

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Grace Unleashed

PART

9

TITLE

We Are Reconciled

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-16



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Providence, it's great to see you. It's always a joy to worship with you. I'm just so grateful for all of the members of our worship team that's on the stage behind me. Just so grateful for you guys, but it is good to see you. It's good to see your face, I've been praying for you this week. The Lord would pour his spirit out upon you and your relationships and various responsibilities.

If you're a guest here at Providence, welcome. We're really, really glad that you have joined us as well. If you know Christ, we're glad that you came here to worship him, and if you don't, we're also really glad that you've come, and our prayer is that the Lord would help you to learn more about who he is and what he has done.

Here at Providence, we love the Bible, and most of the time, what we do as we gather, we read some. In fact, all of the times that we gather, we read some. Most of the time, we just work verse by verse through a book, which is what we're doing. So if you brought a Bible, if you want to turn with me to Ephesians chapter two. We're up to verse 13 through 16. If you don't have one with you, there's a lot of Bibles in the chairs near you.

If you don't have one at home, we would love for you to take that home as a gift, okay? We would love for you to have your own copy of the Bible. This message, this text deals with something that was happening there in Ephesus, and it's still happening today. It's very, very pertinent. It's about racial harmony and tension, hostility around the world. So it's obviously pertinent to our day.

God's word actually tells us that if he doesn't help us with this, if he doesn't open up our heart and our eyes to his word and help us to believe it, that we're going to walk out of these doors totally unchanged. So, I always love to pray even before we begin, so if you would, let's bow, and let's pray together.

Father in Heaven, thank you, that you love us. Thank you that you care for us. Thank you that you gave us your word, and as we read a portion of it this morning, we pray that you would do the miracle to work through all of the hurdles within our fallen hearts. That we choose not to believe all, or a portion of what we read here, and that you would give us the courage not only to believe it, but then the courage to practice it and to put it into practice in our life, to obey it.

So God, would you open up our eyes? Would you help us to see amazing things in your word, but even more than amazing things in your word, would you help us to see your son? The glory of Jesus Christ, in your word. That we would be amazed at him, that we would love him, that we would want to honor him, that we would want to aim every part of our life towards his life, because this book says that Christ is the point of our life.

So give us help, I pray. Speak through weakness, in Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.

Well, in my 44 years here on this earth, I've had the opportunity, which is just a very much a gracious privilege to visit roughly about 30 different countries on 6 different continents. So those travels have really put me in front of lots of different people, lots of different kinds of music, lots of different foods, lots of different ethnicities, languages, cultures, family structures, family dynamics. Beautiful things in terms of the landscape, in terms of the music, all kinds of diversity all around the world. Really, it's just an amazing gift that is just that. It's a gift. I didn't earn it, it's just a gift.

It's a beautiful place, it's an amazing place. What's sad is this. No matter where I've gone in the world, wherever I've traveled, I have found in that place, at least two different people groups who have a historical dislike and distrust for one another. Everywhere I have gone, there are people groups. We can call them tribes, because we tend to tribalize around people that are like us. Every tribe has a rival, and all of these rivals, just like these pictures show, are separated by really big walls and lots of bloody wars.

Hostilities and tensions, and suspicions, racially, ethnically. They exist all around the world. From the terrible genocide in Armenia to the massacres around Sudan, Rwanda, the Holocaust in Germany, the ethnic cleansing that's happening even today of the Kurds over in the Middle East. All the way to the slavery here in our own country, and all around England. The litany of ethnic and racial hatred is deep, and it's wide.

We know that, we know our culture is looking for solutions to that right now. We think it's in education, we think it's in transformation of the mind. We think that if we could have cultural appreciation experiments, and education, then somehow everything would change. The fact is, we're looking for solutions, and this is always the problem when we go looking for solutions to problems that are actually inside of us. We never get deep enough. We always deal with the symptoms and never with the infection.

You see, the Bible says that the problem in the world is the problem in our heart. We hardly ever look there. That's why the Bible is God's revelation. He says, "It's God's revelation". To reveal something to us, in other words, what's in this book, you can't invent and neither can I. We would never say, "You know what we should do, let's do it this way." No, God reveals the best way. God reveals how we deal with not only the symptoms, but even to pull back all the way to the infection of the heart.

So in God's revelation, we find here in chapter two, an explanation. In fact, the solution to our problem is actually found right here. What is happening in this text is Paul is addressing what is literally now a centuries long conflict in the Middle East between ethnic Jews and ethnic gentiles. All the other people that aren't Jews.

