

Fitted Together
Ephesians 2:19-22

1 Peter 1:1-21

1 Peter 1:22- 1 Peter 2:12

Responsive Psalm 46

This morning we are going to be picking up at verse 19 where Paul begins to build upon what it means to be united together in Christ. Previously Paul made the statement reminding the believers to whom he is writing that they were once outsiders, they were once without hope because the revelation of the coming Messiah was given to the Jews, they had the ordinances, the traditions, the rituals the law, all these things given to them by God to reveal to them both their necessity for the coming messiah, and the nature and reality of his arrival. But now he has come, and that wall of separation has been torn down and his glories and mercies have been revealed to all, so that all may know him, and believe. So where previously in what we looked at last week Paul was reminding them to remember where they came from, reminding them of this separation, in our passage this morning he is focusing upon the currently reality of their life in this promised one, in Christ.

So let us go ahead this morning and read our passage, but lets go ahead and start back at verse 11, and read through to 22. These believers to whom Paul is writing, are no longer outsiders, but are indeed sons and daughters, heirs of the blessings from the most high God. Christ abolished both the wall of separation between then Jew and the Gentile, and between God and Man, creating a way of access to God only through himself so that any and all who would have access to God must come through him, and him alone. There is no other way of salvation, no other way of justification except by Christ, and it is not of ourselves but of his work which has been applied to our account. Therefore we are all no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

All who believe upon Christ are no longer what they once were, but in him have become something completely and entirely new. AS believers in Christ we have not been merely patched into what once was, by that I mean, we have not been patched into the physical nation of Israel, what God has created in his Son, is a new nation of believers, made up of both Jew and Gentile, from all walks of life, throughout all time. WE have not been merely patched in, but are actually the promised fulfillment of what came before. In the last few verses here of chapter 2 Christ is called the corner stone. The corner stone is the first stone that is laid by which all other stones are laid, it is the guide stone, it is the one that sets forth the trajectory of all others, and it being the first stone, is the stone that all others are built upon. Christ is the cornerstone of his church in which is united together in his body, by his death, burial and Resurrection. He is the cornerstone of the all believers, the first born among the dead, in whom we have a hope of glory, and share in the resurrection into a new life. So now, both Jews and Gentiles can become a members of the same family, with no separation, having our identity in this new birth, this new creation being found in Christ and the work that he has done on our behalf on the cross.

In verse 19, as we often do as we read through scripture we see the term, therefore. This is a term used to bring about a conclusion....I had said all of these things, which are true, therefore, this thing is also true. The conclusion that Paul gets to here is that reality of oneness in Christ, he says that we were outsiders, foreigners and strangers. This was the terminology that the Jews used for Gentiles, all who lived in foreign lands, outside of Israel were foreigners, outsiders, and those non-Jews who lived in is real, were considered strangers, because again they were cut off, and outside, the blessings of Israel, but now, because of Christ Gentiles are no longer outsiders but have become recipients of these same promises.

No longer are we foreigners and strangers, but citizens of a new eternal nation built upon Christ, who is the cornerstone of this new creation. So now Paul refers to his readers as fellow citizens, a term that stands as polar opposite to the strangers and foreigners. This new standing, is found again in Christ, who has made something new, so that all who believe in him are set apart ones who are near, and all who do not believe are the foreigners and strangers. We have now become citizens with the saints, we have become these set apart ones who are now members of the household of God. And we have not been made merely servants within this household, but sons and daughters, and heirs of the kingdom. The new birth has granted us citizenship in the kingdom of God, as God's children. Though we are yet in this body, on this earth, we are merely travelers and sojourners here for heaven has become our true home and we are just awaiting the day when we may enter in.

It is an interesting transaction that takes place in the new birth, we become foreigners in our own land, and citizens of a foreign land, a promised land of which we await, much like the israelites, the journey in this life, is our 40 years in the dessert, full of difficulties and struggles, as we are making our way to the promised land. This life is full of struggles and temptations, and sometimes we fall into them, but unlike the Israel of old, we have the perfect sacrifice, the eternal lamb of God who came to wipe away the debt of sin, once and for all. The fulfillment of those sacrifices in the temple has come who has made the way for us to be a part of the family of God, as scripture calls it, the true Israel, the offspring of Abraham by faith.

