is a letter from Paul, Paul is talking to some people in a place called Ephesus who were wondering what kind of people God could use in the family of Christ. Paul tells them that God loves and needs everyone! Not just a certain type of person, but many different types of people. Every person no matter what size, shape, color, or nationality is needed to build the family of Christ! We all build upon each other, and we all need each other! When we work together, we build up the family of God so that we can learn, love, and teach others about God. Our individuality helps us to share God's love, how cool is that?

Think:

1. What are some things that make you unique?
2. How do you think your uniqueness can help in God's family?
3. How can you help build upon the family of Christ?

Blessing:

May your eyes be opened to see all the amazing works of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Pray:

Dear God,

Thank You so much for giving us Your son Jesus to be in our lives. Please help us to work together to build a strong family of diverse people who love You. Amen!