

Title: Good Hope Mountain  
Date: February 5, 2023  
Subject: We are included in God's program of rescuing humanity - made right with him and people.  
Scripture: Ephesians 2:11 - 22

One of Jesus' first disciples was a fisherman named Peter. He's often envisioned as a big fisherman. Other times, as in the TV show *The Chosen*, Peter is a scrappy little guy, who was a gambler, a conniver.

His big, brash character is evident in the New Testament. He's outspoken and seemingly always in the forefront. Like most Jews of his time, he didn't have a warm spot in his heart for Gentiles, those who weren't Jews. He despised being ruled by the Roman Empire with its ever-present tax collectors.

Things began to change for him when he began following Jesus. He saw Jesus interact with Jews... and Gentiles. The main turning point came after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Peter was the leader of the followers of Christ. One day he had a vision from God. Heaven opened and something like a large sheet descended with all kinds of ceremonially unclean foods for Jews. A voice told him to kill and eat. Peter said he'd never do anything like because he'd never eaten anything impure or unclean. This happened three times.

Peter wondered about the meaning of the vision. At that moment some men came to the house where he was staying. The men appealed to Peter to come with them because a Roman military leader named Cornelius wanted to hear what he had to say.

Peter went with them. He spoke to the assembled gathering: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean" (Acts 10:28). Then he shared how they could know Christ as Savior.

Later the church leaders met to discuss what requirements, if any, should be placed upon Gentiles who'd placed their trust in Christ. Peter referred back to his experience: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith... We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are" (Acts 15:7 - 11).

Peter is a living example of the truth taught in today's scripture.

Read Ephesians 2:11 - 22.

I. We were on the outside looking in. vv. 11, 12

One of the keywords in vv. 11 and 12 is "remember." It links to the previous passage - remember you were dead, devilish, disobedient and doomed. These lead to more Ds - disconnected and disenfranchised.

Jews reveled in being God's chosen people. From that unique relationship they were to point all peoples to God. They had received the 10 commandments and more of God's moral law in a codified form. They had the covenants God made. They had his word and his prophets declaring his word.

Gentiles were excluded from the advantages and privileges the Jews received. They were derogatorily called “uncircumcised” referring to the physical act the Jews felt was a critical mark of them being God's chosen people. Gentiles had nothing and were nothing.

Jews did more than look down on Gentiles. They hated, despised and reviled Gentiles. They were abominable lowlifes not even rising to the level of being second class citizens. Devout Jews thanked God he didn't make them a Gentile.

The temple, the holy place where people were to worship God, was divided into sections. There was a court for the Jews and a court for the Gentiles which was 19 steps lower. I don't believe this was included in the Old Testament instructions for building the temple nor was the inscription on a plaque that warned Gentiles if they entered the area for Jews, they would be put to death.

The condition of people before they come to know Christ as Savior is summarized in v. 12. They were without hope and without God. That's a very bad place to be.

We come again to the great word we discovered last week - “but.” 30 of the 32 translations I checked use “but.” The other two use “and.”

But.

II. Christ Jesus changed things. vv. 13, 14

Christ Jesus changes the lives of people. It's accomplished through his blood, his atoning death on the cross through which he brought God and people together. He paid the price for the sins we've committed.

This is the focus of communion. We did it early in the service this morning to set an undertone for everything we're doing. God's love for us is shown through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We usually think of it in terms of the physical suffering and agony he went through on the cross. A crown of thorns was embedded on his head. Nails were pounded through his arms and feet. Each breath was torture as he raised himself, withstanding the pain in his feet long enough to suck some air into his lungs before succumbing to the need to give relief to his feet. Then the pain would shift as he'd hang on his arms. Every fiber of his being felt like electricity was going through them as his muscles spasmed and nerves sent lightning bolts to his brain.

There was emotional, mental and psychological suffering. He was crucified in front of a belligerent mob who yelled and screamed at him. They called him every name in the book and hurled insults at him for claiming to be God. They mocked him by suggesting he should call on his Father in heaven to see if he really loved him and he would take him down off the cross. The crowd didn't expect anything to happen. They were just hoping to inflict some more suffering.

Over and above the physical, mental, emotional and psychological suffering, there was the spiritual. Jesus, the one who is fully God and fully human, who had never committed any sin, never violated any of God's principles, commands and standards...He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). At the climactic moment, when the weight of your sin and my sin and the sin of all humanity was on him, he cried out, “My God. My

God. Why have you forsaken me?” He did it because of his love for us. Jesus is the peace offering, the peace treaty, the peacemaker.

### III. We have a new relationship with God. vv. 13 - 18

A. Brought near. V. 13. The distance from being separated from God to being connected with God is so immense it can't be measured even by light years. Jesus bridged the gap. Those who had been far away because of human restrictions are now near. There are no longer hoops to jump through. No longer being held at arm's length. No “off limits” signs posted. There's no restricted entry open only to the elite. We've gone from excluded to being included. The obstacles and roadblocks have been removed. Had been apart but now are a part. We've come a long way.

Jesus opened the way for people to have direct access to God. The Jewish priests in the temple got a front row seat for a visual illustration when the massive, thick curtain was torn from top to bottom. Think they weren't more than a little freaked out? People don't have to go through any person or institution to get to God. All people are able to approach him.

B. Reconciled. V. 16. One source says Paul made up this word. Reconcile is used only here and one other place in the Bible. It means “to reunite those who were originally united, but afterwards separated by the sin of man” (Ellicott's Commentary on Ephesians 1:16).

Reconcile is bringing things into proper alignment, like reconciling the checkbook to the bank statement. Jean does this. She verifies that the checks we've written and the deposits we've made are reflected in what the bank says has been done.

