


## From Far to Near to Him

2025-10-05 – Ephesians 2:11-22

	<p>As Paul wrote to saints to encourage them in their faith, he wanted to make sure they understood exactly who they were in Christ. For all believers, the truth of Ephesians 2:11-22 is that we are citizens and members of God's household. This week, we will be looking at all God has done to bring us from far away to near to Him.</p>
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*Lord, we thank you for this table that we can come to as your church. Lord, we quiet our hearts before you, and we rest in your presence. And we pray that we will come to the table as one body, proclaiming your death until you return. Thank you, Jesus, for dying to purchase us for God. Thank you, Lord, for removing our sin from us and for appeasing the wrath of God. Thank you that we have been brought into your kingdom and that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, we worship you as a church. We proclaim your name. We proclaim your death. We proclaim your resurrection and your reign. Jesus, you are Lord, and we worship you as a church in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Please be seated.

Good morning. It is good to see you all. It is good to be together this morning as we come together to take communion and to worship the Lord through song and through the word. If you are here today and you are a believer as we come together for communion, I want to remind you of what we've been talking about in Ephesians. You are a saint, a chosen child of God, redeemed by his blood. You are a masterpiece that God has made to display his immeasurable grace and power. And when we take communion, we are remembering that all of these things are applied to us through the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a moment, we're going to pass the elements. Our deacons and elders will pass them, and when we do that, I want to encourage you if you're a believer to grab them and to spend time in contemplation. If there are sins, confess them before the Lord. Do not partake if there is sin in your heart that you haven't confessed. And if you're not a believer, I want to encourage you to let the elements pass by because this table is only for believers. Now, that doesn't mean we don't want you to partake, but we want you to know the Lord first. And so I'd spend the time praying that the Lord would open your eyes to the truth of the gospel.

Before we partake, I do want to read one passage, Ephesians 2:1-10. It'll remind us of what we looked at last week and prepare us for communion and for the sermon at hand.

***And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive again with Christ, even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace. He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.”***  
**(Ephesians 2:1-10 CSB)**

I'm going to invite up Steve Jensen to pray.

Thank you, Pastor Matt. Let's bow our heads. Take a minute to contemplate the words of our mouths this week, this month, and the meditations of our hearts.

*Lord, thank you for communion. We remember where we were. Sometimes, I hate to admit, I'm not alone, I feel like I can be right in the garden with Adam and Eve, saying, "Pass me the fruit." It's a horrible thought. But it's what sin does. And I love those words Matt read, and Lord, that you wrote. Those six words, "But God, being rich in mercy." (Ephesians 2:4) You found a way. And the way is on that cross. Thank you for providing for us. Thank you for the bloodshed. Thank you for the beating you endured on our behalf. By receiving this gospel message we are made whole. Praise the Lord. Amen.*

***On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."***

***In the same way also, he took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me."***

***For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.***

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, we thank you that you so loved the world that you sent your one and only Son. We thank you that he died for our sins, he rose, and he reigns, and he is returning someday. We thank you that as we remember those promises, we know they are assured because of the work of your Holy Spirit in our lives. And Father, we thank you for the price you paid, that we could stand before you. Lord, I pray right now that you would guide our time as we move forward into studying your word together. I pray, Lord, that you would give us ears to hear and eyes to see what your word has to say. And Father, I pray you would speak to me and speak through me, that these would be your words and not mine. Father, we thank you for the work of your Son, that through his body and through his flesh, through his death, we have not only been made alive, but we have been made saints and masterpieces by the work you have done. We pray all of this in his holy and precious name. Amen.*

If you've got your Bibles, I want to invite you to open to Ephesians chapter 2, verse 11. This morning, we are in our third week in our series, **“One Body, Saints Standing Side by Side”**. And this morning, we are moving into one of the challenging passages in Ephesians where we are going to look at that which should divide and how Christ has overcome.

