Ephesians 2:19-22

One Holy Household – part 1

Sermon

In the summer of 2008, the Lord was stirring in the hearts of both Lorrie and I. We felt as though the Lord was calling us to make a move. We lived in California at the time…but God had given us the desire to go to a new destination and to embark on a journey. We both had this excited, scared, but strong inclination to GO OUT. There were several verses of Scripture at the time that were leading us. One of the verses was in the book of Romans. I was attending Bible College at the time and teaching through Romans to a group of men when I came to **Romans 15:20**:

> **thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation. (Rom. 15:20)**

Paul didn't want to build on another's work. ***Some are called to build where others are called to plant.*** God was moving within Paul to start a fresh work. That gifting of Paul was confirmed by the revelation of many others around Paul (Acts 13:1-3) and by the revelation that was given to him directly by Jesus. After fasting and praying over Paul and Barnabas they "***sent them off***".

Some people are given a particular gifting of God to envision starting something new. They have this sense that they are being "sent". It was about two years later that Lorrie and I packed up a Budget rental truck and made a huge step of faith. Not knowing what God was going to do. Fast forward sixteen years after our move to the Midwest, and we are starting a new work here in the area of Trevor, Wisconsin. God has led us every step of the way. I can give you example after example of ways that God has led us to this. God is still building His church today. He calls and confirms and equips His people through His Word, through the counsel of others, ***through your gifting and through the gifting of others***.

Ephesians teaches us that God has a plan…and you are a part of that plan. You're not a passive bystander. God reconciled you to Himself to send you back out. His plan is to reconcile all things everywhere that have been turned upside down through the fall – heavenly and earthly things (Eph. 1:10). The gospel is God's solution to everything in the universe that has been distorted – God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish in hell but have eternal life (John 3:16)…He sent His Son to die on the cross for sin, reconciling us to God. He then rose again from the grave conquering death, and shortly after ascended to His heavenly throne, from where He fills the church, so that the church might spill over onto all things as a force of reconciliation while we wait for His return when He will establish His eternal kingdom. Ephesians paints this gospel picture with very broad strokes. We saw in chapter 1 a heavenly vision of Jesus seated at the right hand of God, and filling the church with all that it needs to fill the earth. This is what God is doing today during this age of the church:

> **And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:22-23)**

The reconciled church, becomes a force of reconciliation as Jews and Gentiles, formerly hostile to one another, are now at peace with one another and with God. Here in 2:19-22 we see that both Jews and

Gentiles are a part of a household (Paul uses "household" and "union" terminology in this passage) where each member is connected intimately to one another.

Let me ask you a question. What does "church growth" look like to you? When some of us met in our home a year ago I consistently used a word to describe what real church growth for RR Trevor looks like – FAMILY. Church growth looks like what every family ought to look like…a close-knit family with Jesus at the center of everything. A place where you can laugh together, cry together, work together, learn together, struggle together. A place of trust, support, unity, and vulnerability. It takes an investment of time - you can't be a family once a month or even once a week. It takes commitment. This is a big vision…my family and I moved here to see it realized. May God make it happen.

Here in 2:19-22 – there is a holy household that's made up of three things: 1) a cornerstone, 2) a foundation, and 3) a household that is being built on top. This week we're going to look at the cornerstone and foundation of the church, next week we'll do part two and look at the building itself. Let's see the cornerstone and foundation in our text:

> **So then** [or "consequently"…Paul is giving the glorious result of the peace he wrote about between Jew and Gentile and both to God in vv.11-18] **you are no longer strangers and aliens** [The word "stranger" is used of a foreigner] **but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [**Formerly foreigners, but now fellow citizens! Jews and Gentiles, every tribe, tongue, nation, living together, worshipping together. The church is meant to be the closest institution on the planet – a household of God!] **[20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.**

Let's look first at the cornerstone…

1. The Cornerstone – Jesus Christ

The cornerstone: Definition: The cornerstone was the "stone lying at the extreme corner" of a structure. It was the first stone that was laid for any building. Not only was it to provide structural stability, but it was intended to provide a reference point for everything else that was built around it or on top of it – otherwise the house would be built incorrectly.

