

Ephesians 2: 11-22 ~ Brought Near

Lord's Day 21 joins the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, and the forgiveness of sins. Ephesians 2 shows how these belong together: God brings outsiders near, makes them His household, and gives them peace through the blood of Christ.

1. God had a people in mind

Paul tells the Gentiles that they were once separated from Christ, strangers to the covenants, "having no hope and without God in the world." God entrusted His promises to Israel through Abraham, Moses, and David. His choice was grace, and His promise to Abraham included all the families of the earth. Ephesians 1 says He chose a people in Christ before the foundation of the world. He was not improvising. He had you in mind before you had any thought of Him.

Then Christ came, and the Gospel went first to the Jew and then to the Gentile. "You who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." How glorious that you are here. You had no claim upon God, yet He brought the Gospel to you, gave you faith, and placed you among His people. None of us wandered into the ark because we were smarter than everybody drowning outside. We are here because God is merciful.

That grace kills pride and sends us outward. Christ still gathers His Church from the whole human race through His Spirit and Word. Who are you praying for? Whom are you inviting or speaking to about Christ? If you believe in Him, you may say with the Catechism, "I am a living member" of His Church. Now hold out the same Gospel to those still far off.

2. God has placed us in a household

"You are no longer strangers and aliens," Paul says, "but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." There is a seat at the table with your name on it because Christ brought you here. A household has a life together. We love and bear with one another; we use what God has given us for the good of the family. The Catechism says to use our gifts "readily and joyfully" for the other members.

Imagine a military unit whose mortar team refuses to fire or whose radio operator refuses to make the call. Christians can be content with the safety and food of the ark while leaving Noah to shovel everything himself. Christ has chosen to care for His people through His people.

Who needs encouragement? Which young person needs an older Christian's attention? What ability are you keeping to yourself? Serve gladly, and guard the unity of the house. Christ has made former strangers one family.

3. God has forgiven us in Christ

How can sinners belong in God's house? We have been brought near "by the blood of Christ." His whole obedience is ours: He fulfilled the law we failed to keep, and at the cross He bore the curse we deserved. Because Christ made satisfaction, God forgives our sins and grants us His righteousness. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

The devil may drag up your old sins, and your conscience may accuse you. Confess what is true and repent where repentance is needed. Then look again to Jesus. The case has already been judged. We fight sin as sons and daughters, with a place in the family, rather than as slaves trying to earn one. Your confidence before God rests on Christ's record, not yours.

So be humble and useful in His house. Love the family. Use your gifts gladly. Carry the Gospel to those still far off. When you fail, run again to Jesus Christ, for the Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.