We are looking today at what is the greatest divide in human history between people. What is the singular issue that has caused the most strife in humanity? And we are going to see today how through the work of the gospel, Christ has taken us from far to near to him. And for some, as we talk today, I want to make clear—for some of you today, I don't know all of your backgrounds and ancestry, but for some of you, you may start today, and you may know that you started near; for others, we started far. And this isn't a Celine Dion song right now—this good? Okay, good. Good. I just have to say it because as we talk about near and far, I'm going to accidentally say “wherever you are,” so let's get it out of the way.

But the point right now is that today, we are going to talk about the greatest division in human history between people and how Christ has overcome it. And as we talk about being one body in Christ, as we talk about being saints standing side by side, we are in a modern world that is full of barriers, acknowledged and unacknowledged, and we are in a world where we are told constantly about the things that divide us and the things that we should pay attention to, and then we're also told not to pay attention to them. Things like race and culture, where there are realities of who we are, that we are told you are supposed to focus more on this or less on this, and we live in a world that divides along those lines, that divides along political lines, national lines, that we're in a world that is full of division, and yet the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of peace

And for believers, if we are to take seriously the words of Ephesians, and of course, the gospel as a whole, these dividing lines need to be things we remember from the past. They need to not be the things that affect us in the present, because they will not be the things that affect us in heaven. Heaven will not be a democracy where we pick out of the 12 tribes who we're going to vote for or anything like that. It will not be anything other than a theocracy where God reigns and his people are with him. If we think anything less than that, our picture and image of the gospel is more divided than it needs to be.

If we as the body of Christ do not take seriously the unity and peace that we are called to, we are going to fall so utterly short of who we were made to be in Christ.

**Remember that the Gospel brings us from from far to near to Him**

So today, we're going to look, and we're going to **Remember that the gospel brings us from from far to near to him**. And we're going to define what it means that we were far, and then that we were near, and then that we are in him. And this is such a wonderful passage.

I'm going to read the passage, and then we'll break it down. Ephesians 2:11-22 begins,

*So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcised' by those called 'the circumcised,' which is done in the flesh by human hands. At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death. He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit."* (Ephesians 2:11-22)

I love these words because we see how we have gone from far to near to him.

**Remember that the Gospel brings us from from far to near to Him**

Far – Remember that divide we could never overcome

The first thing we're going to see as we now break the passage down is we're going to imagine, or we're going to realize, what it means that we were far. And we need to **remember the divide that we could never overcome**. It is a divide that had no earthly solution.

So, then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called 'the uncircumcised' by those called 'the circumcised,' which is done in the flesh by human hands. At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:11-12 CSB

Verses 11 and 12 say this: **"So then, remember"** (Ephesians 2:11)—and the word **"remember"** is a word that I always forget. And you may say, "Ha ha" to that, but no, it's in Greek; this word is such an important word. It's such a unique word in the first half of the letter of Ephesians.

Because you see, the book of Ephesians is broken up into two parts. The first three chapters of Ephesians are: here is the story of the gospel that you fit into if you are a believer. It's all about worldview and mindset. There's only one command.

In Ephesians 4 through 6, it's okay, because you're the body of Christ, here are the things you need to do. Here's how you live among each other. You put on the armor, you pray for one another, you do all of these things. Ephesians 4 through 6 is full of commands of how to walk well in this world as believers.

In Ephesians 1 through 3, there is one command: Remember.

And what does Paul command? He commands that they ***remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcised by those called the circumcised, which is done in the flesh by human hands.*** The one thing that Paul commands in the first half of Ephesians is that for everyone of non-Jewish descent, they better **remember** they are of non-Jewish descent. **Remember** that. And you may say, "Well, why did we need to remember this?" Well, we're going to see as we go. By the end of this, you will see that this is not the most important thing, but we do need to remember it because when I've said from the pulpit—and when it says in Ephesians—that you are chosen children of God, you are saints, you are masterpieces, sometimes we don't give God enough glory because we forget aspects of all that the gospel has done. And one of those things is we need to **remember** how far away we were.

