



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“We Are Family: We Are One!”

Ps Bruce Fidler– August 23, 2015

WARM–UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What was your concept of the church when you were growing up?
- With what kind of people do you feel more connected? Why?
- How does diversity look like to you?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision”(which is done in the body by human hands)-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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:11-18

Since the beginning of creation, God has always reached out to men. But since the fall, men have built barriers between man and God and between each other. What the Jewish did with the second temple is a clear example of that. The temple of Herod had segregated sections for each group of people, depending upon their “religious pedigree”. Gentiles had to stay out of the temple courts; devote gentiles could enter into a small section of the temples courts; women had their assigned section as well; and so forth. The Jewish leaders had created what we could call a “religious apartheid.” The passage in Ephesians 2 show us a different way that God has for His church. Here are some truths we can infer from this passage.

- I. Men created hierarchy to access God’s presence. Each group has its own reasons to feel superior and to disdain others. This is exactly what was going on in Paul’s world when he wrote this epistle.
 - a. Greek: cultural pride due to their achievements

- b. Jew: religious & ethnic pride due to their revelation
 - c. Barbarian (fringes of the Roman empire): disdained by Greeks & Romans
 - d. Scythian (beyond the empire in Southern Russia): disdained by barbarians, abhorred by Romans who considered them as little better than wild beasts
- II. Christ tears down all differences. *Christ...has made the two...one...*” Jesus on the cross destroyed all the walls that separated men from God and from each other. He disregards all humans distinctions and affirms that since all are tainted with sin and we all are saved by his grace, there is no difference:
- a. Circumcised/Uncircumcised: no superiority due to religious ancestry or works
 - b. Slave/Free: no superiority due to political or economic status

Christ is all, and is in all, doing away with all the prejudices and tensions which existed in the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic Roman Empire. We are not foreigners any more. He has made peace to all who are afar, and those who are near, because through Him we both have access to His presence.

Jesus aims to recover God’s original plan: fill the earth with his glory through humanity that is made in His image. They are diverse yet united because of their union with God. If we have a good understanding of what Christ has done for us, and for humanity, we will look at our fellow citizens properly.

- III. Christ invites us to be fully members of His church. *“You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household...”* If there is any restriction about getting involved, we are imposing it upon ourselves. God chooses to manifest his presence in the place where He is the central focus.

Therefore, He has chosen that His presence indwells not in a place, but in a people. We are the temple, the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. If you believe this is true, then you will love the church. If Holy and Almighty God has chosen to love the church, who are we to chose to isolate ourselves from the church and think we are above it? You can live life as a Christian thinking that you are a gentile, and live outside of the church. You can think that because you are a woman, you don’t have a part in the church. The degree in which you decide to participate in the life of the church is your choice.

If you truly believe that you belong, you will get involved. We need to put off the laziness or hurts that may be keeping us from fully embracing the church. We need to make ourselves vulnerable and do life. We need to grow together with all those whom Christ has redeemed so as to make a people united in worship and service to Him.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- Are you member of the church? If yes, what motivated you to become a member? If not, what is keeping you from doing so?
- How can you get more involved in the life of your church?
- In light of this lesson, what changes do you need to make in order to align your attitude and behavior toward the church with those of Jesus?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray for the unity of the church so we may reflect Jesus.
- Pray God will give you a heart for His church.
- Pray - surrendering your gifts to Him, so He can use them in His church.