

Title: You Belong Here
Text: Ephesians 2.11-22
Theme: One in Christ
Series: Missions Conference 2010 #2
Prop Stmt

Read Text:

This morning I am preaching on one of the glorious results of the gospel. In so doing, I am attempting to convince you logically and propositionally, even while I cry out to the Spirit of God to compel you spiritually so that you will treasure God above all else. And that you will see that we treasure God when we treasure Christ and his gospel above everything else, because the gospel is the only means by which God has reconciled sinners to himself, reconciled sinners to each other, so that together, no matter where you have come from, or what you have done or how moralistic, proud, and self-righteous you used to think of yourself, we find in God our soul's deepest needs and most personal desires satisfied and overwhelmed with his joy. I want you to be convinced down into the heart level of your desires and affections that Christ is not only dependable, but that Christ is desirable. Furthermore, I am seeking to convince you that this is what drives missions. We long for people from every tribe, language and nation to be satisfied with Christ with us and to join us as one body even as we wait for and long for the day when we gather around the throne of the Lamb and worship him who reigns forever and ever.

I don't want you to see the gospel simply as a ticket out of hell, though there is truth to that. I don't want you to see Christ simply as a crutch for a broken life, or a key that unlocks a door for successful living. I want you to see Christ as the Sovereign, Eternal Redeemer, whose sinless life and sacrificial death so completely satisfied the wrath of God that should have been poured out upon you, and so completely changes every single person who comes to him and by faith alone, and so decisively and completely secured your salvation so that, you cry out to God and say, "I'm in!" Because when you come by faith alone to Christ like that, you are rescued from and rescued to. You are saved from and saved to. That is what is going on in this chapter. Ephesians is all about the gospel-based people of God. Paul begins chapter 1 with a beautiful exclamation of what God has done for you in Christ. He chose you, predestined you, adopted you, redeemed you, and sealed you by the Spirit. He then prays for these believers that they would know the hope to which they are called, the inheritance that they will receive and the power that they are promised. So, *that* hope and *that* inheritance is what he unpacks in chapter 2 and he does so in two paragraphs that echo each other. Now, I am going to focus most of our time on verses 11-22, but notice how they parallel with verses 1-10.

Natural Condition – 1-3
God's Intervention – 4-6
Purpose – 7
Result – 8-10

Natural Condition – 11-12
God's Intervention – 13-15a
Purpose – 15b-18
Result – 19-22

Now, this is more than just writing style and the layering of an argument. This format is so helpful for us to understand, so that we love the gospel and see its intended purpose, in bringing us together to God because God is the fountain and the goal of your/our joy.

Those are not soft, cushy words. That truth that God is the fountain, the source, and the wellspring of our joy; the ultimate good, the absolute satisfaction, rightfully calls us to pursue Him above all else. We pursue the glory of God and our joy all at the same time by believing his gospel. Those two pursuits are inseparable. You cannot pursue the glory of God without pursuing your joy, and you cannot truly pursue your joy without pursuing the glory of God. God made you for his pleasure, and your soul's greatest pleasure is God. Therefore, the abandonment of yourself to the cause of Christ, is the most God-honoring and self-fulfilling purpose for which you could ever live. To call others to do the same is the greatest act of love you could ever do for them. That is what missions is about. We are pursuing the joy of others and the advancement of God's glory by telling them of the only means by which they can know God. We pursue the glory of God and our joy by devoting our lives to making this known to people all over this world. We pursue the glory of God and our joy by giving our children to missions, by giving ourselves to ministry, by living before this world with unity, purity and integrity, by doing gospel-deeds of mercy, by giving our finances to support the gospel, by giving our energy to service, by giving our life and breath to making Christ known. This text gives you a major reason why pursuing your joy in God is not only logical, and reasonable, it is imperative! The gospel is so fine, so complete, so sufficient, so powerful, so enduring, so indestructible, so beautiful, and so compelling, that we have, this week, been celebrating missions. We are extolling missions, because gospel-based missions makes much of Jesus. And there is no one or nothing that is greater than he. He is the one whom the myriads will worship. He is the Lamb whose throne will be surrounded with thousands upon thousands upon thousands who will cry out and together say that which is true, that is which is unalterable, that which has been lied about and covered up but in the end, cannot be denied; Jesus is KING! Jesus is LORD! Jesus is Redeemer. Jesus is Savior! Jesus is the Lamb who is worthy to receive all glory and honor and blessing and power and worship and praise. That means that Jesus Christ is worth all of my energy in making him known. Jesus Christ is worth all of my attention, my devotion, my love, my trust, my mind, my voice, my strength, my will, my finances, my singing, my future and my very soul. Some of you struggle with that. Some of you are bothered by passionate worship. Some of you are bothered by radical obedience and total devotion. You are afraid. Why? I say this in love, but there are idols in your heart that hold you back from treasuring Christ above all. You claim that it is because you do not want to be seen as a fanatic. The truth is you are already a fanatic, but it is about lesser things. Lesser things have your affections. Lesser gods hold captive your worship. You have given yourself to other pleasures, and pursuits that are destined to perish. They are transient, like the flowers of the field. Lesser goals have laid claim to your heart. Look at who God is. Look at our Savior. Look closely at his gospel with me this morning. Look at what he is doing in the church through the gospel. Study it, like you would a precious gem. Let its beauty capture your heart. See with me, that nothing compares to the power and humbling affect and yet soul-raising, heart-filling, reality of the gospel. Look at what we are called to believe and champion! That is what is on display here.