At that time, Ephesians 2:12 begins: ***"At that time you were without Christ."*** Everyone was without Christ before they were saved and made alive. But for Gentiles, especially when they were without Christ, they were also ***"excluded from the citizenship of Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world."*** If you are of non-Jewish descent, you, outside of Christ, are so far removed by birth. It is something that Paul wants you to **remember** and to be aware of. And if you don't remember this, you are missing Ephesians 2:11-12.

**Remember that the Gospel brings us from from far to near to Him**

Far – Remember that divide we could never overcome

*Excluded from citizenship*

*Foreigners to the covenants of promise*

*Unable by the Torah to enter the temple, own land, or fully participate*

There were things that Gentiles were not allowed to have inside of the Old Testament law. They couldn't have full citizenship in Israel. They were foreigners to the covenants of promise. That means that they were outside of them. Now, there were parts of the covenants that spoke to how God—remember in Genesis when we were studying Abraham's life—God promised he would

bless the nation of Israel and that he would bless those who bless Israel and that through Israel, all nations would be blessed. And we see that come to pass in Christ. We see that come to pass through the work of the gospel, but there's a reminder that God chose a specific people. And we need to remember that.

And then in the United States, we don't like this, right? Because it doesn't matter where you were born or who your parents were; it matters what you do. And I'm not trying to diminish that, but I'm also trying to say that Scripture tells us you are very far away by birth. We like to think if you go back in our lineage, at some point you'll find out, "Well, actually, I'm from a noble line." That's what it's like in every movie, right? Like King Arthur, when he was just Arthur the lad, and he pulled the sword from the stone, then it turned out that all along, he had noble lineage, right? Like that, we look at those things, or the person who is not of royal lineage and all the stories, when they do the good things, everyone says, "It turns out you didn't need royal blood after all." But when we take seriously the Old Testament, there is a divide greater than any divide, and it is the divide of Jew and Gentile. And Paul says, we need to remember that divide.

Now, we're not going to live in it because by the end of today, we're talking about we are a new man. We are one in Christ. We have access to the Father. That's where we're headed. But again, Paul's command is, **remember** how far away you were. By the Old Testament law, if you were a Gentile, you could not enter the temple. Even if you converted to Judaism, even if you did everything you could to follow the God of the Bible, Yahweh, no matter what you did, you could not enter the temple; you could not fully participate.

If Israel would have taken the commands of God seriously, you would have been unable to own land in the promised land. Now, Israelite kings blew that because you're going to fact-check me and say, "Well, actually, there's this Hittite guy who owned land and this and that." Well, the kings of Israel did not follow the Lord's commands very well. That should not be a shock to anyone. But the point is, by the Old Testament law, when we take it seriously—the moral law and the ritual law—Gentiles were separated and far away and could not be near. And we need to remember that.

Again, we don't often think about this. We think about how far away we were because of our sin, and we were—we were dead in our trespasses and sin; we were dead; we could do nothing about it; we were children under wrath. ***"But God, because of his mercy, because of his great love, made us alive in Christ. By grace you have been saved."*** (Ephesians 2:4-5, 8) We were far away by sin, but if you are here and you are a Gentile, you were far away by blood as well. And again, we don't think about this often enough, but this is a divide that was impossible to overcome.

If you remember when we were in our series in John, we talked about baptism and how John the Baptist baptizing Jewish people was a shocking thing because the Jewish people said, “We don't need to be baptized.” Gentiles who wanted to become Jewish—as close as they could become—they would be circumcised, and then they would get in the water in the presence of a Levite priest, and the Levite priest would say, “Okay, baptize yourself,” and they would dunk themselves underwater. Because Jewish people would not touch Gentiles, such was the divide. And according to the Old Testament law, that was a divide that if the Jews were seeking to live righteously, they needed to follow faithfully.

