

# Peace, not D/i/v/i/s/i/o/n

Ephesians 2:11-22

## Splintered...

"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand." Jesus, in Mark 3:24-25

Sadly this is so often true of countries, schools, families, ...

Common strategies in stress: blame & divide

One of the most effective means to conquer a powerful foe:  
divide them to make them weaker

So what might Satan want to do to the Church or to a church?

Conflict and separation

What has God done about it? What is He doing about it?



## Sin separates...

### Sin separates people from God

"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save,  
nor his ear too dull to hear.

But your iniquities have separated  
you from your God;

your sins have hidden his face from you,  
so that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:1-2

### Sin separates people from each other

The first brothers: Cain killed Abel

The divisions have not stopped!

What is the most powerful tool to unite people?

Shared enemies → division, being jointly repelled

## We live in a splintered world

The Church has always struggled with divisions...

1 Corinthians 1:10-13a

## God's purpose in Jesus

**God's purpose : "to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ." Ephesians 1:10**

**Ephesians 4:4-6**

## The Divisions in the Church

The early church: especially Jews and Gentiles

There was "the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility"

Culture, language, religious heritage, politics, power, ...

Initially: Jewish people were the most powerful

They defined what was "normal"

Ephesus was a new situation for the church

Gentiles were the majority

We learn from God's message to them in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesian church

## Ephesians 2:11-22

11-12: Remember how far away from God you were

13-15a: Jesus' death brought Gentiles and Jews together

15b-18: Jesus' purpose: one new humanity, reconciled to God

19-22: One house for God to live in

## The Big Idea

**Jesus Christ is our peace  
that unites diverse people  
into one family  
with great variety  
where God lives and loves**

Strategies that don't show the creative wisdom of God...

"Separate but equal churches"

Individually homogeneous and collectively diverse

Like gathering all the eyes in one place, and all the hands in another place, and all the academics or artists or...

Conformity to a single variation

Melting pot or stew

Proximity without loving engagement

Salad bowl

Rather: a single organism with distinct of parts, with one head and one heart, living in common vision & purpose, where the parts are enriched by each others' differences

## Application

Praise God for His great vision and manifold wisdom!

His **eternal purpose**: show His creative glory

**Promised fulfillment**: "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." Revelation 7:9

His **presence** in the journey

It can be challenging...

Joyfully pursue God's vision for us

Joyful diversity should be at home in the church

Varieties of people, living and loving together,  
helping to shape each other,  
without sacrificing our diversity

Love each other in what we have in **common**

Love each other in what makes us **different**,  
and being expanded by those differences

Without any group taking priority → 1 new humanity

Beyond "**colorblindness**", we want to see our many colors!

We have...

God's purpose and design

show the manifold wisdom of God

a realistic understanding of the challenge:

human weaknesses and limitations

sin & Satan

the means to be successful:

sharing the one Spirit of God

individually & together

Which requires walking together when we see and experience many things very differently

Politics, values, perspectives, experiences, ...

Yet we are united in Christ

We all have flaws of various kinds

We all find forgiveness in Christ's sacrifice alone

We share the one Spirit of God

who empowers us to forgive and love each other

as Christ has forgiven and loved us

## Continue to develop relationships across differences

Listen and learn and love

With deep humility

Valuing who I am, and who you are,

in what we share and what makes us different,

and being shaped by each other

Seeing Christ and His creative wisdom in each of us

To show everyone the creative wisdom of God

## Conclusion

...where God lives and loves **through us**

## Reflection Questions

1. Colorblindness can be described as looking past our differences to see what we makes us the same. In what ways might “colorblindness” be a good thing? In what ways might “colorblindness” not be very loving?
2. Why are “separate but equal churches” not sufficient to display the creative wisdom of God?
3. How have you experienced “melting pot” diversity? or “salad bowl” diversity? What has been good and/or problematic in these things?
4. How have you experienced the creative wisdom of God through human diversity?
5. What are some barriers to developing relationships across differences? How can we overcome those barriers?