Ephesians 2:19-22

One Holy Household – Part 2

Sermon

Ark: Our family this summer traveled to Kentucky to see the Ark Encounter (you can see it on the screen). This is a full-scale replica of the Ark with its actual dimensions laid out in the Genesis account of the flood. The experience was breathtaking. But something else that really struck me was the glorious diversity that was represented by all of the visitors from all over the world. Every tribe, tongue, language, and nation – all gathered together, all smiling at one another, all very different and yet united under one cause – the gospel of Jesus Christ as told through the flood account in Genesis. ***It makes me think of the heavenly scene that John gives us in Revelation 5 of an ethnically mixed group of people, all diverse, and yet such unity as they were all gathered together to worship the one true and living God!***

The book of Ephesians is about God's very big plan to build something glorious. He plans to reconcile all things that are hostile from the fall – things in heaven and things on earth. We see a summary of God's plan in Ephesians 1:10 –

> **a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Eph. 1:10)**

It is the Father's plan/decree, it is accomplished by the Son, and it is applied to God's children by the Spirit.

First, God changes our status from "dead to God", to "made alive to God" (2:1-10). Secondly, God reconciles us to one another. The former hostility between Jews and Gentiles and both to God is abolished through Jesus. God creates one new people from a multitude of people groups. He places them into the body of Christ. And the church becomes a "living organism" that is growing - reconciled individuals now reconciled to one another. God views this "living organism" as a "household" that becomes a "temple".

Let's look at the passage starting in v.19 –

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens [the word "alien" carries the idea of a "foreigner who lived in their midst. When a foreign student comes to school in America, they reside here, but they are "resident foreigners".], ***but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*** [there is the word in English – "household" – this word was used of blood relatives. Kin. Family.], ***[20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*** [the foundation and cornerstone are "built". We looked at the foundation and cornerstone that is already built last week] ***[21] in whom the whole structure*** [again household language is used with the word "structure" – Paul is consistently using household type language in Greek.], ***being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.*** [the foundation and cornerstone are laid, but the house is *being built* and *is growing* into a temple] ***[22] In him you also are being built together*** ["being built together" or a house that is "with-built" a single compound word showing the close connection of the parts that are being built together. Again, household language is used here.] ***into a dwelling place*** [again, household

language – Paul is speaking of the "house of God" the temple, the dwelling place…] ***for God by the Spirit*****. (2:19-22)**

God is building a "family", a "household" and Paul consistently uses household language to describe it. The foundation and cornerstone has been laid, but the structure is still being built to this day. It is being made into a suitable house for God to dwell in and through it to display His glory.

God has always built a place for His people and dwelt with them. For Adam and Eve He created a garden and dwelt with them. For Noah and his family – an ark. For the people of Israel – a tabernacle and later a temple. Then the perfect person came. Jesus, the Word of God made flesh – He dwelt (or "tabernacled") among us (John 1:14). The perfect dwelling place of God. The "exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3). Now God is building a people IN HIM. The household is built not in a garden, not in an ark, not with wood or stones, but with people who are reconciled to God and to one another and set apart for Gods work**. We are the house of God. God now dwells here on earth in His people. When we gather together, God is in our midst because God dwells within us, and we are His house.**

Today in the modern-day church we need to get back to how the Bible defines the church and what the Bible says about church growth. A church that is growing looks like a regular gathering of reconciled individuals who are growing with one another into a family, a household, that is fitting for God Himself to dwell in. ***Before we talk about what the church IS…here are a few things the church IS NOT.***

Church is not convenient. I hear people all the time talk about watching "church on TV". Covid really set us back here. I know sometimes we are sick or need to miss church for important reasons. But we have to eliminate the language of "church" at home. Something has gone wrong. We need to get back to the Biblical model. You cannot "have church at home" (unless of course the church meets in your home). Why? There is NO BODY THERE! So many choose to simply miss a Sunday for convenience sake…so they watch on a screen. The church is not meant to be convenient, but the church is meant to produce growth in your Christian walk. You cannot grow in your relationship with God apart from the church because much of what God wants to produce in you happens in and through the church.

Church is not optional. People speak about having a "personal relationship" with Jesus apart from having a growing relationship with His body, the church. While it's important to see that each of us need to have a personal relationship with Jesus, that relationship with Jesus automatically places us in relationship to one another in His body. Again, the church is a living organism of persons being built together into a dwelling place of God. There is no Jesus apart from His body! You cannot have Christ and not have His church along with Him. Being a Christian IS being a member of His body…the two are inseparable. You cannot sever the head of Jesus, from His body, the church.