Remember how far away you were. And I say this, I am a Gentile, okay? I'm not like lobbing things at you when I say “you”; I'm a part of this. And remember that divide because this divide is the greatest divide in human history. There was no solution for this divide by human standards. You were either born one of God's chosen people, an Israelite, or you were not. Outside of the work of Christ, there is no solution for this.

In our modern world, when you see anti-Semitism, it's because God chose a people, and so the world hates that people. And that is wicked, and that is wrong. But what we see in the world today, we should not be surprised by, because when God chooses something, the world rebels against it. And we need to remember how far away we were. And this isn't a threat. This isn't something of, “Oh, they're closer, so we're further,” right. No, this is something that when we see it—and as we keep reading—it's going to make us give more glory to God when we see how he has brought us to him.

You were far. Remember the divide we could never overcome.

**Remember that the Gospel brings us from from far to near to Him**

Far – Remember that divide we could never overcome

Near – Remember His work does not settle for a mere piece of peace

As we keep reading, we're going to see what it means to be near, and we need to remember that his work does not settle for a mere piece of peace. Remember that his work does not settle for a mere piece of peace.

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility

to death. He came and proclaimed the good news of **peace** to you who were far away and **peace** to those who were near.

Ephesians 2:13-17 CSB

As we keep reading, verses 13 through 17: ***“But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh he made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace.”***

Now, the dividing wall of hostility. The dividing wall—when we hear that language—we need to go back to 60 AD, to a very specific image that would have been well known to all believers at that time. We need to look at the temple. This is an artist's render. It's not a real picture of the temple. It's like a CGI one. It looks really impressive, though.

But this picture of the temple—this is Herod's temple. This would have been the temple that Jesus walked in. This temple—there's—and I'm going to go back here like Vanna White for a moment. This is the temple; this part right here. This is the courtyard outside the temple. This temple, these walls—when Paul talks about a dividing line, he is talking about these walls to this inner courtyard and then the temple with the Holy of Holies place right there.

And we need to understand this because if you were a Gentile in this day, the closest you could get would be this area or this area. On the temple front entrance of the temple, there was actually a sign that said, if you were a Gentile, if you walked past this point, the Romans allowed the Jews to execute you. The Romans did not even say, “Well, you got to bring them to us for trial.” Now, think about when Jesus died. What did the Jews have to do? They had to get permission. But in the old, in the temple, there was a place that on the wall was written that if somebody went past that line, if a Gentile went past that line, the Romans said, “Jews, do whatever you want with them.” And that's because according to the Old Testament law, that was such a heinous breach that it could never be. And so the Jews were allowed to operate and execute on that point.

Now, it probably did not happen very often because there was a big sign. You can actually, if you Google it, you can see pictures of the remnants of that sign. But here's the thing. Here's why this is important when we're talking about from far to near to him. First and foremost, that outer area—that's the area Jesus drove out all the money changers and all the people selling the animals for sacrifices, because that area was supposed to be a place where the nations could gather and worship God, and that's as close as they could get. But for convenience of worship and sacrifice, that had been turned into a place of commerce. And so Jesus drove them out.

But that inner area, if you were born of Gentile heritage, you would never see. You were never allowed into, by ritual and moral law of the Old Testament. And the inner, inner parts—the high priest would see, and maybe a few others—but there were divides and barriers that prevented.

Paul writes this letter from prison because he has been falsely charged with taking a non-Jew inside the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 21:28). Taking a non-Jew beyond a particular dividing point in the temple was such an important breach of Jewish law that the Romans even permitted Jewish leaders to execute violators of this law.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament

And when Paul is talking about the wall of hostility, he's talking about this. In fact, there's even more to this because when Paul writes this letter, he's writing from prison. And if you go to Acts 21, you find out that one of the main reasons he's in prison, he was falsely charged with taking a non-Jew inside the temple in Jerusalem. It was even a guy from Ephesus. And taking a non-Jew beyond a particular dividing point in the temple was such an important breach of Jewish law that the Romans even permitted Jewish leaders to execute violators of this law.

