

The Gospel and Ethnicity.

Ephesians 2:11-22

-We live in a world of *differences, conflicts, competitions, and rivalries*. The political news shows us the rivalry between democrats and republicans. Many of prefer Mac computers to PCs, common sense shows us the superiority of Coke to Pepsi. This time of year magnifies the differences between allegiances to football teams and schools. From Auburn to Alabama to Georgia and anybody that wears orange.....rivalry is everywhere. But there is also a ***sad and serious scene to this drama where rivalries turn violent and even deadly***.....rivalries based on racial and ethnic, even national differences.

-Evils that are based on race and ethnic diversity are real, have marked out history and need to be addressed by the gospel and acted on by the church.....(THE UNIQUENESS OF OUR CONTEXT)

-the lack of gospel understanding and gospel application to these issues have led to unmanageable evils.....

-Cain kills Able, the record of slavery in biblical history, the Holocaust in Germany, Genocide in Rwanda, Slavery in America, the Civil Rights Movement, to today.

-It doesn't take much to realize this tension and these evils still exist today, from riots, to "Black Lives Matter" signs, to "Stars and Bars" flying up and down the road, to a hundred different beliefs and opinions about immigration.....***but we as Christians can run to the Scriptures for wisdom.***

-It is timely for us to realize that God chooses to include in this letter for us to see the reality of our corporate identity as the church.....**a people reconciled to God and reconciled to people.....especially people of different races and diverse ethnicity.** I agree with Paul in the need for the church to *remember* this.....always and especially in our culture that is full of hatred, tension, and apathy with concern to issues of ethnicity.

-Paul reminds readers of the separation between people and God, the great links that God went to bring reconciliation, and the truth that his reconciliation is not only between us and God, but also reconciliation between us and the rest of the world. In Christ, enemies can become friends.....

-It has been said that there was a vertical and a horizontal purpose in the death of Christ.reconciling us first, vertically to God and then secondly, horizontally to others!

-Lets go to EPH. 2:11-22

-In vv. 1-10 of Eph. 2 we see one of the clearest and most beautiful pictures of the gospel given to us even though we are sinful and undeserving. Then in v.11 Paul tells us to "therefore remember"the way we think about being reconciled to one another must be drawn on the canvas of the gospel of the cross.

We must remember:

1. Sin leaves us alienated from God and those ethnically diverse from us. (11-12)

-there is a need to identify the difference between race and ethnicity in this conversation.

-race is extremely hard to define....especially in terms of color, biology, and location.

-the term ethnicity, though, sees categories of people based on language, cultural customs, and diverse histories.....a much more helpful start than just color....the diversity of mankind is far greater than just a difference in color of skin...why say this?.....because we need to see the sinfulness of judging others based on skin color but really we need to go much broader than this and say that we must not deem others less than ourselves no matter what ethnic difference there is....and there are far more of the differ. than just color.

-I want us to see though that the gospel applies to divided people no matter if they are racially

diverse or ethnically diverse.....***sin divides.....but the gospel unites.***

-v.11-12 shows us in short what we are in sin.....we are alienated from God and from the people of God.....to be uncircumcised was to be alienated and separated from God.....**a separation that ultimately was because of sin and an unchanged heart.**

-the word alienated means to be excluded, estranged, and a non-participant to the ways and will of God.....this screams hopelessness.....hopelessness in our relationship with God and the wreck of our own relationships with people.

-Notice the cause of this alienation:

-v.12a- we were ***Christless***- without, missing the Messiah, no hope, no life.....this being true, there is nothing worse that could be true about us.

-v.12b- we were ***foreigners***-excluded from the citizenship of Israel....meaning that we were strangers to the covenants of God. Israel was a commonwealth under God, while the gentiles were foreigners.

-v.12c- we were ***hopeless and Godless***- no hope because of the absence of God in our lives.....even though God does offer salvation and did offer it to the Gentiles.....but absent of that we are hopeless and Godless.....we go after idols instead of God, we suppress the truth, and act like sinful rebels!

-and this is just the picture that creates hostility toward God and towards people.....and in this context, people who are ethnically different from us.

-the picture of the racist is a picture of the Christless, foreigner, hopeless, and Godless!.....the picture of the one who thinks himself better than others is a picture of the Christless, foreigner, hopeless, and Godless!

