



Racial Reconciliation - Eph 2:11-22

Oct 27 - Dave Navarro

INTRO

Ephesians 2 is all about the ways that God has changed the world through Jesus. In this week's passage, Paul explains that God has erased a deep racial divide that existed in the first century. This reality had implications for 1st century Christians, and it has implications for 21st century Christians.

Open with prayer¹, then read Eph 2:11-22 together as a group. Consider dividing it by paragraph. It's helpful to all use the same Bible translation. SLC preaches from the NLT.

SERMON RECAP

1. Intro
 - a. Conference - a family expanding.
 - b. Recap: Summing up all things. Right here he's saying more about the WAYS he's summing up. Today, looking at looking at God through Jesus eliminating a deep racial divide.
2. Gentiles BEFORE Jesus (V11-12)
 - a. The wall, the law, and circumcision.
 - b. No hope and no God.
3. Gentiles AFTER Jesus (V13-15)
4. Reconciliation and the ancients and us (V15-19)
 - a. One new people
 - b. Reconciled to GOD, or EACH OTHER? Inextricable. You can't have one without the other.
 - c. Inclusion and unity and speaking the truth in love.

¹ Some groups prefer to begin with a longer time of sharing and prayer. This is a good instinct and ensures that prayer time doesn't get shortened by time constraints.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share about a time when you spent time with someone (or multiple people) from a different culture? How did they enrich you? In what ways was it challenging?
2. Dave stated that Israel was a nation who had been particularly blessed by God, and instead of focussing on SHARING that blessing, they used it to act superior to other people groups. Does this reality play out today? How can the church guard against it?
3. Dave talked about how the Jews had become focussed on EXTERNAL realities, rather than on the heart. Read 1 Samuel 16:7. How do people today tend to look at the outside, instead of the internal reality? How can we posture ourselves differently?
4. The word “peace” comes up in V13 and V16. As a Jew writing to an audience that included many Jews, when Paul talked about peace, the Jewish concept of peace (*shalom*) is a big part of what’s in view. This concept of peace was deeper than the mere absence of conflict. How would you define this word and do any particular word pictures come to mind when attempting to explain this word? To answer this question, do a quick survey of Isaiah 9:6; Zech.9:10; Micah 5:2, 4-5a; Luke 1:79; 2:14; Rom.16:20; Isaiah 48:22; 57:20-21.
5. Verse 13 says that the Gentiles, who were far off, have been brought near. How does this fit into the overall plan of God? Do you think it is an afterthought, or integral to God’s plan? To answer this question, read Isaiah 57:19; John 10:16; John 11:51-52.
6. Read V11-13.
 - a. What conclusions can we draw from this passage about including people of diverse backgrounds in the church?
 - b. What challenges might occur if we lived this reality out?
 - c. When benefits might occur if we lived this reality out?
7. Read V15-16.
 - a. What conclusions can we draw from this passage about pursuing unity amidst disagreement in the church? (See also John 17:23 and Ephesians 4:15)
 - b. What challenges might occur if we lived this reality out?
 - c. When benefits might occur if we lived this reality out?



PRAY

1. As a group, share areas of praise and need. Write them down so you can be praying for them during the week.
2. Remind yourselves of your Adopt-a-Missionary, and any prayer requests you've seen from them.
3. Spend time praying, either all together, or in smaller groups. Feel free to experiment with silent prayer, written prayer, etc. If appropriate, close with the following prayer for unity, from the Book of Common Prayer:

*Almighty Father, whose blessed Son before his passion
prayed for his disciples that they might be one,
even as you and he are one:
Grant that your Church, being bound together
in love and obedience to you,
would be united in one body by the one Spirit,
so that the world may believe in him whom you sent,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the same Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