The people knew this. Anyone who was a believer would have known about this because they would have heard of the temple and heard of the divisions and heard of the way Christ brought them down. When Paul is writing, he's writing to an audience that would be aware of this, and he is talking about those human barriers. They're gone. No longer is there a dividing wall of hostility. No longer do we have to worry about the law and its regulations because Christ has died, and we are now under his grace.

***He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death. He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.*** (Ephesians 2:16-17)

Now, notice, sometimes people think, “Okay, now because of Christ, there's no longer Jew or Gentile, and the Jewish people, there are not promises to them anymore.” But I think Scripture is very clear. There are promises for the Jewish people that will extend until the Lord returns. I want to make sure that's very clear. We should be praying for our Jewish neighbors to come to know the Lord. You read Romans 9 through 11. We should take very seriously what the Bible says.

We should be praying for the nation of Israel, and I want to say something important here because I know right now that depending on which news sources you are looking at, the divides that might be there. And I'm not going to tell you how to pray for the war to proceed or anything like that, but I am going to say: *pray that every Israelite would come to know Jesus; pray that every person in Gaza would come to know Jesus; pray specifically for the leadership in Israel that they would fear God and that they would walk in righteousness.*

Now, this is not a political statement because we should always pray for that. Sometimes people think praying for a nation is praying just good for the nation, but we should pray for the nation according to the precepts of God's Word. And so however you feel about that, this is not a place for a nuanced discussion on foreign politics, but what I do want to say is you should be praying for the people who were first chosen by God. We should be praying for them and taking seriously that call, but how we pray for them needs to be bathed in the wisdom of God's Word.

Because there are two distinct people groups, the Jews and the Gentiles, and yet in Christ, both groups have been reconciled in one body through Christ, through the cross. What an amazing thing. You who were far away have been brought near.

**Remember that the Gospel brings us from far to near to Him**

Far – Remember that divide we could never overcome

Near – Remember His work does not settle for a mere piece of peace

And “near” is not the right word because we've been brought from far to near to him.

Remember the divide we could never overcome while Christ has overcome it. And remember his work does not settle for a mere piece of peace.

Now, what I mean by this is he is not going to settle for, “I'm just going to get all the Gentiles to the same place as the Jews.” He's saying in this he's going to do something more and something more incredible. The divide that was there is gone. You read carefully through the New Testament; read the letter of Galatians where there are Jewish believers saying, “You have to follow the Old Testament law,” and Paul says, “No.”

You read carefully through Acts, and you see how the Jewish and Gentile believers early on—as they were trying to work out their faith—like the Jewish believers wouldn't let the Gentile believers be at meals with them because ritual cleanliness of the Old Testament meant you couldn't go into each other's houses. And yet God broke down those barriers that were so clear. God broke them down. They were impossible divides, and yet they have been overcome by the work of Christ on the cross. It is such an incredible thing.

He doesn't just settle for, “All right, they can all stay separated, and someday in heaven we'll work it all out.” No. He does not settle for a mere piece of peace. And we should not either. Inside the church, this means that we should operate with a unity that is not based on our preferences, our cultural norms, the things that we want, but we instead should all be seeking to be saturated in Christ and building up the body with one another.

When the world looks at us, they should be in awe of the way we walk in faith, saints standing side by side, because they should see that we are united. And they should see we are united in the gospel. Let me make one thing very clear with this. One of the worst things Christians do is we settle for peace with the outside world instead of working towards peace inside the church.

If you're a Christian and you go out in the world and people find out you're a Christian and you try and figure out how to navigate with them peaceably where you don't mention the gospel at all, well, you're just helping them be comfortable on their way to hell. Inside the body, we need to be wrestling with one another and building one another up and growing in our faith. And we need to not settle for something less than that, because when we do, we are denying the work that Christ has done to bring us all from far to near and to him, as we will see.