-think for a moment about what racism is and what it does:

-“Evil deeds like Racism are the beliefs or practices that value one race or ethnic group over another.”the heart of the issue is that one believes one race or ethnic group is more valuable than another.....and this is based out of a sinful heart. And that sin is called racism, ethnic supremacy, and its actions are called terrorism, but at its heart is SIN.....Sin is the issue!

-apart from Christ we are Christless, foreigners from God, hopeless and Godless.....and because of that it should be no surprise that all of the terrible examples I mentioned earlier are what happen.....

-Think about slavery. The gospel speaks to this. The idea of a human being attempting to “own” another human being is abhorrent in a Christian view of humanity. That is sinful. That should hardly need to be said these days, though it does, given the modern-day slavery enterprises of human trafficking all over the world.*******and we need to affirm that all sit in this boat.....white, black, and other have hearts prone towards the evils of self-supremacy, racism, and prejudices.....and the actions that result**

-And Paul says for us to remember this! Here are a few ways I think we can do as we remember:

-constantly preach the gospel to yourself to put your sinful self in perspective.

-see the root and cause of racism to be sin and not history, different social structures, or ignorance.....see sin and its horrible nature!

-see and confess the sin of racism and other prideful thinking in your own life....and if you think you are exempt, you should start even quicker!!

-because we are the redeemed we can rejoice in the fact that where there is sin there can

be redemption.....so be hope-filled, patient, and loving!.....(because)

2. Christ has reconciled us to God and to those ethnically diverse from us. (13-18)

-at this point, we cant run to Christ fast enough.....the good news of the gospel is that we are not just in need of a hope-giving Savior, but that God is gracious and gives us Christ! Christ is what we must cling to in a world fueled by ethnic tension.

-we have just said that we don't have a race problem, or an ethnic problem, or a social or political problem, not even a violence problem or a police problem.....the root at all this "issues" is a sin problem.....thats, vv. 11-12.....but that's not the end of the narrative.....now let us gaze at the reconciliation in the gospel of Christ!

-once Christ redeems there is still physical difference, but that difference is of no ultimate significance.....skin becomes secondary and the heart is then primary!

-notice what the cross does.....the cross causes some wonderful effects!!!!!! : (FOR ALL PEOPLE)

-v.13-**Jesus brings us near**.....all the separation and alienation is altered to nearness.....we get the presence of God, relationship with God, a part of the family of God!

-v.14a-**Jesus brings us peace**- peace with God and peace with others...(what world wants)

-v.14b-16-**Jesus makes us one**- he breaks down all the walls, he kept the law making himself a worthy sacrifice to tear down the wall between God and our sin, v.15, this unites us to God.....then he creates a new man to be united in one body, v.15b-16,.....the church!

The gospel does not transform Jews into Gentiles or vice versa and does not wipe away an ethic specific, but rather the gospel re-creates one man.....we all need the gospel, and when we receive the gospel the adoption into God's family makes a bunch of diverse people all have a seat at the same table.

-we want to divide but God unites!

-Gal.3:28, "you are all one in Christ Jesus"

-this unity makes us better, breeds humility, and kills racism!

-v.17- **Jesus preached peace**- we must preach the gospel today!

Nazi Germany needed the gospel, (Rawandan Genocide, Segregated South, Furgeson, Baltimore, New York, Charleston, Atlanta, Carrollton, Roopville.....NEED THE GOSPEL)...so will we speak?, we all seem to have strong opinions about the "other side"....but are we willing to take the gospel as our Word and GO!

-simple fact= never forget that to preach the gospel where it is needed is Chrislike!

-v.18-**Jesus has given us access to God**- this creates in us a new position, and not just us now, but WE.....the united have sweet access to God.....though different we can *worship, love, and serve the same God because he has taken our guilty and loving embraced us!*

Because Christ has unified, lets promote unity:

"White Christians ought to think about what that flag says to our African-American brothers and sisters in Christ, especially in the aftermath of yet another act of white supremacist terrorism against them. The gospel frees us from scrapping for our "heritage" at the expense of others. As those in Christ, this descendant of Confederate veterans has more in common with a Nigerian Christian than I do with a non-Christian white Mississippian who knows the right use of "y'all" and how to make sweet tea." -Russell Moore

-We must also say to the black community that the proper response to the evils of racism is not more evil and racist acts.....destruction, disorder, and irresponsibility are not proper responses either.

-Our own country needs to see white and black Christians humbly unite and bring the gospel to the rest of the world together!....in love and sacrifice.....writing a new chapter of American history!

