

A New Humanity - Eph. 2:11-22 (18/5/08)

Karl Marx popularised the word 'alienation' having taken it from Ludwig Feuerbach.

Alienation is partly a sense of disaffection with 'what is', and partly a sense of being powerless to do anything about it.

Long before Feuerbach and Marx the Bible spoke of human alienation.

Alienation from God, and alienation from one another.

The Bible talks a lot about gentiles, that was those outside the Jewish faith and that was so evident in the way that the rules were enforced.

Josephus talked about the temple 'enclosed by a stone wall for a partition, with an inscription which forbade any foreigner to go in under pain of death'.

Two Greek notices have been discovered, one in 1871 and the other in 1935. The 1871 one reads 'No foreigner may enter within the barrier and enclosure round the temple. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his own death.'

Although all human beings are separated from God because of sin, the gentiles were also alienated from the people of God.

Paul begins by listing the problems that the gentiles face. Separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise. Having no hope and without God in the world.

This was the terrible 5 fold living conditions of the gentiles in the ancient world, before Jesus.

Were we not the same in our days before we really knew Jesus? Really accepted him?? Maybe there are some here who have still to accept him?? Some who are still waiting on the opportunity to still really know him.

People still build walls of partition today. The Berlin wall, erect invisible curtains of Iron or bamboo. Or barriers of race, colour, caste, tribe or class.

It's the constant of community without Christ.

But Now. I love those words in the Bible.

But now in Christ Jesus, you have been brought near. This nearness to God which all Christians enjoy through Christ is a privilege we take too frequently for granted.

Through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit we have immediate 'access' to God as our Father.

God does not keep his distance.

Verse 14

Why did Christ do it.....by abolishing.....that he might create.....and might reconcile.....

By abolishing? He said often enough that he came to uphold the law, so what does he mean. He didn't abolish the moral law as a standard of behaviour; but he did abolish it as a way of salvation.

Acceptance with God is now through faith in Christ. The law was a barrier; faith unites us.

We are no longer condemned under law; we have the opportunity of life through faith.

By creating?

Paul is referring to a new human race, united by Jesus Christ in himself. Inequality before God is abolished. There is a new unity in Christ.

Reconciliation?

He reconciled this new united humanity to God, having killed through the cross all the hostility between us.

God's Kingdom (v.19)

Paul sees another Kingdom, past the Roman Empire that governs his time. A kingdom both international and interracial. Lloyd-Jones comments 'we no longer live on a passport, but we really have our birth certificates,.....we really belong.

God's Family (v.19)

A kingdom is one thing, and member of the household is another. You're in the family.

Brethren (meaning brothers and sisters in the most common word for Christians in the New Testament.

God's Temple (v.20-22)

The Foundation

Built on the New Testament Scripture. The Church's founding documents.

Cornerstone. Is crucial. Its Jesus himself (cornerstone of the temple 38ft).

The new temple is neither a building or a shrine. Nor has it a localised site.

It is a spiritual building, God's household. International community. Worldwide spread.

I wonder if anything is more urgent today, for the honour of Jesus and for the spread of the gospel, than that the church should be, and should be seen to be, what by God's purpose and Christ's achievement it is already is -

a single new humanity,
a model of human community,
a family of reconciled brothers and sisters who love their Father and love each other,
the evident dwelling place of God by his Spirit.

Only then will the world believe in Christ as peacemaker.
Only then will God receive the glory due to his name.