Jesus as the cornerstone – OT: Two places in particular that are very important are **Isaiah 28:16** and **Psalms 118:22**. Paul is most likely referring here to Isaiah 28:16 because the word he uses for "cornerstone" is the same word used in the LXX version of Isaiah 28:16. Paul also uses this word in 1 Peter 2:6 where Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16 directly.

> **Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone** [same word in LXX], **of a sure foundation (Isaiah 28:16)**

In Psalm 118:22, which is a messianic Psalm, the stone that was rejected (Jesus was rejected) became the cornerstone. God has laid a stone, it is a precious cornerstone, it is a sure foundation – everything is meant to be built on or in reference to the cornerstone. He is the most important part of the structure.

Jesus is the cornerstone of every church: Church, I know that this seems extremely obvious – but Jesus needs to be kept at the center of this church. It's actually quite easy for us to lose sight of this. Everything we do must be in reference to and in line with Him. He is our plumbline. If we go, we go to bring Jesus to others. If we meet, Jesus is at the center of our discussion. When we preach, we preach Christ and Him crucified. When we read Scripture, we look for Him on every page. When we serve, we serve with the energy that He provides. When we sin, we go to Him for cleansing. When we are discouraged, as the songs says, "our hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

Jesus is the cornerstone of your life: Just as a church is really not a church without Jesus in it, a Christian is not a Christian without Christ as their cornerstone. A cornerstone was the most important stone of the building – without the cornerstone, there is no stability, everything is out of line. Is your life stable, or are things out of line? Where have you positioned Jesus in your life? Is He your cornerstone, or a separate stone added on top of everything else? Like a house addition project…Jesus added on. Jesus doesn't want to be an ***addition*** to your life, Jesus wants ***to be the most important structural stone.*** He doesn't want to be positioned second, third, fourth…He must be FIRST. ***Paul put it this way in Gal. 2:20***:

> **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)**

Paul viewed his old life as gone…there was only Jesus now. Jesus will have the cornerstone slot in your life, and until He does, your life will remain unstable. Paul's new identity was redefined as "Christ lives in me!". Is Jesus the cornerstone in your parenting? In your calendar? In the stewarding of your finances? In your mornings, days, and evenings? A disciple is someone who leaves their former life in order to follow their master. Think of Peter and Andrew – they had their former lives as fishermen, but then Jesus came and changed that:

> **And He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." [20] Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. (Matt. 4:19-20)**

Their lives were redefined. Every church must have Jesus as the cornerstone. He defines the structure, He provides the baseline, He is the key reference point that every wall is built upon and in line with. A strong household is built in line with the cornerstone.

Now let's look at the foundation…

2. The Foundation – apostles and prophets

Paul says here that this household is ***"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (2:20).*** Notice that the foundation in 2:20 is not Jesus, because Jesus is the cornerstone. In 1 Corinthians 3:11 the foundation is Jesus.

> **For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11)**

Paul is talking about doctrine in 1 Corinthians 3. The *doctrine* of Jesus is foundational. However, here in Ephesians 2:20 Paul is talking about a household built of *persons*. So the "apostles and prophets" are gifted individuals who are foundational to the building of the church.

Let's first look at an "apostle" as foundational to the church…

The word "apostle" means "one who is sent. The "*office*" of an Apostle was for those who were specifically commissioned by Jesus to proclaim the gospel in oral form (preaching and proclaiming) and written form (all of the NT was written by an apostle or someone who received the message from an apostle). Also, the apostles were to share their personal witness to the resurrection of Jesus. In Acts 1:21 after the betrayal of Judas, Peter gave the qualification to fill the office of Judas as an apostle. He quoted the OT "let another take his office" and then gave the criteria – they needed to be someone who had been with Jesus from the beginning and who had witnessed the resurrection personally. Paul was also an apostle as one "untimely born" (1 Cor. 15:8) because he witnessed the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6) and he would have to defend his apostleship to the Gentiles throughout his ministry (Gal. 2:8). In 1 Corinthians 9:1 he asks the rhetorical question – "*am I not an apostle, have I not seen the Lord".* In 2 Corinthians he gives evidence after evidence of the "*signs of an apostle*" that he bore (2 Cor. 12:12).