One of the things that I struggle with in our modern world most of all is I look at young Christians—and by that I mean the demographic my age and younger—who go after a social gospel, and a social justice where they leave the gospel behind. And they want to take care of people. And I don't want to diminish taking care of people, but they do it at the cost of spreading the gospel.

If you are trying to give someone peace without first telling them they are dead in their sins and they are so far away from God, there is no peace for them. Because peace begins with our relationship with God. And then it expands to our relationships with one another. Inside the church, we're to love God and love each other. And if we're not going to start with our relationship with God, then there is no such thing as peace. There will not be peace in this world until God returns.

“To the tree of life in Revelation 22. Its leaves are the healing for the nations.” (Revelation 22:2) There is no other thing that will heal the nations. We settle for such lesser things. And if I can say even more boldly, Christians, one of the things—and it's popped up like four different times for me in the last week—as a pastor, I get invited to these random, like, interfaith prayer groups where it's like all the religious leaders of all the different religions in the area; somebody gets us all on an e-mail chain somehow and says, “Will you all come together and no pushing your religion, but let's all pray for unity.”

And I read it, and I just think, “What is the point?” I think most of you are destined for hell. If I come in and sit there saying, “Let's be united,” there is nothing that unites us outside of Christ. And it's not to diminish that people are trying, but it's to acknowledge that if I'm going to sit with people and let it be a thing where the gospel is not proclaimed and let it be a thing where I'm operating on the level of, “Yeah, these are all good options,” then I am not bringing about any

sense of peace. There is truth that we need to stand on. And when we settle for anything less, how dare we?

At our prayer meeting this last week on Wednesday night, one of the greatest blessings for me—one of our men who was praying at the meeting—he prayed last week, and there was a terrible shooting at a Mormon temple in Michigan. And it's awful. And the person in our group who prayed, I loved his prayer because he prayed for those affected. But then he also went in his prayer to, *“Lord, I pray that you would open their eyes to the truth of the gospel so they could have true peace.”* Because Mormons are not Christians.

And so if I'm going to pray for them and I pray, “Oh, help them in the situation they're in,” but I do not pray that they would come to know the truth of the gospel, look how far short I have fallen. “Lord, help them as they stay far away.” What a silly prayer and what a wicked prayer. I hope you see this because if we settle for a mere piece of peace, we're not going to be effective in the world, and we're not going to be effective as the church.

Paul wants us to remember how far away we were so that as we come together as the body of Christ, we rejoice because there is nothing that can divide us if Christ can overcome this division.

**Remember that the Gospel brings us from from far to near to Him**

Far – Remember that divide we could never overcome

Near – Remember His work does not settle for a mere piece of peace

Him – Remember our identity is found in and founded on Christ

This leads to the last point. We need to **remember our identity is found in and founded on Christ.**

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So, then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but **fellow citizens** with the saints and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole building, **being put together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also **being built together** for God's dwelling in the Spirit.”

Ephesians 2:18-22 CSB

The final verses here: **“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”** (Ephesians 2:18) Now, in this one sentence, there are so many amazing things. First off, through him—through Jesus Christ—we both have access, both being Jews and Gentiles, have access in one Spirit to the Father. You get the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Father in one sentence, all working. You see the three persons of the Trinity at work together.

On top of that, that word “access.” We don't think this way in our modern world, but when you think about the temple, the temple was the place where God and his people dwell together in

the Old Testament. It was the place where the Jewish people had access to God; it was the place where God revealed his glory to his people and where they could stand before him, where they could have feast with him, where they could offer sacrifices to be right before him. And now, through the work of Christ, ***“we both have access in one Spirit to the Father”***—we, the place where God and his people dwell together, is now tied to this: those who have the Holy Spirit.