What this means is there is no second class citizens in the kingdom of God, there is no division based on any economy of faith, or tradition, or lineage. All have been made one in God, equal before him, adopted as sons and daughters of the most high God. If there were to be any hierarchy among the children of God, it would be Christ as the first born, and we who come after. but Christ is not a selfish heir, but instead shares his kingdom with all of us, we are partakers of his inheritance and we have been made one in him. In this family of God, there is no strangers and outsiders, many dwelled in Israel who were not the physical descendants of Abraham, but in God's Israel all are members of his household through his adoption of us as his children.

All those who are in Christ are citizens of heaven, children of the almighty God therefore we are to treat one another as such. WE are all equals before God, each with our own roles and purposes which play our in our lives as we fulfill the work that God has given, as Paul says in verse 10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." . God views us all as members of his eternal family, bought for by the blood of Jesus, our citizenship in the promised land, and our family ties to one another are one in the same. We as believers hold the same status before God, lost sinners, adopted and freed from the debt of sin which we could not pay, So there is a call to treat one another with a love that sometimes defies humanities understanding of love. There is a sort of familial obligation in that love. By that I mean, we one one level understand the concept of loving our own familys, sometimes family members can be some of the most difficult relationships to deal with, family members tend to hurt us more, but there is a seemingly unbreakable bond that ties families together, an innate understanding of that bond, so we often sacrifice beyond what we normally would for family, we tolerate things from our family members that we would most likely not tolerate from friends, and yet we strive to look past those things because as the old saying goes, blood runs thicker then water.

It should not be any different in the family of God. Though we are citizens of heaven, joint heirs with Christ in the kingdom, that day has not been fully realized and we are still yet in this flesh, we are still yet held down and tainted by sin, and just like our earthly family, sometimes we can hurt one another, sometimes we can cause pain to one another, but we should always seek reconciliation and forgiveness because that is what defines a family over all other relationship types. And this should be even more so in the family of God, for we are not left to our own devices but have the indwelling of the holy spirit which convicts us, who guides us, and who should be causing us to seek that forgiveness and reconciliation. As Christians we should probably be the most apologetic of all people, and likewise the most forgiving, for God has forgiven us of so much, how should we hold anything against our brothers and sisters, who has likewise been forgiven by God. Who are we to withhold forgiveness, when God himself does not? Again we are one family, each of us had our adoption fee paid for by blood, the forgiveness we have been given required a death, required the death of the perfect and holy one, if God has given his Son to suffer and die so that we may become sons and daughters, if he has given his Son to suffer and die on the cross so that we may be forgiven, should we who are in Christ not also do the same for fellow brothers and sisters?

We who are in Christ are one, fellow citizens of the promised land, built together to become the household of God in which, as Paul says in verse 20, has been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. We touched on this a bit last week, explaining that the corner stone is that piece by which all others are built upon, it is that piece by which directs the rest of the building, that first piece which guides the placement of all others. And on top of that has been built the ministry of the apostles and prophets. God did not choose to build his church from the foundation of Israel, but instead has built a new foundation upon Christ and the apostles, along with the prophets which foretold of this coming new structure. Recorded in the book of John Jesus said, Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in 3 days. He was of course speaking of his own body, the disciples asked for a sign to prove his authority and he foretold of his death and resurrection. But in that death, burial and resurrection the temple was indeed destroyed, the law and traditions fulfilled, and in him something new was made. The old ways have passed away, and God through his Son has made all things new. And this faith, this family of adopted outcasts and foreigners who have been brought near, is built upon Christ, not the law, is built upon Christ, no traditions, is built upon Christ, not ancestry.

So again it becomes clear, that without Christ there is no salvation or reconciliation before God, for all things which came before pointed to this reality, and now we in our time look back to the cross, to what Christ has done for us. We don't look to the law, and the prophets, but we look to the one to which they spoke, we look to the one in which they have been all fulfilled. The church of God rests upon the revealed scripture, the recorded accounts, and written word of those who have seen, and who know Jesus. The foundation of Christianity stands upon the writings of the apostles and prophets who represent Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of this new body of believers made from both Jew and Gentile, from all peoples, throughout all of time. We who are of Christ are not tied to the old Israel, those laws, have no bearing upon us today, for in Christ God has created a new Israel, a spiritual Israel, a chosen people to the praise and glory of God. Therefore all things flow from Christ, all things are built upon him, and the words of the apostles and prophets testify to his work, and to his glory, so that we may know him, so that we may believe.