The "*office*" of an Apostle is no longer an office today because the Scriptures have already been written and there are no more witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. Many believe, however, that the apostolic gifting is still in operation today. This is because there are others in the NT who are spoken of as apostles who did not fit the criteria of the "*office*" of apostle but were "sent out" with a specific task. Also, in two of the lists given of spiritual gifts, "*apostle*" is included:

> **And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers" (Eph. 4:11)**.

These are leadership giftings given by Jesus to equip the saints for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ. We also see the gift of an apostle listed among the spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:

> **And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers…" (1 Cor. 12:28)**

These passages are also important because while "apostles and prophets" are often grouped together and some lump them into the same "office", the lists in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 show that they are separate giftings.

Barnabas is called an apostle in Acts 14:14. Epaphroditus is described by Paul as "fellow soldier, and your messenger (αποστολος) and minister to my need (Phil. 2:25). Titus and the brothers sent to Corinth are called "αποστολοι" (2 Cor. 8:23). None of these were with Jesus from the beginning nor did they witness the resurrection in person. Also, the church of the second century still used the title of "apostle" for those who would travel abroad from church to church. In one of the earliest known church documents called the *Didache* (chapters 11,13), there are criteria given for whether or not an "apostle" or a "prophets" ministry should be received into the church and given church support.

While it's clear that the office of an apostle is no longer a valid office (no one can claim that they are an apostle in the sense that Peter and Paul were) it's also clear that God is still sending people

out today with what you might call an apostolic gifting. Many are nervous using the word apostle because of the importance to distinguish the "office" of an apostle. Nevertheless, regardless what word you use, we see this in missionaries who are "sent out" to distant lands where the gospel has not been taken. We also see this with church planting.

It takes a visionary, apostolic type of mentality to church plant. Church planting is a lot like farming. It's not glamorous work. There is a lot of plowing. A cart rolled to its destination, a seat situated in the proper location. A lot of scattering of seed. There is a ton of sweat with no immediate yield of crop. Not far from here are churches that have already sprouted, they have a beautiful building, a lot of programs and ministries that have been brought to fruition. But that didn't come from nowhere. Someone had to plant and plow and water and wait. There is nothing glamorous about setting up and tearing down every week. But we do it because we have a vision – we have a vision of God building a household of God. So we farm, we plow, we work, the vision is glorious, but it's hard work. I just want to encourage you not to give up. Think of what this church might become years from now. Think of the reward and blessing that will come from the work we are now doing together! Many of you are together with me, and our hands are to the plow. I thank God for every one of you. I'll share with you two verses that God has constantly brought to my remembrance:

> **So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. (1 Cor. 3:7)**
>
> **No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:62)**

Now let's consider the second foundational individual, the "prophet" …

There are two types of prophetic giftings in Scripture: **forthtelling and foretelling**. We see both working through the OT prophets. At times they spoke forth truth (forthtelling) – they spoke forth God's known revelation concerning the law or concerning something God wanted to specifically say to His people. Other times, a prophet predicted events that would come to pass (foretelling). We see foretelling in the NT as well with Agabus (Acts 21:10-11) when he predicted the imprisonment of Paul. Philips daughters are called prophetesses (Acts 21:9). It's also included as a gift of the Spirit. Again, the Didache also included ways to determine if someone who visited the church was a true or false prophet.

When Paul mentions the prophet as foundational here, he is speaking of the C-hurch universal that is made up of Jews and Gentiles. The prophetic revelation given to Paul and others was foundational for the building of the C-hurch. In chapter 3 Paul will talk about this revelation of the mystery given to him from God that God's grace would be extended not only to the Jews but to the Gentiles as well. **Glance over at 3:4-6**:

> **When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, [5] which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. [6] This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Eph. 3:4-6)**

Paul was a prophet in that he received new revelation from God concerning the gospel spreading to the Gentiles. So prophecy was foundational to the building of the Jew/Gentile household of God.

Some see prophecy today as no longer a valid gifting because the Scriptures have already been written and therefore prophecy is no longer needed. I agree that the Scriptures are complete and there is no "new revelation" given as Scripture – again, there are no more apostles who were commissioned to write the Scriptures. But the gifting of prophecy appears in Scripture to be more than receiving new revelation. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul speaks of the gift of prophecy as a gifting that we should "eagerly desire" to receive from God (14:1,31) and to be used publicly in the church because it edifies, builds up, and encourages the entire church body (14:3-5,24-25). He speaks of prophecy as a "forthtelling", a proclaiming of God's word to the church.