It's no longer about how we're born, our lineage, anything like that. It's no longer about where we go. It is about who is in us and who is with us through the work of Christ.

***“So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.”*** (Ephesians 2:19-20)

Fellow citizens—that language—in the Greek, it starts; it's the word “citizen” with the word, in Greek, the word in front of it is “σύν” “sun,” which means like a together word. It's a “y'all” word. And all the words in purple here have the same “sun” starting point: fellow citizens, being put together, being built together. But the idea of fellow citizens isn't, “You're now immigrants, and you're of lesser status.” It's now your equal status. You're now together in Christ. You are one in Christ because he has made something new.

There's a famous quote from John Chrysostom—and I probably pronounced that name wrong because I always do—but he talks about how it's like God took silver and lead, and through the work of Christ, he made gold. The imagery here is so beautiful in what Christ has done. Gentiles and Jews, fellow citizens with the saints, members of God's own household. And look at who is the cornerstone: Christ Jesus himself.

Now, the language of cornerstone in this ancient time was the language of the key to the whole building. Ancient kings, when they were very proud of who they were and trying to make sure everyone knew how great they were, they would make sure the cornerstone had their name on it. So someday in the future, people would always know that this king was the big king. You can see example after example in archaeology. And yet, in the passage at hand, Christ Jesus himself is the only cornerstone that matters.

***“In him the whole building, being put together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit.”*** (Ephesians 2:21-22) The language here—if the temple is the place where God and his people dwell together, and if at one point you were far away, unable to even look inside the doors of the temple, unable to even imagine what's there—you could read in Exodus the description of the curtain, but you could never see because you

were never welcome there—now, you're a part of that inner area. Now, there is no space sacred that you are not welcome to as a follower of Jesus because of the work of Christ.

**Remember that the Gospel brings us from far to near to Him**

Far – Remember that divide we could never overcome

Near – Remember His work does not settle for a mere piece of peace

Him – Remember our identity is found in and founded on Christ

**You were far, you were brought near, and you are brought to him. You are founded in him, and you are founded on him.** It is such a wonderful and radical thing. And again, it's not something we think about often, right? I think about how far away I was because of my sin. I don't think how far away I was because of birth and because of every reality, and yet Christ has taken care of those two. And I should give him glory for that. You were far, he brought you near, and then he brought you to him.

We need to remember our identity is found in and founded on Christ. And as we come to the end, I want to point something out to you.

Ephesians 1:3-2:10 tells believers that through the work of Christ we are:

- Saints
- Chosen before the foundation of the world
- Adopted as children of God
- Redeemed by the blood of Christ
- Richly covered in his grace
- Reconciled to him
- Given an inheritance
- Sealed by the spirit
- Assured of his promises for eternity
- Made alive through though we were dead
- Raised to be seated with Christ
- Masterpieces (display of God's immeasurable power and grace)

This is in your bulletins, this giant list of things we've talked about the last couple weeks. You are a saint, if you are a believer. You are a saint, chosen before the foundation of the world, adopted as a child of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, richly covered in his grace, reconciled to him, given an inheritance, sealed by the Spirit, assured of his promises for eternity, made alive though we were dead, raised to be seated with Christ, and a masterpiece, displaying God's immeasurable power and grace.

That whole list—if you are a Gentile—every single one of those things by the Old Testament law could never apply to you. When Paul says, “Remember” at the end of Ephesians 2:10 into this next part, he is talking about the divide was so great. “Deuteronomy 14 *talks about the sons of God are the children of Israel. They are the people of Israel. They are the chosen children of God.*” (Deuteronomy 14:1-2) And yet Paul says, before the foundations of the world through the work of Christ, you were chosen. You are brought into this picture of the gospel in a way that is far greater than we could fathom.