I believe why he's starting here, is that he wants to show us, "Look. If God can deal with this problem, you can deal with yours." So this is what he says. Let's back up to verse 12. He says, "Remember," He's speaking here to gentiles in Ephesus, who've come to faith in Jesus, and they are part of a church, lots of different churches in the city.

He says, "Remember that you were at that time, separated from Christ. Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise. Having no hope and without God in the world, but now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and is broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. By abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace. And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."

Now if you're looking for a thesis or a theme, just one central idea of what Paul is trying to unpack, I believe it would be this. God's desire is to take us from many ethnic bloodlines and lead us into the bloodline of Jesus. A bloodline that began at the cross, intended to bring people from every tribe and every language and every nation and every people group into one people.

What's interesting is, you look through this passage. We break it up into three different sermons, simply because of time. Verses 11 to verse 22 of chapter two, it's one central thought. He starts by saying, "Don't forget you guys were divided." Verses 13 through 16, that's our text. What he's saying is: Jesus brought you together. Next week, verse 17 to 22, he's going to say: Now here's how you live together, in a way that's going to honor Christ and be good for each other.

So next week is really, really practical. Hopefully not that this one won't be, but the fact is, what he wants to show in these verses is, this is how God did this.

In verse 12, it says, "You were strangers from each other." By verse 19, he says, "You are no longer strangers, but now you're literally citizens of the same household. One family. You've become brothers and sisters in Christ." You have to ask the question, how did Jesus pull this off? How did he accomplish this?

He did two things, I want to show you. The first is this, Jesus broke down the hostility separating us from God. The first thing he had to do was break down the hostility that existed. This wall of hostility that separated us from God. What he's doing here, is he's arguing from the greater to the lesser. I think this is why, what he's saying is this: If Jesus can break down the wall of hostility between holy God and sinful man, then surely he also has the authority and the power to be able to break down the wall of hostility between sinful man and sinful man.

So he starts, in verse 13 and he says, “You who once were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Then in verse 16, he says, “He reconciled us both to God, killing the hostility.” Hostility is something that we don’t necessarily use as a word that sits in the middle of us and God. We don’t feel it that way, but God felt it that way. God is solid, he felt, he saw a wall, an enormous wall of hostility. Some of us, we just look at that, and we think, “But I don’t just feel that kind of hostility, I’ve never felt that hostility. Even before I trusted Christ, I never felt that there was hostility between God and me.”

The reason is because you’re not the victim. Have you ever thought about that? You’re not the victim in this relationship. It’s always the victim who gets offended. Most of you have been in the car, you’re driving down, suddenly someone pulls out in front of you. A lot of us look like this guy, right? We’re like, “Wait!” Now the person who pulled out in front of you, they don’t look at it this way, you know why? Because they’re not offended. They don’t feel hostility in their heart, they may not even be aware that they pulled out in front of you, and if they are, they may have more of a face like, “I’m so sorry!”

They don’t feel hostility because they weren’t offended. Someone pulled out in front of you, and so you feel offended. What the Bible says is this, is that every one of us have all pulled out in front of God. We may not feel that, but that’s exactly what God says, is in our relationship with him, he is the offended party. Solomon 51, verse 4 says this, “Against you only, Lord God, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” In your sight.

Just image, I know it’s hard to sort of imagine, because this doesn’t happen. Let’s just say, let’s just imagine that you live in a neighborhood, and there’s this one particular neighbor that every time he’s about to sin, or is choosing to sin, he comes over and actually performs the sin in your living room. He brings everything that’s necessary in order to sin in your living room. So if he wants to lie to somebody, he brings the person he’s about to lie to, “I’m so sorry, this will only take a moment.” He comes right into the middle of your living room and he lies, “Thanks so much.” And they walk back out.

When that neighbor wants to commit adultery, when that neighbor wants to watch pornography, when he wants to bow down to idols, wood or stone. Anytime he wants to yell at his wife or hit his child. Anytime he wants to sin, every time he’s about to sin, he comes into your living room. You say, “Brian, this is crazy. That doesn’t happen.” It doesn’t happen to you, but it happens from you. That’s what he’s saying here. He goes, we live in God’s living room. Every time we sin, we’re doing it in his presence, in his face.

