

Sermon Notes from Pastor Lloyd – 19th June 2022

EPHESIANS 2 - CROSSING THE TWO GREAT DIVIDES

The purpose of God is to save you – utterly and completely for all time. You will live in this body for some 70-plus years but that is only the container of your spirit which God will save for eternity. But guess what that eternity starts now – not when you die. We are living spirits empowered by God's spirit and a living community and the kingdom which is here now and gaining momentum and prominence. My prayer is that we will move from just being saved, with entry into the kingdom, to becoming kingdom people! Jesus was all about the Kingdom. Faith is the currency of the kingdom, grace, and mercy is the culture of the kingdom – that is where this book is going. But before we get there we need to understand something.....where we have come from and how we got here.

I just want to summarise last week quickly....again. So there can be no misunderstanding. I spoke of the two powerful truths from chapter one last week.

1. That God's plan is a **Christian universe** -something that he will bring about that has no direct bearing on you! How He does this we don't know nor fully comprehend, but it will happen. Man's attempts to make this happen have all failed. One day every knee will bow to Jesus and all creation in heaven and earth will come under his kingly reign and authority. I am not a Universalist and I'm not preaching universalism. If I was to do that I would preach just this one truth and not the other which is about our responsibility to share the good news and urge people to be reconciled to God through Jesus.
2. Meanwhile we have been given the task of **bringing in the kingdom** as we preach Jesus and his gospel of reconciliation. There is no let-up on what we have been asked to do because of what God will do! There is a great mandate for us to begin the reign of the Christ-Messiah by telling the story of Jesus.

We have this very human inability to hold two apparently contradictory things in tension, we tend to promote one to the detriment of the other. *We don't like hearing something we cannot control or something that does not fit into the framework of our beliefs.* God would say to us...."You do what I have asked – I will do what I have determined"!

Today's message is about **Enmity, Hostility, and the two Great Divides**. In my life I have been privileged to cross some great divides: The Demilitarised no go zone between north and South Vietnam. Numerous land borders and immigration crossings – with 'no man's land' between! – e.g. India/Bangladesh. Israel's northern border with Syrian and southern border with Egypt. Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin twice – once when the wall was up and another when it was down. But there are two divides that God has crossed that we read about in Ephesians 2.

Between God and us – V1-10

What's wrong with people? **V1- v3** these verses teach us that we have a triple infection by the World, the flesh, and Devil...This has resulted in us being spiritually dead.

When I go to the doctor I usually get three things: – Diagnosis Prognosis Prescription. I think Paul must have gone a few days before he penned these verses....because he comes up with the same three. **Diagnosis** – You have a disease and it's terminal. The gospel message is bad news before it is good news. **Prognosis** – Well it's not good either....unless you do exactly what I say! Without the right intervention, your horizon looks bleak. **Prescription** – I have a treatment plan for you that is amazing....you have nothing to do but receive the medication God has provided. You're a corpse and you're dead – you need resurrection, not education! Have you seen a dead body? Many of us will have done so in a funeral home, some of us may be just after a person has died in a hospital or even at home. But there is something common regardless of the location.... It does nothing!

V1 A corpse cannot hear nor see nor think it **just is!** That's you..... And it is into this condition that God comes to save you. You see we humans have got this thing about always needing to be competent and self-fixing! We want to feel that we discovered the way, made the choice, and improved ourselves. But the Bible says – you are dead in your sin. With no hope of self-improvement or life. *You need help from outside yourself!*

V6 You have been raised with Christ....seated with him. God did it, you didn't! And everything you have is because of Christ – you bought nothing to the party but a corpse! God crossed the great divide and came to your side in the person of Christ. The sooner you realise this the better for you. Because most of us like to think that we can help God with our salvation. That we have something to offer him, our good works, or our compassion, or impress him with our knowledge.....listen you have nothing to give God but a corpse! You want to go toe to toe with God over something – Job tried that over what he felt was unfair treatment and it didn't end well for him. God has bridged the divide....you can add nothing, provide nothing and do nothing to earn it. Just be forever grateful.

Between us and each other – Jew and Gentile v11-13

The greatest no go in all of history was not any of these but the gap between Jew and Gentile. It was a religious divide between the Jew and Gentile...(that's us) The Jew felt chosen and entitled after all they had received the Law, the Prophets, and are his favourites! So the Jew was anti-Gentile. And it was into this that Paul was born and raised.