1. **Remember what you were!** (11-12)

Two times in these verses (11-12) we are told to remember what our condition used to be because it helps us understand how wonderful God's grace is to us through Christ. Paul uses 5 different expressions to describe our lives before Christ. These expressions all relate to each other and paint a picture of isolation, disconnection, loneliness, no identity and complete despair.

What is it that grips our hearts about Haiti? We see the images of children who not only do not have a home, but they have no family. They are left to fend for themselves. And we know what happens to children like this. They grow up to be abused or to abuse. Gangs thrive on kids like this. Gangs are not really a family, but they are the only family some of these kids will have. And in order to be with people who will accept them, kids will do all sorts of horrific things, just to please the other gang members. The cycle of violence just continues. Apart from Christ, our condition is worse than that of these children. We are the people, the "sons of disobedience" (v. 2) who have no real home, and no real place to belong. These 5 expressions are obviously focusing upon Gentiles who have not heard the gospel, but the picture is so much more speaking of one's spiritual condition rather than ethnic.

- separated from Christ – we are separated from true love
- alienated from the commonwealth of Israel – we are left on our own to find a people
- strangers to the covenants of promise – we are ignorant of God's laws
- having no hope -
- without God –

Remember what you were. Paul is not asking us to remember in order to make us feel guilty, or weighted down. This is not so that we will move back into the darkness and feel like we owe God a payment for our rescue. Neither do we look back so that we can self-righteously feel smug about ourselves now that we are better off than those who have not yet responded to God's gracious invitation to come to him. No, we look back so that we can rightfully so how rich the grace of God really is. V.8 says that "by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one can boast." What is the gift? Look at the text. What is the gift? The gift is your being saved through faith. Salvation is part of that gift and the faith to believe it is the other part of the gift. He not only accomplished your salvation, he gave you the faith so that you would believe in order for him to apply it to your life. That is how much he loves you! This salvation is so precious that God does not leave anything to chance for it. Remembering what you were then leads us to remembering how God intervened. Your life was a play about hopelessness and wastedness. And God changed the script of your life. God changed the play. Remember God's intervention.

2. **Remember God's Intervention!** (13-15a)

This is the bam clause! Paul is describing our spiritual carjacking by God. In verse 4 Paul tells us what happened theologically. It is called regeneration, or being born again. Being born again is technically not, praying a prayer to ask Jesus into your heart. Being born is something that happens to you, it is not something that you do. Being made alive spiritually, is the moment the Spirit of God breathes life into your cold heart and awakens your desires for Christ. Now, you look upon Christ and love him, and desire him and believe him and trust him. The result of that carjacking is seen in verse 13. "You, who were once far off, have been brought near by the blood of Jesus."

Look at what it took to accomplish this. You have been brought near "by the blood of Christ". This cost, this effort that was made, bringing you near is not a cheap event. The price that was paid to bring you near helps you to understand the infinite value of your salvation. Christ died to bring you near. Now, again, I do not think that Paul is saying this in order to make you feel beaten down by that reality. Yes, it was an incredible price that Christ paid, but as Hebrews says, he did it for the joy that was set before him. Have you ever considered the fact that you are part of the joy that motivated Christ to endure the cross? Bringing you near is so important to him and so satisfying to him, and such a cause for joy, that he looked forward to that while enduring the cross. He knew how seriousness our lostness was. He knew our seriousness our sin was. We still don't realize how enormous of a gap our sins created between us and God. He does. And he bridged that gap.

He was able to accomplish this because "he himself is our peace." (14) We think of peace as the absence of war. However, this peace is so much more than that. This peace is completeness, soundness, wholeness, that is living with God's blessings being poured out upon you. As my people, my flock, my sheep, I want this for you. I prayed for you this week that you would grow in your understanding and experience of this. And that is why I must preach the gospel to you, even though you have believed. Notice the participles here and you see why. He "has made us both one and has broken down...the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments." Some of that does not sound very peaceful. Later in verse 16 he speaks of Christ as "killing the hostility." This peace that you can have with God came as the result of violence. The price of our peace with God was made by the greatest payment, offered by the greatest giver, who paid the greatest price because he was the greatest treasure of infinite worth. Your peace with God was purchased by such a treasure of inestimable value that its affect is of inestimable impact!