3. An ethnically diverse church is needed in fulfilling the Great Commission. (19-22)

-notice in v.19 the tone seems to change and Paul addresses the audience in light of the reconciliation that we just saw.....Paul uses three words to give us a picture of who we are now as the “new man” , “the Church” those not only now reconciled to God but also to each other.....(no matter how different we once thought ourselves to be)

-what I want us to see is that this is useful to the Great Commission.....and the mission of God. When his church is united, though they are diverse, they scream the work of God and his gospel!

-we are not only synched to God, but to each other.....there is great strength in this!

-Ethnic and racial reconciliation is needed because there is mission and we are stronger together.

*so this means:

-***We are fellow citizens, 19a***- we belong, there is no refugee mentality, but rather great comfort and security in God’s Kingdom for all its divers members.....this citizenship, we know from Scripture, equips its members to preach, love, serve the world!

-***We are members of the family of God, 19b***-the image gets personal with a family, this goes to a whole new level.....there is not just a working relationship between us and other people, but under Christ we are brothers and sisters!!!!!! We all have a role, a seat, a mission, and a Father!

-if you have ever really been in a diverse bunch, it is beautiful, its creams heaven!

-***We are stones in God’s Temple, 20-22***- these verses teach us that we are built together on the scriptures, our foundation, Christ, our cornerstone.....and that we are its stones or building blocks, different people all ransomed by Christ together.....useful to the mission of God!

-these images express the beauty of the new heavens and new earth but also the earth now as the church rises up to take the gospel to the nations.....and we do this, from all places, with all colors, with all backgrounds, all under Jesus blood! The church must be together because it is united under Christ.....(the most segregated hour each week is the worship hour!)

4. Seeking reconciliation with a diverse world requires incarnational living.

-Both the Old and New Testaments say that God shows no partiality, but judges with complete justice. Likewise, Jesus showed no partiality. By example, we are also told to show no partiality, but treat all people fairly. The essence of biblical equality can be summed up in the Gal. 3:28.... “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

-Even though the world does not always treat humans as equals, as members of the body of Christ, all are equal spiritually in the eyes of Jesus. In fact, those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who serve others will be exalted to a higher status in the kingdom of heaven. The bible says that there will be "a great multitude, which no one could count" in heaven, and that these people will be "from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues."

-Piper

-to do this,

-to seek reconciliation with diverse people,

-to love, serve, and preach to those ethnically different than you, even hostile to you

-to know the value of the church, even though it is diverse, and to work together will no doubt be challenging, but is possible when we live incarnationally, that is to say.....when we live like Jesus, love like Jesus, serve like Jesus, and SEE like Jesus!

This looks like:

- praying that God would give you eyes to see pride and prejudices of heart and repent.
- praying that God would spurn the church to serve all without partiality.
- welcome love and serve new people in our church, no matter color or ethnicity.
- intentionally build relationships with other ethnicities to demonstrate love and value and to preach the gospel in the world.

-MLK story and quote

-Church.....in regards to tonight and all the other issues facing our culture, may we rise as a strong force, the church, living and speaking the gospel to the world around us as. This is needed!

-be saved, be changed, be active!

Martin Luther King called for freedoms and rights and justice that were long overdue. And he did it with an appeal to historic Christian vision, with amazing rhetorical skill, without condoning violence, and with unprecedented and lasting success.

The place is Birmingham, Alabama. The time is April 11, 1963. At the Gaston Motel, Room 30, Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, Wyatt Walker, and Fred Shuttlesworth decided to lead a peaceful, nonviolent demonstration the next day, Good Friday, against the racial injustices of the city.

There was one catch. The sheriff, Bull Connor, had served Martin Luther King with a state-court injunction that prohibited him and other movement leaders from conducting demonstrations. With a wife and four children back home in Atlanta, King decided to violate the injunction, pursue a peaceful, nonviolent demonstration, and willingly go to jail. On Good Friday, King led his fifty volunteers downtown, up to the police line, came face-to-face with Connor, and knelt down with Ralph Abernathy in prayer. He and all the demonstrators were thrown into paddy wagons and put in jail.

On Tuesday, April 16, King was shown a copy of the Birmingham News, which contained a letter from eight Christian and Jewish clergymen of Alabama (all white), criticizing King for his demonstration.

. . . he delivered a powerful call to the church, which rings as true today as it did in 1963:

“There was a time when the church was very powerful — in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. . . . But the judgment of God is upon the church [today] as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the 20th century.”

-From Martin Luther King's "Letters from Birmingham Jail", Parnell