Church is not a building. Many think of the church in terms of a building made with walls, a long driveway, and plenty of parking. The structure Paul describes here is built with reconciled people. The physical building is simply the location where the church meets. Who cares about the building! As long as it is suitable for the people and what God wants them to do when they meet – the building is really irrelevant.

The Church IS not what it DOES. It's important to separate what the church does from who the church IS. We can miss God's vision for the church by focusing too much on the mission of the church in

the world around us. So we focus on numbers, or outreach endeavors, or what we are doing within the community – all of that is fine and very important, but you can have an increase in numbers and you can be doing all kinds of things in the community and still miss the mark for what a church IS.

Here is a definition of the church that I see just in our text this morning: The church is a living and growing organism of reconciled individuals who are united to Christ and to one another; each growing in their love for God, and each growing in their love for one another, as they collectively become a dwelling place suitable for God and a demonstration of God's love to the world.

I want to unpack this definition by sharing two things we learn about the church in our text…

1. The church is a family of people who have a new status with God and one another

In 2:1-10 Paul showed each person who puts their faith in Jesus changes their status from "dead" to God" (2:1-3) to "alive to God" (2:4-5). Praise the Lord we are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of our own doing – it is solely a gift of God! Through faith in Jesus God changes your status from "enemy of God" to "child of God"! But not only has our faith in Jesus changed our status with God, it has changed our status with others as well. In 2:11-22 Paul shows the change of status between Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles include anyone non-Jewish. The Jews hated the Gentiles and vice versa but that has changed now because from the "two" God has "created one new man" (2:15) and reconciled the two former hostile groups into "one body" (2:16). In v.19 Paul shows a "contrast" between who the Gentiles formerly were, and who they now are:

> So then **you are no longer** strangers and aliens, **but you are** fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (2:19).

Paul used the same word "strangers" back in v.12 to describe the Gentiles – they were "strangers to the covenants of promise". Here in v.19 - "you are no longer strangers"! In the movie My Big Fat Greek Wedding the father is beside himself that his lovely Greek daughter is marrying a "ξενοι, ξενοι, ξενοι!". That's the word here. He wasn't welcome to his family because he was a "stranger" a "foreigner"! Now you are a "blood relative", you are "family", you are "kin". You're no longer a "resident alien", you are a "saint" and "member of God's household". You were formerly, v.12 – "alienated from the commonwealth (πολιτείας - citizenship) of Israel"…now you are "συμπολιται" or "with-citizenship"… "fellow citizens".

In the Ephesian culture there was a class system that granted certain rights, respect, and status.

"Greco-Roman Class System"

First, at the very bottom you had the ξένοι or "foreigners" or "strangers". These people had the lowest status, they were considered barbarians and dogs that needed to be saved by the Pax Romana, the "Peace of Rome". If you've ever seen the movie Gladiator, when the emperor Marcus Aurelius and his general Maximus are speaking of their military campaigns among the barbarians Maximus says, "Rome is the Light". This is the common perspective the Romans had of foreigners…everywhere they went and conquered they were actually "freeing" the poor barbarian people they conquered. The ξενοι had virtually no rights at all.

Second, you had the πάροικοι, the "resident aliens". They lived among them, received the covering and blessing of Roman society (which included high taxation and persecution) but they did not have the

rights of citizenship. This would be how the Jews functioned while under Roman occupancy which is why they hated the Gentiles.

Third, you had the συμπολίται, "fellow-citizens" of Rome. They had the full rights of citizenship and were considered a higher class of people than everyone outside of Rome. This status could be achieved only through birth, or through payment and a very difficult process. Paul, you remember was an actual born citizen of Rome and used his citizenship on several occasions to get himself out of trouble.

Finally, you had the οἰκεῖοι, the "member of the household". This was a citizen who was also a blood relative. This was the closest relationship one could have in Roman culture.

Paul here in our text is using each of these words of status that the Ephesian audience would have been very familiar with to say, "You are no longer "ξενος", you are no longer "παροικοι". You are now "συμπολιται…fellow-citizens…better than that…you are now οικειοι, blood relatives within the household of God!" The blood of Christ has caused us to be blood relatives of one another and of God! This is the kind of relationship that God envisions for His church.