And the more we study Scripture, the more we are going to give glory to God, because each and every one of these things is true through the work of Christ our Lord. It is such a wonderful thing. And these divides—if he has broken down these divides—church, what can separate us? If he has torn down divides that were impossible, this should be seen as we should be rejoicing in this, in our unity as the body, in the way we go into this world. People should be in awe that we are what the world pretends to be.

You watch every movie and TV show, and everything's perfectly diverse, and everyone's in perfect harmony, and then you watch the news, and everyone hates each other. And you watch every worldview that happens right now and the things being pushed on us, and yet what Christ has done is better than all of it, and we are invited into that. If you are a child of God. You are a saint. You are a masterpiece. You, who were far away, are now part of the dwelling place of God for all eternity. There is nothing that can separate you in this life or the next, and we should be praising God for that each and every day.

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, we thank you for this day. We thank you, Lord, that you are good. We thank you, Lord, that you have taken us from far to near to him. Lord, we thank you that your plans and purposes that stretch from before the foundations of the world, we get to see them in action. The mystery of how your good news would extend to the Gentiles, you have shown us through Christ.*

*We thank you, Lord, that as we come together, we come together for those who believe as saints, who were chosen by you, who are your children, and we are redeemed and reconciled. We praise you for your glorious grace, Lord, and it is immeasurable, and through it we have been made alive. We pray, Lord, that we would remember how far you have taken us—from far away to be in you.*

*We thank you, Lord, that through your Spirit and through your work, you have made us; you have given us full access. We pray, Lord, that we would be a body united in you. We would stand strong in this world. We would point others to truth. And Father, we pray that we would not settle for anything less than what you have made us. We thank you, Lord, for the work of your Son. We pray that you would guide. We pray all of this in his holy and precious name. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.*

For our benediction, the promise of the gospel is that ***“all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*** (Romans 10:13) All. It's not for Jew only; it's not for Gentile only; it's for all. The openness of the gospel is extended to all. No matter what our background is, we only come to the Father through Jesus Christ, and the way is open for all. That is the mystery of the gospel; it's not a mystery anymore; it's the revealed mystery—once hidden, now revealed—not only for the Jew, for the Jew first, but also for the Gentile. “The Gentiles call upon me the Lord; the promise of God: All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Let's go in this gospel.



## Digging Deeper – **From Far to Near to Him** - Ephesians 2:11-22

1. What stood out to you from the sermon?
2. As you think about the big ideas from the last two sermons (we are saints, chosen children of God who have been redeemed, reconciled, and had his grace richly poured on us... we are his masterpieces), how has the truth of what you have heard been shaping you in your walk with the Lord?

### **Read Ephesians 2:11-22**

3. What stands out to you as you read through the passage?
4. Do you think of yourself by your birthright as far away from God? (note, there is an interesting distinction here between dead in our sins (2:1) and being far away. This passage is not talking as much about sin condition, as in Gentiles being far away by birthright from God. It is still an effect that came about because of the fall, but the point in this passage is not to just repeat 2:1-10, but to talk about further divides that Christ has overcome)
5. What do you think of what you heard in the sermon about Gentiles being unable to own land, enter the inner areas of the temple, and being outside the key covenant promises? How should this shape how we see ourselves before God?
6. When Paul speaks of us coming near in verses 13-17, he is talking about Gentile believers joining in the closeness that Jews had. What does it mean to be near to God? Is it enough? Why or why not?
7. What are some ways that we settle for “nearness” instead of being found in Christ?
8. What is the Gospel response to how you answered question 7?
9. What are the images used in verses 18-22 about our status in Christ? How do these build on what we saw in the previous two weeks (chosen masterpiece saints)?
10. Do you see yourself in your own strength as utterly separated from by birth, by sin, and any other standard you could make a claim of righteousness by?
11. What does the Gospel say to how you responded to question 10?
12. What does it mean that we are being built up as part of the temple, with Christ as the Cornerstone?
13. How should your answer to question 12 affect how you see yourself among other believers?
14. Take some time to end in prayer by sharing prayer requests and praying for one another.