So, let's put this together. (14) Christ is our peace, who has made us both one. I take that to mean that both Gentiles (v.11) and Jews (v.11) have been brought together and forged into a new man (the church). The way that this was accomplished was by the death of Christ that fulfilled the law. I believe that this is the Mosaic law that was abused by the Jews to view themselves as being superior to the Gentiles, which contributed to deep-seated hatred and animosity on both sides. At the same time, the Gentiles certainly gave many excuses for this situation by their gross idolatry. Both Jews and Gentiles have been carjacked by God's grace. Both people, who were cut off from Christ because of sin, now are not only brought to Christ, but in coming to Christ, they are coming to each

other. That is the church. Do you see it? God carjacked your life and by grace, through faith he saved you from sin, saved you from hopelessness, saved you from isolation, saved you from no family, saved you from Satan as your father, saved you from despair, saved you from meaningless, saved you from materialism, saved you from empty philosophies, saved you from self-righteousness, save you from worshiping traditions, saved you from wasting your life and saved you to his righteousness, saved you to hope, saved you to his church (our family), saved you to Him as your father, saved you to joy, saved you to significance, saved you to meaning, saved you to truth, saved you to a life of purpose and eternal value because he saved you to his kingdom, along with people from every tribe, language and nation. Look around you and rejoice! In the middle of verse 15 is the purpose clause! “that (now notice the two things that he has purposed to do) he might create in himself one new man in the place of two, so making peace, and (16) might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.” Now, I understand that Paul loves these prepositional phrases. I think that if he were typing at a computer that his fingers could not keep up with this theologically informed enthusiasm. It just seems to pop off the page. But, when you look at those two phrases (that he might create, that he might reconcile) it is obvious that we are to rejoice and enjoy what God is doing through Christ, in the church.

3. **Rejoice in God’s Purpose** (15b-18)

The result was, Jews who had the law, used that as an excuse to be self-righteous. Self-righteous people do not admit their sin, so they reject the Savior. The Gentiles, who did not even have the law, were also without a Savior. These two groups were both enemies of God because of their sin and were enemies of each other. But now, these two, irreconcilable groups have found that in Christ, they are one. In Christ there are not Jews and Gentiles, but sinners who have been rescued; loners who have found a home, former self-righteous and religious snobs who discovered their own shame and discovered the Savior. Out of these two, Christ has made them into one new man. And has reconciled us both to God through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. The death of Christ, killed the hostility that existed between us and God. The death of Christ absorbed, used up the wrath of God against my sin. There is nothing left for me to pay. When, I by faith trust in Christ as my Redeemer and Savior, my sin is removed completely, my guilt is removed completely, and I am credited with his righteousness. This is a soul-changing, life-changing, eternity-shaking event. The reconciliation between you and God is not a “let’s agree to disagree” sort of thing. God does not settle for some lame, let’s just be friends deal. Oh no, now God treats me as his Son. God views me as his own. This infinite God has infinite love that he lavishes upon his children. He is crazy about his kids. Christ’s death killed the hostility. This death of hostility means that it cannot come back. That is why there is such authority in the sermon that Christ preaches. (17) He preached peace to you who were far off – Gentiles and he preached the same thing to those who were near – Jews. Gentiles and Jews are hearing the same thing. Same gospel because the need is the same. Same gospel because the goal is the same. Same gospel because the hope is the same. So get this now, when the hostility between you and God is killed and when the hostility between me and God is killed, when Christ is preaching peace to you and telling you with authority and certainty that you are whole with him and

telling me that I am whole with him, what does that mean for us? That means that we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. That means that your Father is my Father. That means that we are part of the same family. Whoa! What do you do with that? You rejoice in your new citizenship, that's what!

4. **Rejoice in your new Citizenship!** (19-22)

You are no longer strangers or aliens. You belong here! Those are not just words on the door to make you feel good. You belong here because Christ has given you an invitation that is sealed with his blood inviting you to come and take his gift of salvation and live in it. The implications of this are so vast. But, I simply want to leave you with why this is the heart of missions. We, who were slaves, who were guilty, who were homeless, who have found redemption, found justification, and found the Father and his family, are simply telling others, there's room at his table. We go to every nation to tell them to come. We go to every language and tell them to come. We go to every ethnicity and say, the Father wants you and me to be brothers and sisters – forever and ever. And Christ bought that peace!