And yet…so often we function within the church as though we were "foreigners" or "aliens" to one another. We go to the same church, but we aren't a part of the same family. We refer to each other as "that guy, that gal who usually sits over there." We attend church as though it's simply a place to receive the blessings and benefits of a Sunday service, but we're not a part of the church family. We treat the person visiting as ξενος, a stranger or a foreigner instead of welcoming them into our home. We label, we put people into tribes with a particular status instead of welcoming them into our home and our family.

Three ways that I've seen God built this type of family relationship between myself and others in the church.

First, we must pray for one another. This is a simple thing and yet so profound. When you hear of something that needs prayer, stop and pray for that person. Keep praying for them. Don't miss the opportunity by saying, "I'll be praying for you." Stop right then and there and pray! **Paul says in Galatians 6:2:**

> **Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ [**the law is fulfilled in love. When we pray for one another we fulfill the law of love as we bear one another's burdens to God]. **(Gal. 6:2)**

Second, we must spend time with one another! The type of family atmosphere that God envisions in this passage can't happen once a month or even once a week. We should call each other, pray for each other throughout the week, meet in one another's homes, and for coffee. Don't leave today until you find one person this week that you can reach out to, pray for, invite to coffee, or even into your home? This takes time, this takes embracing awkwardness, but it's worth the effort. In the first century the Greeks had customs that were radically different than the Jews. They ate funny things, they celebrated in funny ways, they went to the games where people competed in the nude. The Jews saw these things as an abomination and now Paul says, "you are being built together" you are "joined together" you are "one new man"! ***You cannot grow in your relationship with Jesus apart from growing in your relationship with people in the church and that means a willingness to embrace the awkwardness.***

Third, we must suffer with one another. There was a New Hampshire soldier who bunked with a soldier from Alabama. He hated his country music and the southern soldier referred to his as "yankee". They even got into a fist fight on one occasion. Then they were called to fight in Vietnam side by side and their lives depended on each other. After the war they fondly referred to each other as "brother". There is a reason why I call you brother or sister…it's a reminder that we are family. Family goes through the fire together. When you've gone through the fire with someone, there is a bond that forms like no other. If you don't share your sufferings, your struggles, your battles with each other, your temptations not only are you missing out on the help and healing and power that God means to provide, but you are missing the opportunity to become blood relatives.

Paul told us that the struggles and temptations to sin that we face are very common: "*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man."* (1 Cor. 10:13). The devil will lie to you and make you ashamed of what you're going through as though your struggle is unique – that's a lie! There are brothers and sisters who are around you and are able to help you through this. This is how family is built. We have to get into each others lives…it's not convenient, but it will cause you to grow in your faith and develop a bond with others like you've never had before. A bond that is even closer than biological family.

Church growth looks like the people of God evolving from "strangers" and "aliens" to "family" in the household of God

2. The church is a family growing together into a dwelling place for God

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (2:20-21)

This family of God has an ultimate goal – it's to become a habitation, a temple (Paul uses temple imagery and specifically he is talking about the inner sanctuary – ναος - where God dwelt. It's a dwelling place for God where Father, Son, and Spirit can display the glory of God's love and unity to all creation. We are being filled with the love and "oneness" of God as the church to then become a witness to the world of God's love – Father, Son, and Spirit. The love of God is first displayed in God's love for us. And then our love for one another.

In antiquity, when a building was put together, they didn't use wood or nails or metal earthquake straps like we used in California to hold the structure together. They used very heavy stones, and instead of using mortar, the stones were intricately cut in such as way so as to fit closely on top or adjacent to one another. In this way you would have a very stable structure if the stones were cut just right and fit together perfectly.

Each stone was intricately shaped, each stone was laid in reference to the cornerstone, each stone was built upon the foundation, and each stone was "joined together" and "built together" in close connection to each other.

In Ephesians Paul frequently uses "oneness" or "union" language to speak of our relationship with Christ and with one another – "in, through, with" Christ. If you remember in 1:20 we saw that

Jesus was "raised from the dead" and "seated" in heavenly places. Then in 2:5-6 Paul told us that we are "with alive" and "with raised" and "with seated" with Jesus Christ in heavenly places – three compound words to describe our union with Jesus. Here is 2:19-22 Paul uses three more compound words to describe our union with one another – he says we are "with citizens" and "with joined" and "with built". Later in 4:16 Paul will add "with held" together. ***Here is the point: The kind of language Paul uses for our oneness with Jesus, He uses of our oneness to each other in the church. That's the kind of love and unity God desires within our church!***

Here is my question as we close. What is the ultimate goal of the "oneness" and "love" God wants to create within the church? Why is God building a dwelling place for Himself made of persons? What is God Himself doing when He creates a family of reconciled individuals who were formerly hostile with one another but now a family? What is the ultimate goal of this "plan to unite all things in Jesus"?

