

The Lord's Supper is a Family Making Meal

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by David Schrock

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 has 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. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Ephesians 2:13-16

Racism. Elitism. Sexism. Ageism. Ethnocentrism of all stripes. The world is filled with hostility. One race enslaves another, one caste condescends toward another, one generation mocks another. In every age, in every region, among every people strife marks humanity.

For all the talk about equality in our world today, there is no such thing--not if it is brokered by sinful humans. For how often do those who fight for justice become unjust when they are given a place of power? As Jesus said, the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over you (Mark 10:42), and when the Jews had power in his day, they did the same. The politicians and prophets of this age talk of world peace and equality for all, but with hearts filled with strife such promises are only societal hallucinations (Mark 7:21-23).

It won't work. It hasn't worked. Something more is needed to unify people.

How the Cross of Christ Makes Peace

In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul gives the answer to what will unify people. It is not an endless search to find common ground or become colorblind; peace on earth comes from God in heaven. Only through vertical reconciliation with God, can lasting peace be found in the community created by Jesus death and resurrection. Speaking of this very reconciliation, Paul says three things about the way Jesus and his bloody cross brings peace.

First, Jesus IS our peace.

Perfect in all of his ways, Jesus doesn't simply promise peace. He is peace. Unlike a foreign delegate trying to set up a peace treaty, Jesus lives to unite historic enemies. Whereas, God divided humanity between Jew (the sons of Abraham through Isaac) and Gentile (everyone else), Jesus Christ came at the right time to "break down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances."

Jesus fulfilled the law, so that what divided Jew and Gentile--namely the law of Moses--would be replaced by Christ himself. His law written on human hearts superseded and completed laws written in stone (see Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6). As James interpreted Amos 9:11-15 in Acts 15, the rebuilding of David's tent included the Gentiles, so that Jesus is now the [covenantal "glue"](#) that binds all nations together (Isaiah 42:6; 49:8). The church of Jesus Christ is neither Jew nor Gentile (1 Corinthians 10:32); it is Jew and Gentile, a third race that finds life in the Spirit and peace in Christ.

Second, Jesus procured peace.

Through Jesus death on the cross, he accomplished two things that procured peace. First, he destroyed the dividing wall---a symbol of the barrier that stood between Jews and Gentiles. Second, he created one new man. This, Paul says, made peace.

History might argue against Paul's point if one understands him to say Jesus' religion produces peace. But he doesn't say that. It is not religion that produces peace, nor is it permission for religious diversity. Lasting peace comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the cross, when Jesus died in the place of his people, he procured peace for his "one new man." As Paul says in Romans 6:3-6, those who have been made alive in Christ were also crucified with him. And those who die in him, have his peace-making life.

Third, Jesus proclaims peace.

Still, it is not enough for Jesus to grant peace if he doesn't proclaim it. The common logic of the New Testament is (1) to remind people of the grace they have received in Christ and (2) to live in light of their new position in Christ. That's how Paul attends to the factions in Corinth (1 Cor 1:4-17), the Jew-Gentile divide in Ephesus (Eph 4:1-16), and the problem with false philosophies tearing at the church in Colosse (Colossians 3:1-17).

In Ephesians 2:17, Paul says that "Christ proclaims peace." Amazingly, Paul puts the gospel in Jesus' mouth and says that the resurrected Lord still speaks. He proclaims peace by the Spirit and through the church. In the gospel, Jesus is speaking, beckoning irreconcilable sinners to be reconciled to God and then with one another. In truth, one of the reasons why we continue to preach the gospel is because Christ by his Spirit is speaking his word to us. In the same breath, Christians with different backgrounds need the gospel to remind us of the unity we have in Christ.

The Lord's Supper is a Family-Making Meal

In our country, pictures from the 'Jim Crow' South remind us of the hateful divisions we have faced (and still face). In that era, whites forced blacks to eat in different restaurants, drink from separate fountains, to name only a few examples. Such licensed segregation reminds us of the ugliness of racial hostility. Five decades later, racism and all other prejudices continue to rear their hideous head in our country.

The Lord's table is the antithesis to such division. In the simple meal of bread and wine, God's multi-ethnic people gather around the same table. We eat of the same bread and drink from the same cup. We proclaim the same body sacrificed for us and the same blood that forgives our sins. We remember how we deserve the same penalty but have received resurrection life instead. We are not a United Nations where each of us come to lobby our concerns; we are one, a holy nation that lay our concerns at the feet of Jesus.

In truth, while America's churches still suffer the effects of cultural misunderstanding and racial separation, it is the Spirit-filled church of Jesus Christ that alone has power to bring peace. Only in a place where the gospel of Jesus Christ is exalted above all other messages, can blacks and whites, Asians and Africans, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile find what we all desire---peace on earth and good will to men. This is what Christ came to give his multi-colored bride, peace with the Father and grace for one another. And it's this peace-making gospel message we proclaim every time we sit down at the Lord's table.

Look around the room this Sunday and marvel at the diversity of the gathering. Different ages. Different colors. Different nationalities. It is a testimony to the power of the gospel and the grace of God which turns enemies into family. May God grant us communion as we eat this common meal.

For Your Glory and his joy, Pastor David