

Citizens & Saints
New Humanity • Message 4
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time:

- Thank God that He makes us new in Christ.
- Pray that your heavenly citizenship would shape your earthly life.
- Pray that our church would reflect the heart of heaven.

Worship Psalm:

“Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.”

Psalm 63:3-4 (ESV)

Scripture Reading:

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. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:11-22 (NIV)

A. Introduction

(Ephesians 2:15)

If you have ever been overseas... you know what I find funny: when you see an American, there is a sense of connection. Like, I was in India and every time I saw an American, we would go over and say hi... there was this odd sense of excitement. Like at the mall or store, you would never just walk up and give someone a hug and go, *Wonderful choice on those potato chips*. Like, on a trip a few years ago, I saw someone had an Eagles hat on, and I still was excited to see them. But as soon as I got back to New York, my love for Americans and humans dropped a bit.

But here's what happened... In India, I saw another person like me, temporarily living out their identity in another place...

This is what the Bible says to us: we are citizens of heaven, temporarily living out our lives here in America...

That's why we are calling this series *Citizens and Saints*—we are called hundreds of times...

... 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.

Ephesians 2:15 (NIV)

In verse 15, it says His purpose was to create a new humanity- the word *new* here means: the first of its kind...

God isn't making us better, or stronger, or different... He's making us something new, something never seen.

And now, when the Spirit makes us new, it does three things...

B. Our new humanity means ...

1. Hostility to HOSPITALITY.

(Ephesians 2:11-12)

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.

Ephesians 2:11-12 (NIV)

Starts off, *Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth...*

What's interesting in the book of Ephesians, there are 41 total commands... and only one is in chapters 1-3... and that is this command to remember...

Don't take for granted what you have in Jesus. Don't forget where you've come from. I'm trying to get you to understand citizenship.

That's why we take communion here often, because most of us have spiritual amnesia, where on Sunday we know God's love, but by Wednesday, we've drifted away. So we should remember who we are.

Called *the uncircumcision which is done in the body by human hands...* What?!? Uncircumcised means non-Jews. Jews were God's chosen people, His covenant people, and one of the signs was circumcision. And if you aren't certain what that is, our founding pastor will be right outside in the lobby after the service, and he would love to answer it...

Now Paul mentions something odd. He talks about circumcision... then he says, *done by human hands*. Why even mention that? Of course it was done by human hands... who at that time would be circumcising without hands? The logistics of that, I don't even want to think about... The reason he does this is that phrase, *done by human hands...* every time it's used, it means something apart from God. Not surrendered to God.

See, this is important. They look the part on the outside. They did the external things... but God wanted their heart. He wanted a surrendered life... God's kingdom is different than the world.

And here's what Paul is saying: part of your new humanity is this... you move from hostility to hospitality...

Jon Perkins, who was a pastor and a civil rights leader, grew up with racism and segregation in the '50s and '60s. He was beaten up badly by some police officers and some in the community, and he thought he was going to die. And he said, as he looked in their eyes, all he saw was hatred and anger. But he knew God had called him to be different—to forgive, to love... because he had a different citizenship than the world. He went on with a fellow KKK member who accepted Christ to write a book on God's love and forgiveness...

Two people who had hostility to unity...

How many of you are annoyed by someone right now? How many of you are sitting next to them?

We watch movies like *Avengers*, not *Forgivers*... We love stories of retaliation and justice...

The Jewish people's job was to show God's love to the world. They were meant to be the connectors and deliver God's Word to the people. Instead, they became arrogant and proud....
You are on the outside; we are the ones chosen by God.

Instead of hospitality, they chose hostility... Why? Because we have a shared identity...

That's why he says again, *Remember that you were at one time separated from Christ...*
Remember where you came from—commonwealth means citizenship.

2. Them vs. US.

(Ephesians 2:13-17)

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.

Ephesians 2:13-14 (NIV)

But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off—far off in the Old Testament means Gentiles who weren't seeking God.

Have been brought near by the blood of Christ—In the Old Testament, the way a priest would draw near to God in the temple was through the shedding of blood. Now, because of Jesus' blood, we draw near.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Temple illustration (show picture)

- Holy of Holies-God dwells here. One High Priest.
- Court of Priests- reserved for the Priests and Levites.
- Court of Men- down a set of steps, reserved for committed Jewish men.

- Court of Women- this is where Jewish women were permitted, they could go no further.
- Court of Gentiles- this is for the non-spiritual, this is for those who were far off. (I don't know what they're doing... smoking pot and vandalizing things I guess)

Paul is saying there is no *them vs. us*... we are one new humanity in Jesus.

... 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.

Ephesians 2:15-17 (NIV)

So again, he's saying about the image here... He's saying he tore all this down. Listen to how much he talks about unity...