You see, there’s a lot of people who look at life and even at Christianity and the Bible as if we have our little world, and we’re asking God to rain down blessings into our world. Let me just tell you something, you have no world. You live in his world. We all live in his world. We’re all tenants. He owns everything. You came with what? You came with nothing, you came naked, that’s what you came with, that’s what I came with. When we leave, we take nothing with us. Everything in the middle is borrowed.

All of the relationships you have, all of the things you have, all the experiences that you have, God's allowing you to experience these things. Solomon 24, verse one says, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." It's all his. Welcome to God's living room. When we sin, there is always a victim. There is always an offended party when we sin, always. What God says, "It's always him." It may be other people as well, but even when we're offending someone else and we're sinning against another human being, we're also sinning against God.

You see, it's God's word that we disobey. It's God's wisdom that we don't esteem. It's God's presence that we don't love. It's God's pleasure that we disregard. It's his faithfulness that we don't trust. It's his justice that we don't respect. So imagine the offense, imagine if every time, God was offended by humanity. He added another brick to the wall of hostility. Imagine how tall that wall would be. How did God respond?

What this text says, it says that he had a son go over the wall. I don't know anybody on this earth that does that. I don't know anybody who loves their enemy so much that if it really came down to it, you would kill your own child for someone who intentionally always came to your living room and did all their sin in your presence in order to offend you. That's what God did. Jesus Christ came over the wall, and then he lived on our side of the wall. He was tempted just as we were, yet he never sinned. He declared himself God, this was the first time that all the Jews and gentiles, they said, "Hey, we can all rally together on this. Let's kill him!"

So he went to the cross, and when he went to the cross, he absorbed all of the hostility that was directed towards us. He took all of it himself. This is why it says he, by the cross, by his blood, he killed the hostility. He broke down the wall between us and God. He was our mediator. This is why first Timothy, chapter two, verse five, he says, "There is one God, and there's one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The word mediator means two people have a problem, they can't get along, someone else needs to come into the middle who identifies both of their issues.

Jesus came over the wall to identify with us, he took on a body and was tempted just as we were to identify with us, and yet he never sinned, just like his father. He became the mediator to say, "God, the father and sinful humanity, I can mediate between the two of you." If you've never trusted Christ, there is hostility that is stored up towards you. It doesn't have to be. Jesus died, and if you believe in him, that he died and rose again, he literally will take away all of that hostility. He'll take away that sin, he'll give you his righteousness, and it says here that he becomes our peace. That hostility was killed by the blood of Jesus through the cross.

Now why is this so important to an idea? Wait, you said, “I thought this was about racial relationships?” This is why I believe he starts here, because until we see how God’s wrath can be overcome towards us, we will never believe that there is a solution that can overcome the wrath that we have for one another. This is true in any marriage or any relationship, any culture, any ethnic divide, any divide between two people here on the earth, or more than two people here on the earth. When there is a divide between the two, if we do not see that there was a wrath, a hostility, a wall that is taller and bigger and thicker than any wall that we have between each other, then that wall could be crushed down, we would be absolutely hopeless to think that the walls between each other could be pulled down.

What Paul is saying, what the word of God is saying is, he starts with a greater in order to emphasize that he has the power to reconcile the lesser. I’m not saying that the fences that people have on this earth, that they’re not significant, they are. To be totally honest with you, they do not compare to the offense that humanity brought upon God, and the hostility between a perfect, holy God, and all of humanity that’s sinned against him.

The first thing we see is that he broke down this hostility separating us from God, the second thing is that he broke down hostilities separating us from one another. One another. Anytime you see a racial flare-up, anytime you see a racial rally that turns rough. Anytime you see supremacy of people groups on the earth being held up as honorable over other people groups, anytime there’s a racial flare-up, you have to understand something. That is that you came late to the fight, always. The pot has been on low-heat for a long, long, long time. What we tend to do, we are a people that deal with a headache and not with the cancer.

We are always a people that are dealing with symptoms instead of the infection, it’s always deeper. We’re always looking for the quick fix, instead of the eternal fix. So we’re always dealing with, “Why is that rally happening? Why is this happening? Why was this tension taking place? Let’s just train people a little bit different.” So what this text tells us, it says, “If you really want to be whole, you have to back up far enough to get all the way back to the source of that infection.”

Some people are going to go, “Wow, this tension between Jews and all these gentiles, it’s really long-standing. We’ve got to go back a long way.” It’s interesting, we never go back far enough. Most people, where do they go? They go back to Abraham. Father Abraham. This is the start, most people believe, of this tension. Indeed, there is ... It certainly tells a story. Let me tell you just a little bit of the story.

