



SEQUIM COMMUNITY CHURCH

EPHESIANS

SESSION 6: THE NEW COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Ephesians 2:11-13 • January 23, 2018

“Exploring the new life and new society God has created through Jesus”

By Rev. Rick Dietzman, Minister of Adult Discipleship

Ice Breaker: Find as many things as possible you all have in common in your small group.

Paul longed for the Gentile Christians to know how they had been brought near to God through Jesus Christ. Before Christ’s coming, Gentiles (non-Jews) and Jews kept apart from each other. Jews considered Gentiles beyond God’s saving power and therefore without hope. The Gentiles in turn resented the Jewish claims. Jewish males were circumcised ten days after being born as a sign of the covenant, signifying they belonged to Israel and were part of God’s family. Gentiles were not circumcised, but could be if they were willing to convert to Judaism.

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called ‘uncircumcised’ by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)-- 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

1. What does each of these five strikes against the Gentiles mean?

- Separate from Christ _____
- Excluded from citizenship _____
- Foreigners of the covenant _____
- Without hope _____
- Without God _____

This passage emphasizes the distinction between those who are circumcised and those who are uncircumcised. Historically this kind of discord or discrimination had also happened at some level between Jews and Samaritans (John 4); between Jews who spoke Hebrew and those who spoke Greek (Acts 6); and even Judean Jews and Galilean Jews (Matthew 21:11, John 1:46, 7:52).

2. How does this religious name calling continue today? _____

• What group do you tend to look upon negatively? _____

• Why does that particular group bug you so much? _____

• Is your view justified, or does your attitude need to change? _____

Jesus was no stranger to prejudice and theological differences. In fact, Scripture says that he provided the answer for centuries of racial, economic, and religious strife. His answer was not like John Lennon's "Imagine" song where there are no countries, wars, religion, heaven or hell. Instead we come back to the powerful notion of the "blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). Jesus' shed blood on the cross was pivotal for the entire order of the universe. It set him as the supreme authority and head over all, and gave the potential for those who are far away from God to be brought near. Christ has broken down the walls people build between themselves so we can come into real unity with people who are not like us.

"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'... These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." -- Revelation 7:9-10, 14

3. At the final day depicted in Revelation, there is a multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, gathered around and worshipping. What is it that unifies them?

4. These verses in Ephesians speak in depth about removing barriers between people. Yet, where do we draw the line on accepting people with moral or doctrinal differences?

Praying for one another

This lesson naturally leads us to wrestle with how being reconciled to God through Christ affects our reconciliation with others. What "dividing wall" in our world would you most like to see come down? Perhaps there is a relationship in your life where you need to let Christ knock down some walls and do a work of reconciliation. Talk about any relevant areas that have come up, and pray for any needs you are facing.