

Talk – Ephesians 2:11-22 – Brought near to Christ

Bible Reading/s

Isaiah 66:19-24

Eph 2:11-22

Central Truth

In Jesus - despite, nature, sin or death – we are brought to God.

Purpose

In this sermon, I want my hearers not to fear being separated from God because of what Christ Jesus has done for them.

Outline

My Grandmother

What we once were and now are (2:11-12)

Why we can be confident in what Jesus has done for us (2:13-18)

1. Our nature
2. Our sin
3. Our death

Dwelling with God (2:19-22)

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CHECK TIME

Talk

Prayer

Dear Lord and Father,

Open our eyes and ears to Ephesians 2 and what you have done to bring us near to yourself through Christ.

And by your Spirit, grow us in confidence and faith.

Amen

My Grandmother

- I visited my 97 year old Grandmother in Sydney a few weeks ago.
- I love her dearly.
- She is ailing, and she is scared.
 - She is in a residential home, which is not her home.
 - She has dementia and knows that she can not remember what she used to be able to remember.
 - She keeps losing things – her handbag one day, her walking-stick the next – and she is worried that one day she will forget to get dressed and will walk out of her room and give everyone the fright of their life!
 - She has several physical ailments and takes enough tablets each day to keep the local chemist in business.
 - Each day she has lunch with the other residents – they discuss their medical ailments – by the time they have finished talking about their aches and pains – lunch is cold.
 - Perhaps there are some here who can relate.

 - My grandmother knows Jesus – but she is scared that she will forget him.
 - She worries that she is *no longer good enough*
 - She worries that she will *do the wrong thing*
 - She worries about what will *happen when she dies*

- Our passage today helps us to see that God doesn't forget.
- In fact, what God has done in Jesus gives us every reason to not to be scared.

- Ephesians 2:11-22 is our passage this month
- It reminds us
 - What we once were and now are

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- And it gives us the reasons why we can be confident in what Jesus has done for us.

What we once were and now are (2:11-12)

- So, what we once were.
- Ephesians is written by the Apostle Paul to the church of Ephesus – the city which houses the Temple of Artemis – one of the seven ancient wonders of the world.
- It was built in honour of the Greek goddess Diana – to symbolise success and superiority.
- It was a symbol of everything that was good and bad about humanity – power, wealth, prestige, yet surrounding it gathered the prostitutes of the day.
- And it was to this city that the Apostle Paul spend three years of his life church planting – proclaimed the gospel – and many Gentiles gave their lives to Christ.
- In Ephesians 2:11 Paul reminds them of their citizenship.
- He says: ‘remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and ‘uncircumcised’.
- Over the last few months – several federal MP’s have been questioned about their citizenship. Although all have lived in Australia for many years and all have Australian passports, it turns out that formerly they were not Australian by birth.
- Perhaps those politicians might be able to relate to the point Paul makes here in Chapter 2.
- Paul says you are Gentiles – those from the uncircumcised – in other words you are not a Jew you are not of the circumcised bunch.
 - The politics of that day said that Gentiles were not privy to many of the privileges that the Jews (as the OT people of God) were privy too.
 - Why would that be of a concern to those of this secular city?
- Look what comes next in verse 12 – Paul describes something much more concerning than a citizenship issue – he describes a spiritual issue.
- Verse 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.’*
- That does not sound too promising.
- If I was to walk up to Hindley Street and ask a passer-by ‘Are you concerned that you may be separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship with the people of God and a foreigner to the covenant of the promise – I am pretty sure that most would be completely unfussed. They may not know what I was talking about – and they certainly won’t know why it mattered?’

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- Yet, if walked into the cancer ward of the new Royal Adelaide and asked any of the terminal patients there ‘are you concerned you are separate from Christ, without hope and without God in the world’ – then I would not be surprised if the response was more open even if a little fearful.
- What Paul is reminding the Ephesian Christians is that at one time they were lost, but now they are found – now they are saved.