Reconciliation/alignment is important for vehicles. According to [bridgestonetire.com](http://bridgestonetire.com): “Tire alignment, also known as wheel alignment, can help your tires perform properly and help them last longer. It can also improve handling and keep your vehicle from pulling in one direction or vibrating strangely on the road. Alignment refers to an adjustment of a vehicle's suspension – the system that connects a vehicle to its wheels...The key to proper alignment is adjusting the angles of the tires which affects how they make contact with the road.”

Jesus Christ realigns us with God. He makes it possible for us to have contact with God and that things are functioning the way they should.

Jesus brought peace with God. We're no longer enemies of God. The battles are over. The war is done. There's no longer hostility between us and God. Peace is an integral part of what God does for us as shown by its prevalence in the passage (14, 15, 17).

All are reconciled in the same means. There's no other way. There's not one way for one group and another way for another group. No one has a better way than somebody else. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. It's only through Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

Pulpit Commentary (Ephesians 1:16): “it was as providing a satisfaction to God's justice for their guilt, and thus enabling him to receive and bless the sinner...If Christ had only to proclaim God's friendship toward

sinners, why should he have suffered on the cross? The cross as a mere pulpit is hideous; as an altar it is glorious. The love of God is ill revealed, if it subjected Jesus to unnecessary agony. The love of both Father and Son is indeed commended, if the agony was voluntarily borne by the Son, and permitted by the Father, as being indispensable for the pardon of the sinner.”

What God accomplishes for people's relationship with him impacts people's relationship with one another. God desires similar things to happen.

IV. We have a new relationship with people.

A. Unity is achieved. v. 14. I mentioned a temple barrier that separated Jews and Gentiles. It embodied the wall of hostility between people. I also mentioned how Jews and Gentiles didn't like each other. They weren't just skeptical of one another, there was a deep-seated hatred. They had been at war with each other. Brick by brick they built the wall with the brick of different languages, the brick of different appearances, the brick of different customs, the brick of different ethnicity, the brick of different culture.

After WWII Berlin was separated, one zone was controlled by communism, the rest by the free world. The Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 to keep out western influence. Families and friends were separated by cement, barbed wire and machine guns. In 1987 President Ronald Reagan challenged Soviet Union leader Gorbachev to tear down the wall. In 1989 the East German Communist Party head announced that after midnight November 9 people could cross the border as they pleased. Huge crowds from east and west gathered. Some climbed atop to sing and celebrate. Others crossed to the other side to see family and friends. Others brought hammers and hand tools to hack away at the wall. They became known as “wall-woodpeckers.” They'd be joined by heavy equipment. Families were reunited. The country was reunited.

Jesus tore down the wall of hostility that divided people. He accomplished this through his death. He abolished the law. This doesn't mean he got rid of God's moral standard. He got rid of the ceremonial regulations and commands the Jews observed. He obliterated the sacrificial system.

Jesus brought together Jews and Gentiles making them into one new man. They are reunited as one race, the human race. Those who place their trust in Christ become part of his body. This is another picture of the church in Ephesians. The human body is a living example of what the body of Christ is.

B. share the same status. Vv. 19-22

V. 19 brings another linking word - consequently. It indicates the previous teaching has consequences. Sometimes we think consequences are negative as in “You better tell the truth or you'll face the consequences.” Here the consequences are tremendous.

Human created differences have been erased. Previously, Gentiles were foreigners but now they're fellow citizens. They have all the rights, perks and privileges of a heavenly citizen. Previously, they'd been aliens but now they're members of God's household. Household refers to extended family, kin, long lost cousins twice removed. Now they've been reconnected.

I like to watch 'The Amazing Race' to see the locations around the world where the contestants travel and the games they have to play. This past season had identical twins who'd been separated at birth, adopted by different families and met each other for the first time 36 years later after they'd both taken DNA tests for different reasons. Less than a year after meeting for the first time as adults they were on the show and finished second place giving credit to their twin-tuition that helped them understand each other.

Jesus brings the family back together - kin, long lost cousins twice removed because of man-made obstacles. They're now part of the family of God.

### C. Building blocks

The image shifts to that of a building. The most important part of a building is the foundation.

Burj Khalifa in Dubai is 160+ stories. It was built on a 12 foot thick concrete raft with a volume of 16,349 cubic yards. 194 bored reinforced concrete piles, 59 inches in diameter and 141 feet long support the raft. Each pile has a capacity of over 3000 tons. They wanted to make sure it was sufficient.

God didn't scrimp when it came to the foundation for God's building. It's the apostles and prophets, not the men so much as their provision of God's word. They aren't the most important part as that's reserved for Christ Jesus. He is the chief cornerstone. The structure is dependent upon him for placement, alignment, durability, strength. All the rest of the building could be in good order, but without him it would collapse.

This building is no ordinary building. It's to become a holy temple in the Lord. We think of temples as buildings like churches or synagogues, places people go to worship. God's temple is a place of worship, but it isn't a physical building. People are the building components. They're the ones who worship God. The temple is a place where God lives and dwells.

In case you've been wondering what mountain is on the screen. It's Good Hope Mountain in the southern Coastal Mountains of British Columbia and has an altitude of 10,636 feet. It wasn't named by some mountain man who ascended it and found a life-saving route. The name came from a WWI British warship.

We started off the message talking about Peter. Scripture from his first letter serve as reinforcement for the teaching in Ephesians.

Read 1 Peter 2:4 - 10.

A song phrases it this way: "He took my sins and my sorrows. He made them his very own; He bore the burden to Calvary, and suffered, and died alone. How marvelous! How wonderful is my Savior's love for me" (song I Stand Amazed).