Many of you have experienced this as I have. Someone in a small group, or someone you meet for coffee, or a preacher getting up to preach speaks something that strikes your heart in a very prophetic, powerful way. It's as if the person was speaking directly TO YOU. Maybe there was a time when YOU sensed God speaking directly THROUGH YOU? You had a STRONG inclination to share something with someone and even as you spoke it was as if God were speaking through you. This is more than information, or teaching, it's as if the person knew your very thoughts or the secrets of your heart when they spoke. Maybe you've experienced someone speaking a truth into your life that would later come to pass. ***I don't want to limit that God can still do this today! We see it in the early church, we see it in the church of the second century (The Didache), we see it in the lists of spiritual giftings, I don't see in the Bible anywhere that would definitively claim this gift has ceased to be. Most importantly, I've experienced this in my own life.***

I'll close with this. I mentioned earlier God confirming us coming here to the Midwest. When we first moved here, the question burning on my heart was, "Ok God…we're here. What now?" One of the verses that God gave to me around that time was Isaiah 54:2 – "*Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes*." God was essentially saying that He wanted me to plant myself and my family firmly here in this area. But also to stretch out our influence into the broader area of the Chicagoland. To meet people, to influence people, and to wait on the Lord for the work He was calling me to. Weeks after receiving that very obscure passage of Scripture (not a well-known passage) I was at a Calvary Chapel conference in Blue Island IL. and one of the pastors from Southern California, Mike Macintosh came to share. At the very end of his message he said, "I feel like the Lord has a word here for someone. I'm not sure who this is for…and he then quoted Isaiah 54:2." That is just one example of the way God has used the gift of prophecy in my life. You can't tell me that was coincidental.

Brothers and sisters…live like God is able to speak to you and through you. Eagerly desire that you may prophecy and do not despise prophecy (1 Thess. 5:20). Look for people daily to whom you can speak a word of encouragement, edification, conviction. Be readily available for God to speak through you and to you from others. When you come to church…be ready to hear a fresh word from God. When you meet that sister for coffee or at a women's bible study – be ready! God just may speak to you there and reveal something specific that is for you personally.

Here's my encouragement for us church: Don't give up the vision of this church, and b**e open to God speaking *<u>to you</u>* through others. And be open to God speaking *<u>through you</u>* to others.**

Finally, is Jesus the cornerstone of your life? Are there areas where Jesus isn't the cornerstone – if there are, recommit those areas to Him this morning. For those who have never made a decision to follow Jesus…you need to fall upon the stone. The Bible says that you will either fall upon the stone,

Jesus, or He will fall upon you and crush you when you face the Judgment of God. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day rejected the cornerstone…He became "*a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense*" (1 Pet. 2:8). Don't make the same mistake. Are you ready to fall upon the cornerstone? The Bible says that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. God sent Jesus, His only Son to die on the cross for sin and to rise again conquering death. We can know that we have eternal life through putting our faith in Jesus. Will you fall upon Him this morning. I'm going to pray now, and if that's you, and the Spirit of God is speaking to you this morning…don't leave here without surrendering your life to Him.

Pray

Connection Group Questions

The following questions are to help facilitate discussion within our connection groups. Feel free to use any or all of them for your group time together.

- Read Ephesians 2:11-22 together.
- What was something from the sermon that stuck out to you?
- Have you or someone you know ever stepped out in faith to do something big for the Lord? What was the outcome?
- Read Ephesians 2:20, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, and Romans 15:20. What is the context of each passage and how does that effect the understanding of the word "foundation"?
- Read Acts 1:21, 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, and 1 Corinthians 9:1 - what are the criteria for an Apostle in these passages? Are there other apostles mentioned in Scripture that don't fit this criteria? (See Acts 14:14)
- Read Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. What might an apostolic gifting look like today?
- Read 1 Corinthians 14:3-5,24-25 - does prophecy only include foretelling the future? What might the gift of prophecy look like today?
- Have you ever had someone speak to you in such a way where it felt as though God were speaking through them? Have you ever sensed God speaking through you?
- Read Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22. Why does Scripture give the image of Jesus as a cornerstone? Do you feel that Jesus is the cornerstone of your life? Where in your life does Jesus need to be made the cornerstone once again?