Why we can be confident in what Jesus has done for us (2:13-18)

- That is good news. That is comforting news.
- The second part of the passage goes onto to describe why these Ephesian Christians can be so confident that they are saved.
- Verse 13 *‘But now, in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ’.*
- There are many reasons why a person can be far away from God.
- Let me give you three.
 1. We can be far away because of **our nature** – no one on this side of puberty would say that they were perfect.
 - I have a twelve year old son – I keep thinking I should give him a job, now while he still knows everything! – No one on this side of puberty would say that they were perfect.
 - and this presents a problem for all people because like it or not, our fallen nature makes us incompatible with the perfect God.
 - our very being is out of step with God and as such far away from God.
 2. We can be far away because of **our sin** – that is anything we do which goes against that which pleases God.
 - you don’t need a whipper snapper like me to tell you what sin is and what it has done at times to your relationship with God (and others).
 - suffice to say, the more you sin the more distance you feel from God.
 3. We can be far away because of **our death**.
 - if God is the creator, giver, sustainer of life and is the author of eternal life – then death creates a dividing line that needs to be dealt otherwise a person will be far away from God.
- What Paul does is show that what Jesus gloriously did, was bring those who were far away – be it by *nature*, *sin* or impending *death* – he brought near.

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- He did it by having the perfect *nature*, living without *sin*, and *dying* in our place – it was by the blood of Christ.

- Look at what Paul says Jesus achieved...
 - He brings peace - Verses 14-18
 - Where there was once division between Jews and Gentiles – he has brought the two groups together.
 - He gives reasons for Jews and Gentiles to come together – physically and spiritually.
 - The Jewish Temple had a wall around it which separated it from what is known as the ‘court of the gentiles’
 - It separated the holy people of God from the unholy people of the other nations.
 - When Jesus died, he died for all – and so there was no reason to divide the Jews from the Gentiles.
 - By *nature* in Christ they were brought together

 - But there was also the law, with its commandments and regulations.
 - The Jews had been given that 10 commandments – so they would know what sin was and what it was not.
 - Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly and then died the penalty of the law so that there would no longer be a case to answer and no longer consequences to experience.
 - Christ reconciled *sin* in both Jew and Gentile through the cross and in doing so created a new humanity.

 - And then, there was the problem of death - and the fact that there is no life after death unless you are with the living God.
 - Jesus came and preached the answer – through him and only through him would both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father *after death*.
 - Jesus brought a new relationship – and one for all time.

Application

- My grandmother worries that she is *no longer good enough* – she doesn’t have to be – Jesus has it covered
- She worries that she will *do the wrong thing* – she will (we all do), but Jesus has it covered.
- She worries about *what will happen when she dies* – she doesn’t need to fret – Jesus went before her.

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- She may forget her faith – but what Jesus has done for her means that God will not forget her.

Dwelling with God (2:19-22)

- Our passage finishes by painting a picture of what it looks like to be with Christ – in verses 19-22
 - The language is all about being God’s people, with him in his place, in Christ.
 - No longer foreigners, no longer aliens
 - Instead fellow citizens with God’s people
 - Members of his household
 - Part of a building, a holy temple built upon the teachings of the OT prophets (Ie Isaiah which was read) and the NT apostles (like this letter from Paul) – with Christ as the main feature.
 - And together – being the place in which God is pleased to dwell.
 - Sounds like heaven

Application

- Friends don’t be scared in faith.
 - Friends don’t be scared in faith.
 - Please, don’t be scared in faith.

- Our residential home is with Christ

Closing Prayer

Prayer – written by a previous rector here Reg Piper – and based on Eph 2:11-22

Praise be to you, O God,

For sending Christ to preach eternal peace

On the grounds of his death.

Thank you for creating us to be your new humanity,

your holy nation, your family and your temple in which your Spirit dwells.

Thank you that whether Jew or Gentile,

We are one people together in Christ

With access by one Spirit

To you, the one God and Father of all.

Help us to live up to this calling. Amen.

R. Piper, *Ephesus and the New Humanity* (Sydney South: APA, 2010), 44