You Gentiles are aliens and atheists! The closest I've ever felt to being like this is when approaching the entry of a country and the lines have said – that everyone else other than those who hold the passport of that country are aliens or others! Actually, the root meaning of the word atheist is not how we most commonly use it which is 'to not believe there is a God!' The Greek word is *atheoi* which means without *theos*....'without God'. So we Gentiles are without God, without hope, and without a future. But! You are now 'In Christ' and everything Christ has is yours. So now the whole chapter changes from you to we and us!

Then Paul gives three examples of what this looks like *from God's perspective*.

One Blood v14-16 – The whole Old Testament sacrificial system ceased to be at Calvary's cross. Never again could the Jew feel superior or the Gentile feel excluded. Both have one father. Both come to God through Jesus Christ and him only.

In the movie Martin Luther.....there is a scene of the Catholic Superior of the monastery saying to the young monk Luther. 'I hear you want to do away with all the aids to catholic worship, the images, the relics, praying to the saints, all observances...if you do away with all these what will you put in their place?...to which the young monk replied – Jesus Christ'.

He has abolished the Old Testament law and replaced it with himself. Paul would say to the Jew – if you trust in the temple to save you – forget it. If you trust in the Law to save you – forget it. The fact that you are born a Jew with God's covenant no longer will save you. Neither will circumcision nor any other previously commanded ritual or practice. Every benefit that you had been called and chosen by God is now defunct and superseded by Jesus.

To the Gentile believers, Paul would say – you now have access right into God's presence as his chosen family. The great divide has been crossed at Calvary. You too can forget about trying to impress God with your worthiness – you're just a corpse that has been resurrected to new life. One blood puts everyone on the same level Jew and Gentile. It's not your hereditary or your nationality, it's who crossed the great divide to bring you before the Father and bled for you on Calvary.

One Body v17-19 – what does this really mean that we are one body? To say that we come to God by Jesus and this somehow makes us the same....is one thing but to use this picture of 'one body'..... This is getting rather uncomfortable. This is getting very close! I think what Paul is getting at here is not so much about what we call body gifting or ministry gifts as he speaks about in 1 Corinthians 12 but the fact that Christ is the 'head' of the body. And the head calls the shots! The arm or hand does not say to the head – don't move me, ask me to do something! The head is the nerve control center of the body.

For many years I have had problems with the nerves in both feet – they have ceased to function properly and send the right messages to my head where the nerve center is. And as these nerves have gone rogue and got increasingly worse I have had to take a daily medication that tells the head not to listen to my feet! Because my feet are trying to do things independent of the head. So I really understand this. The head controls the body, and the body responds to the orders from the head. So Paul is saying here – there is no such thing as a Jewish Jesus and a Gentile Jesus. We Gentiles have embraced the Messiah...one body. No one is more loved or special than the other. No one with more rights than the other. Both have the same head and control center. We are all in this together. If one part suffers then we all do. If one part succeeds then we all do. If one part grieves then we do that too....you see this is *kingdom living*.

One Building v20-22 – The temple had a sign. 'No Gentiles beyond this point'. You could only go to the outside yard where the money changers were and people bought and sold

animals. But the curtain in the temple was ripped in two when Jesus cried out and took his last breath on the cross. So where was God going to live now that temple worship for the Christian had ceased? God was going to live inside people. This new temple was not made of stone and bricks but the teaching of the Apostles and Prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone. Both Jew and Gentile were going to be built together into one building. A new temple of God where his Holy Spirit would live.

The deepest division of the human race has been dealt with. Differences in worship, culture, economics, and class have been dealt with. Do you now see it, that there is only one difference that really matters anymore, not black vs white, rich vs poor or young vs old, east vs west but whether you are a **believer** in Jesus or not? Whether you have received this gift of life that Jesus offers. It's not a bad deal – you trade in your corpse and you get a new life, with new brothers and sisters, and a new Father and the inbreathing of the Holy Spirit – and it's all because of Jesus.

In v10 Paul finishes the chapter with another illustration from the art world. You are God's Masterpiece – he is creating for the world to see. God is making something remarkable.....*and he has good works for us to do that he planned long ago.* Now here is where it all gets quite difficult.

I've shared with you this morning what it looks like from God's perspective....one blood, one body, and one building.....the great divides have been crossed. **But does it look like this from where we sit?** Is the church of Jesus unified like this in the world? Is the masterpiece God is creating worth seeing – or is it still filled with human jealousies, power-hungry people, and all kinds of fallen-ness?

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Next week I will speak on the topic of **grace**. You will never understand nor appreciate grace until you realise from what you have been saved. You will never be able to live out this new blood, new body, and new building without 'grace'. It could be that grace is the greatest need of God's Church today....more about that next week. Today is the bad news next week is the good news.