Listen carefully: "oneness" and "love" within the church family is the vision and mission of God because the church of God is meant to embody and depict the same kind of love and unity that God has *within the Himself*. Every member of the Trinity is involved in bringing this goal to pass: "a united family of people, all one with Christ, and one with one another, and thus embodying and displaying the unity and love of the Trinity, God Himself, to the world." This is a true temple of worship to God who IS LOVE.

> **In him** [In God the Son] **you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God** [for God the Father] **by the Spirit** [by God the Spirit]. **(Eph. 2:22)**

Whenever a company "goes public" it means that a private company has made its stock available to be received or purchased by the public. Listen to the lyrics of "All I have is Christ" and ask yourself if this is true of you: "I once was lost in darkest night yet thought I knew the way. The sin that promised joy and life had led me to the grave. I had no hope that you would own a rebel to your will. And if you had not loved me first I would refuse you still. But as I ran this hell-bound race indifferent to the cost, you looked upon my helpless state and led me to the cross. AND I BEHELD GOD'S LOVE DISPLAYED".

When God created the world, the Trinity went public and the apex is the gospel. What is the message? God IS LOVE. The love of God has "gone public" through the gospel and through the church. God has spilled over into the church the same kind of unity that Father, Son, and Spirit have always enjoyed. God has always been love because Father, Son, and Spirit always have existed together in perfect love, unity, and divinity. God didn't create humanity out of some sort of lack, but to spill over His beauty, glory, and "oneness" and "love" onto creation. We celebrate this on Christmas - God dwelling with us, "Immanuel" (Mt. 1:23). We see it in the Son of God - The exact imprint of His nature (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is God tabernacling ("dwelling") among us (John 1:14). The greatest "display" of the love and "oneness" of the Trinity is God in the flesh who chose to dwell among us, and die for our sin on the cross, and then rise again conquering death, and then ascend to heaven and sit at the right hand of God, and then pouring out His Spirit who comes and lives within us, and joins us to one another. The church now is meant to be the embodiment of God's love. Think of **1 John 4:7-9** – "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.* **8** *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love*."

The type of love that Father, Son, and Spirit have for one another, God wants shared in and through the church. This was Jesus' prayer before going to the cross:

> **I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word** [He was praying for the disciples, now He is praying for those who will be in Him through their word – that's us. Those built on their foundation] , **21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** [the type of unity, and love that Jesus has with the Father, He prays for us to have with one another. This is mind-blowing! You and I need to consider the implications of such a strong notion as this.] **(John 17:20-21)**

We have work to do! Church we will accomplish this lofty goal of God…or not. You and I are responsible to embody and display the love of the Trinity. We are too receive the love of God, to enjoy the love of God, and to supply the love of God that is in Christ unto the glory of God….within this church! This is a huge vision and its worth fighting for.

Pray

Connection Group Questions

For further study or for connection groups…

1. **What was something that spoke to you or challenged you in the sermon on Sunday?**
2. **In Ephesians 1:10 God has a plan to "unite all things in Him". How is this plan fulfilled in the church? (see also Ephesians 1:22-23)**
3. **Read Ephesians 2:1-10 – how has our status changed with God?**
4. **Read Ephesians 2:11-22 – how has our status changed with one another?**
5. **Read Ephesians 2:19 - Pastor Brian spoke of the lists of status common to the Ephesians (foreigner, resident alien, fellow citizen, member of the household). What are some "lists" or "markers of status" that we have in our day and age?**
6. **Share some common misconceptions about the church. How would you describe what God wants the church to be?**
7. **Read Acts 2:42-47 – what are some descriptions of the early church in this passage?**
8. **Read Ephesians 2:20-21 and John 17:20-21. How is the vision of the church in Ephesians similar to the prayer and desire of Jesus in John 17:20-21?**
9. **Read 1 John 4:7-8 - What are some ways you can help create a family atmosphere of love within our church?**