In the 12th chapter of Genesis, God comes to a man named Abraham, and he graciously chooses him. He says, “Look, the whole earth is sinning against me. But I’m going to choose you.” He gives him four different promises. He says, “I’m going to bless you. I’m going to make you into a nation, even though you have

no children, and your wife is barren. Third, I'm going to give you a very special land. A piece of land on the earth that you're going to love. You're going to love this place." The fourth thing is, he says, "Through you, all the nations will be blessed." In other words, the rescuer that's needed in order to reconcile man and God is going to come from your lineage. One day, there will be a child that's born from somewhere in your line that will be the savior of the world. This is the promise.

God gave it to him when he was 75 years old. 75. Well, nine years pass, so now he's 84, and he still has no kids. He looks at God and he says, "Man, I thought there was a promise, and so he takes things into his own hands." So he takes Hagar, his servant in his own hands. He sleeps with her and has a child, his name is Ishmael. Ishmael. Well, God comes to Abraham and he goes, "You know what, this is not my plan, because this son glorifies your power and your effort and your work. It doesn't glorify me, so this is what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you a son that will glorify me and my work and my accomplishments in your life."

So God made sure that he waited long enough until everyone knew that we couldn't praise Abraham. He waited 15 more years, now he's 99. Romans chapter four says, "Of this man, he was as good as dead." That's not a compliment, is it. As good as dead, it was very clear now, Abraham could not have children and Sarah's wife was barren. It was at this point in time that God did a miracle in their life, she has a son, and his name is Isaac. This creates a family feud, you see? Isaac, the Jews, Ishmael and the Arabs, the gentiles. They both assumed rights over the land, over the promise.

That our ancestor is the true son of the promise. So God gave them a book, and the gentiles, they rejected the book, the Bible. The reason they rejected it is because it says that God's blessing goes to Isaac. Isaac's kids, they get all arrogant with the book, and they start saying things like, "Hey, have you ever heard of David and Goliath?" Yeah? Well, David's our people, Goliath is your people. All of the villains in the book, they're all your people. All the heroes in the book, they're all our people.

They become arrogant with this. This becomes even more of a problem, and resting on this feud are literally thousands of years of wrongs and then retaliations to those wrongs, and then retaliations to those retaliations. Nine years ago, we were in Israel. Literally, you go to Israel, it's a beautiful place, it's awe-inspiring, and yet you feel like it's a time bomb. You're just waiting for things to happen, there's so much tension.

Check this out, they've got teenagers that they draft for either two or three years to be in the Army, and they all have a machine gun walking around. Literally. A machine gun! Just walking around, they're just teenagers. It's crazy! There's so much tension. Two days before we're about to leave in Jerusalem, an Arab man drives a backhoe into a coffee shop, kills a bunch of people. Everyone's like, "Man, why would you do that?!" Well, it's because one of his ancestors was hurt by one of the Jews at some point in time. Why did that happen? And it just keeps going back, and it stacks.

Hostility stacks up on hostility which stacks up on hostility, and here's our problem. We always say: Had he not gone through the coffee shop, I wouldn't be so mad. We never get back to the source, because we never get far enough back.

If we don't go far enough back, we'll wrongly conclude that all racial tensions, including the ones in our own land, that they originate with land and bloodlines and skin colors. So God says, "You've got to back farther than Abraham, even farther than Abraham." The reality is, Abraham, when God chose Abraham, Joshua-24 actually says of him, that he's bowing down with his dad to stone and wood idols. He commits adultery. I mean, seriously, if I did this, I would be your former pastor, right? When God chose Abraham, and Abraham believed in God's promise and became part of God's Kingdom, the moral average of the Kingdom of God did not elevate.

Even the Jews have nothing to be proud of in terms of the moral ancestry. Even the New Testament says, it goes, look ... Let me be really clear about this. "God didn't choose you because you're better than anybody else. It was just grace." So if we go far enough back, we get to the first verse of the Bible. It says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. God created a man and a woman." He said to them, "I want you to multiply, to have children, who have children, and children." So this is where we all came from. One human race.

They sinned against God, and they brought death and strife to all of that one human race. Like DNA, it was passed to each one of us that we would all die and that we would all have strife with one another. Sadly, the unselfish heart that was in the garden before sin that said, "My life for your good", was now transformed into saying, "Your life for my good".

