

March 12, 2016

Ephesians 2:11-22

Belonging is rooting for something, while at the same time, excluding something else. This plays out in society today with an “us and them” attitude that even carries into our Christian lives; we believe we have the ability to decide who and what is included or excluded from *our* world.

In Ephesians 2, Paul distinguishes Gentiles from Jews in that Gentiles must remember what they never had. Gentiles must recognize – much like we must recognize today – the separation, alienation, desperation and desolation that lies in the past in order to understand the unlimited blessing there is in Jesus Christ. We must also note that, like the Jews, our self-righteousness serves as a barrier to experiencing God’s embrace. Thankfully, due to Jesus’ death on the cross, the “wall of hostility” has been destroyed and everyone in Christ – both Jew and Gentile – has complete access to God.

Questions

1. Bill gave the example of being a freshman in high school and feeling excluded because of his pimples. When was a time in your life when you felt excluded and how did it affect your identity?
2. As Christians, we tend to develop our *own* ideas of what God is looking for that skew the reality that *all* are included in God’s family based on Christ’s work. What characteristics of people do you find yourself avoiding or writing off as “more ungodly” and thus worth excluding from God’s kingdom?
3. In order to appreciate our present identity in Christ, we must never forget the past and from where we have come. Without glorifying your sin, share what you are thankful He has delivered (& even continues to deliver) you from.
4. Some of us carry the burden of our shame-filled past. We tend to believe that there are parts of our past that are too dirty to be cleaned. If God can take the uncleanness of the Gentiles who were enemies and had no heritage in His family and make them the very building blocks of His temple, then there is nothing too big for God to forgive. What burdens do you continue to carry, thinking God cannot possibly redeem?
5. What is it that makes you think you are good in and of yourself (i.e. moral habits, avoidance of bad behaviors, good works, etc.)? Expose that sin before the group (perhaps in gender specific breakouts) and repent before the Lord.