In verse 21 we who are in Christ can find ourselves, we are those whom he has built together into the holy temple of God, the nation of God, the people of God. Not only did Christ die, and raise again to a new life, not only has God put away the old things and fulfilled all of them in the new, he has done the same for us in the new birth, for we have died with Christ, our sins having been paid so that we may live in Christ, a new creature, a new creation, created for his Glory, and it is of these people that God has built his church. Each and every one of us today who is in Christ are a member of this heavenly body, Paul has used a few descriptors here to show our status before God, we are likened as children, we are called brothers and sisters of Christ, all who are in Christ are called the family of God, but he also says that we are the church, we are the holy temple of God, in whom he dwells. Paul says that we are each a part of this building, and we are being fitted together, this is intentional. We are not all here this morning because of some haphazard circumstances, but each and every one of us gather here to worship together because God has fitted us together.

Understanding how God works in and through a local body of believers would change how many perceive their ministry. So much emphasis is put upon the growing of the local church body that other important pieces of the ministry can be ignored, or at the very least sort of relegated to a back seat. But if we understand that it is God who adds, that it is God who has fitted us all together it can change our outlook and our mindset of what our own local expression of the body of Christ can and should look like. But the local body is only one aspect as well, for there is the universal church, the believers from all over the world, across all of time that God is working to call to himself. Each one who come to Christ is another block being fitted into the temple of God, that he is building for himself. He is the great architect, and builder who knows the beginning and end, he is the chief cornerstone which is the foundation that holds us all together, and it is in him, and him alone in which we all share through the redemption of his blood.

In the last verse of this chapter, we get an image of this holy temple that God is building, and that image harkens back to the temple of the old covenant, which was a type, an example of many things and one of those things I believe it was an example of was the lives of those who are in Christ. The temple was the dwelling place of God while the Israelites were in the wilderness, he was with them, in the inner chamber, and now God is with us, in the inner chamber of our heart, and he has built us into a dwelling place for himself through the new birth. If you are a follower of Christ, one for whom he has died to cover your sins, then you are the dwelling place of God in the spirit.

On commentator I read on this verse said that since we are each dwelling places of the holy spirit of God, when we gather, when we visit, when we socialize we are in the presence of God. We can get that also from Matthew 18, which also states, when two or more are gathered God is there. The commentator posed the challenge stating how would we act, or treat one another differently knowing that we are in the presence of God. If every believer has the presence of God in the holy spirit indwelling in them, we should act and treat one another as such. This should be the cornerstone of all of our relationships with our Christian brothers and sisters, with our believing spouse, our children, our parents, our friends, our fellow congregation. Remember the account in Luke, when Mary who was pregnant with Jesus, visited her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the baptist and he said that the baby John leaped for joy in his mothers womb at the sound of Mary's greeting.

There should be a level of that in each of us, a sense of joy and comfort when the people of God gather together, rejoicing first and foremost in the one who has brought us together, who has fitted us together in him so that we may be the local expression of his body, a ministry to the world around us, and a light in the darkness of sin and despair, and we should find joy, and hope in this gathering, we should find joy and hope in our fellowship together, we should find joy and hope when we are in the presence of others believers. For it is God who has fitted us together, in him, to be his holy temple, a dwelling place and there is no chance or random happenstance in his building, we all serve a purpose for his glory, we all serve a role in his family, and we are all a member of his temple, and as we go about our daily lives interacting with one another we should see and know this reality, that God is with us, and that we have been fitted together for his purpose. Knowing this, and living out this reality as the ability to change our relationships with one another, it is why we can forgive one another when the world would not, it is why we can love one another in a way that does not make sense to those who are outside of Christ, because we each have the spirit of God working in us, and we each know and understand that the spirit of God is working in one another, and that we are each a part of the body of Christ, so we should conduct ourselves, and act as those who are just that, one body in Christ, fitted together for his glory.