Ultimately, if you really think about what's happening in the world, even in the whole historical context of our culture, of our nation and of every other nation and every other ethnic battle around the world, what you see is the seed bed is this. There's a transition from, "My life for your good", to "Your life for my good". This is the seed bed of our nation's deepest stains. Personally, my evaluation is that our two deepest stains as a country, slavery and abortion, people thinking they can own people. Then in the last 45 years, 60 million babies have been killed. Why would this take place? Because we conclude that the value of our heart is this, we move from my life for your good, to, "I'm going to take your life for my good".

It always starts in the heart. You see, we always have to go deeper though. While slavery and genocide and tyranny and supremacy rallies, whether they're white or brown or black, or whatever they are, they're all evil. They're all vile, they're all sinful. But the real source of the infection was and still is a sinful heart that demands to get its own at the expense of other people. Without the right antibiotic, we will forever deal with symptoms instead of the source.

So what's the antibiotic? Jesus came, and he said, "This is the antibiotic. It's a new heart that lives a life of repentance." You see, when we trust Jesus Christ as our savior, the Bible says that we're born again. Ezekiel-36, he describes what it means to be born again in these words, he says, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you." So those of us who are in Christ, we are absolutely new, but we still have our old ruts. We have to repent of our ruts.

When Jews and gentiles began to believe in Jesus Christ, this is what happens, right? Jesus rises from the dead, all the eyewitnesses, they were all Jewish. The first church was Jewish. They start telling people that Jesus rose from the dead, and that good news got out. Gentiles started hearing, and they start believing in Christ. So here in Ephesus, they had to ask a question. That is: Well, we all need a church too, so what should we do? Should we just put the Jewish church to Jesus Christ on one side, and the gentile church in the other?

He says, "No, because you're no longer two people. You're one people. You're no longer two families. You're one family. You're no longer multi-bloodlines, you're now one bloodline. If you're in Christ, you are now one." That's what he says. You see, if Jesus is the mediator, Jews and gentiles come to Jesus, they're brought near to each other. In our context, if Jesus is the mediator and people who are black and people who are white both come to Jesus, they're brought near to each other. Just as every other ethnicity and every other race and every other skin color that there is.

It says that we're brought near, and then he says that Jesus broke down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed into ordinances. What does that mean?

It means as long as the Old Testament was confused as the foundation of how we're reconciled to God. So long as the Bible was confused as rules that we're supposed to keep, and if we keep them, we'll be reconciled with God. Nobody had any hope. Why did no one have hope? Because the gentiles didn't have the book, and the Jews never kept the book, because they couldn't. You see, the Bible actually says that the laws came after sin, not before.

In other words, people are out sinning, and God says, "They don't know that I call that sin." In other words, he gave lying people the command, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." It didn't start with the commandment, and he goes, "Oh my goodness, what am I going to do?" He says, "I need to show them how they're sinning." Nobody could be reconciled to God by obeying the Bible. Did you hear that? Nobody can be reconciled to God by obeying the rules in the Bible.

We're only reconciled by believing in Jesus, that he kept all of the rules. That he was Holy. So Christ died to build a new foundation, that he might create in himself one new man in the place of the two. Now if you're following along, what I'm really saying is this, America and every other country, so long as people do not come to faith in Jesus Christ, will not experience racial harmony on the earth.

We can educate people. We can do all kinds of things sociologically, but the reality is, the problem is in the heart, so there will constantly be flare-ups on this earth between people who do not look like each other. Here's the hope. You say, "Well, that's daunting. Let's take that nugget out, let's take that home and ..." No, no. Here's the hope, is that God has created a church on the earth to be a light, a city on a hill. Where people of different colors, of different genders, can all come together. All these created differences, we all come together.

Instead of tolerating one another, we appreciate one another. Instead of saying, "Your life for my good", we say, "My life for your good". Suddenly, Jesus becomes the rallying point to all kinds of diversity, and on this earth, the people outside of the church, they look and they go, "Man, look what Jesus can do to a diverse people. He can bring them together. That they love one another and appreciate the great diversity that is there."

Next week, we're going to talk about a lot of applications for us personally, here in Raleigh. Four things right now, what do we do with this text before we take this up? First is this: Let's trust Christ and be reconciled. If you don't know Christ, we welcome you to trust him today. Whatever your tribe is, however you would define that, you need to know that Jesus is not a tribal god. He's the God of every tribe. Every tribe will be represented at his throne. So we urge you to trust him today.