Those who are far off, those who feel like you don't belong in a church, those who didn't grow up religious, those who feel far out there... like even now, you're sitting in the back... God brought you here to understand we don't worship God because we are good; we worship God because we are forgiven. You don't have to clean your life up all together to make yourself good enough. Jesus became broken so you today can be whole.

Those who feel close... you know the Bible, you lead groups, you've been in church, you do the right thing... Do you realize that all your best efforts, the Bible says, are dirty rags? Do you realize God loves you just as much on your worst day as your best day? See, sometimes we don't feel like it's good news because we don't think we are that bad... it's by grace you've been saved...

Every barrier, every sin, every wall, every mistake, every evil has been torn down by the death of Jesus. Because of Jesus' death... He defeated sin, death, Satan, and hell. Amen... You may be seated...

Everyone has been brought into the Holy of Holies. That's why the curtain has been torn.

...[Show pic of temple.] ...

See the dividing wall –

Everyone would have been thinking about the temple wall I just mentioned... The outer court of Gentiles was separated by this wall... what's interesting is that at the outer court, there would be a sign that said...

No foreigner is to go beyond the balustrade and the plaza of the temple zone. Whoever is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.

This is an actual sign that was found years ago (show picture of sign)... And do you realize when Paul writes Ephesians, he is in a Roman prison for being accused of bringing a Gentile to the upper courts?

With that in mind, listen to what Paul says...

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

Ephesians 2:14 (NIV)

Yet today, far too many Christians have a dividing wall—it's called *us vs. them*...

Us are the people who look like you, think like you, vote like you, value what you value... *Us* can be a social group, it can be a political party, it can be the color of your skin, it can be an age group, it can be a socioeconomic group.

The problem is, the more you idolize your *us*, the more you demonize *them*... You go, *That's not true*.

I can prove it... The more you idolize your sports team, the more you demonize the other.

I remember years ago, the Dallas Cowboys were in the playoffs, and we were playing the Green Bay Packers. I went to breakfast the Saturday before the game on Sunday... at breakfast, this guy had on a Green Bay Packers shirt and hat... and I sat down, and I looked at Steph and said, *Can you believe that guy? The nerve to wear that in Dallas. He better watch it*... And then Steph looked at me and said, *Aren't you speaking about following Jesus tomorrow?* Touche...

The more you idolize *us*, the more you demonize *them*...

The *thems*... they aren't your people. They don't work off the same assumptions. They don't value the same things... The problem is, nowadays, those who don't think like you, we tend to view as a threat.

But if we are Jesus, then there is no *them* ... Because once you get connected to Him, you get connected to an *us*...

You don't get to judge, or break off, or tear down others that don't think like you... But this is important: Paul is saying we are tearing down barriers, not moral distinctions... if the Bible calls something sin, you can't use verses like this to indulge in that behavior.

But it tears down barriers, judgment, and hatred that tend to cause us to demonize others. Remember, Jews and Gentiles hated each other.

The church can't be an *us vs. them*. It has to be different... countercultural... no cliques, no judgment... we are one family.

3. Sinners to SAINTS.

(Ephesians 2:18-21)

For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:18 (NIV)

For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.... Interesting, this is the second time in this section of Scripture the Trinity is mentioned—it's showing unity, that in God is a party... see, this whole section is about how God is connecting us to each other.

Access means introduced to royalty.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Ephesians 2:19-21 (ESV)

This whole section is showing you our new identity... That's why Paul says, *Remember...* remember that you aren't just a sinner, but a saint... you are part of the family of God.

The word mentioned above, *alien*, means to come alongside the house... you aren't in the house and family... remember that. But now, because of Jesus, you're in. You're part of the family. You have value and worth. Your life matters. God has chosen you.

Did you also notice it ends by saying you're a temple of the Lord? In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would fall on the temple... but in Acts chapter 2, the Spirit of God falls over the head of the believer... signifying our new identity...

God's special possession—what does God need? God has everything... or what's your favorite possession? Angels are probably like, *Got to be us*. Creation is probably like, *Got to be us*. But it's not... My favorite thing in the whole universe is my chosen people... imagine the whole universe going, *You mean Katie in accounting?*

We spend so much time pushing that off... and we wonder why we aren't living in the right kingdom... We spend so much time talking about politics and theories on this earth that we spend so little time talking about the most important kingdom—our heavenly kingdom...

Honestly, next time someone asks our story, I want to say...

I was an orphan, and I got adopted by this kingdom in the Middle East, and it's crazy... I got adopted into the royal family... and I'm actually now the son of the King... And not only am I the adopted son of the King, He recently told me I'm His actual favorite... And people think I'm making it up... but that's where I am actually a citizen...

This is your truest identity...