The second thing is this: Let's repent for rebuilding what Christ has torn down. Jesus looked at a wall of hostility, racially and ethnically here on the earth between us, and he pulled it down. Do not be the man or the woman who seeks to build it back up. Those of us who contribute to trying to build it back up, the Bible has a very simple invitation to you. And that is stop. It is repent. You say, "Well, what does that look like, to rebuild the wall?" For some of us in the room, it's simply repenting of hatred. Unjustifiable hatred towards people, repent.

For some of us in the room, it's suspicion. Every single week, daily installments in a fallen world are filtered and sprinkled all over our heart. Some of us simply walk in here and we're saying, "I wonder if those people are like those people?" Repent. For some of us in the room, just like me, I wrote you a two page article this week. If you've not seen it, it's on the website, it's just on indifference. We look at it and go, "I don't have a problem with anybody, so those who do have a problem with each other, they should repent and move on." If that's you, you need to repent.

Jesus broke down a wall, we do not want to contribute to building it back up. The third thing is: Let's show the gospel's power by appreciating one another. This requires a change of heart. You see, the goal of the church is not to see each other as though we're not different in our skin color, but it's appreciate diversity and skin and culture. God made these things. In Revelation, chapter five, verse nine says that when we get to heaven, he doesn't take them away, what he takes away in heaven is our hearts and ability to appreciate these things. To love these things.

You see, the world needs to see a model that moves past toleration to appreciation. It needs to see a model to where we move from, “Your life for my good”, to, “My life for your good.” You need to understand something. The odds are against this providence, by the time we regather for next week’s sermon, you’re going to have six days where the culture has sprinkled an investment of suspicion in your life for people who don’t look like you. So if you don’t sprinkle truth any more than on Sundays, we will always be behind in this area, which is why the verse for us to memorize, there’s two of them in November. They’re Ephesians Chapter 2, verses 18 and 19. This is what it says. Let’s say it together.

Ready? “For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So that you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” What this means is this: Is that you need to be placing good seed in your heart that reminds you that the people who are unlike you, when they come to faith in Jesus Christ, they are one of you. They’re one of you. Fight for your heart.

The fourth is this: Let’s share the gospel as our only hope. I want to urge you not to shine a light as the people of God on the problem of race, and racial tensions in the world without also shining a light on the solution that we know is the gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, without a change of heart, there’s no harmony. Only Christ can give us a new heart. Only he can give a repentant heart. So let’s labor to speak of the gospel as frequently as we labor to highlight injustices to the world. Those of us who are tempted to just talk about the injustices, we actually contribute to the problem by not giving people the solution that is found in Jesus Christ.

You see Providence, old things may explain things about us, but they no longer have to define us. Christ made us one body through the cross. So when we come to a supper, isn’t it interesting that the supper is all about family? This is how we know this. The supper, the Lord’s supper was initiated the night that he was betrayed. It was the Passover. The Jews would always take Passover with their family, it was commanded. You do this with your family, and yet Jesus took 12 men away from their families to celebrate and institute a new supper with him. Doing so, what he’s saying is this, “You are my family. You are a new family. It’s not saying that you throw away your old family. It’s that you have an allegiance to a new family, because I am your King. I am your Father.”

You see, when we take of this, what we’re saying, you look around the room and there’s people who don’t look like you. But if you know Jesus Christ, we’ve become one family and one household. Isn’t that good news? So for those that will be serving us, if you want to go ahead and stand up and head to the back, so grateful for our deacons who do this for us. As they do this, let me just remind Jesus told us to take this supper to do two things. He wants us to remember what he did, and he wants us to proclaim what he did.

So if you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your savior, we would just humbly ask that you would let these elements pass, but if you do know Christ, we welcome you to to the table. We ask you to take it. We want you to take it. Jesus does tell us that we need to take this with a clear conscious. So as these elements are being passed, I want to encourage you to do two things. One would be confess any sin in your life, so that you can take it with a clean conscious. Then second, marvel. Really marvel at the word of God as Ephesians two is read to us. So if you would, let's bow, let's pray.

Father in Heaven, we thank you for your kindness, and we pray now, God, that as we take of the Lord's Supper, that you would prepare our hearts. We thank you for our new family, we thank you for our new identity in Jesus Christ, and pray, God, that you would continue to do the miracle that you began in our lives to bring about harmony within the church that would be attracted to the world. So we look to you, we need your help, we pray this in Christ name. Amen.



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