

Reaching Across the Aisle

Breaking Down Walls Ephesians 2.11-18

The history of humankind is filled with the hostility of one person against another. Our text today deals with the hostility between Jew and Gentile. But one doesn't need to read a document written 2,000 years ago to be aware of racial and cultural hostility. All one has to do is pick up the daily newspaper.

Recent events have underscored the stark realities that walls are still standing strong and high. It seems we have grown very adept at building walls of prejudice and hostility between ourselves and those we deem to be not like us. Wherever and whenever there is the "us and them" mentality, we see the walls start to go up.

What are the walls you have erected between you and "them?" What are the walls of prejudice that separate you from others? Do you want those walls torn down? If so, how can they be torn down?

Separation – The Natural Result of Sin

"Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so called 'Circumcision,' which is performed in the flesh by human hands – remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Ephesians 2.11-12

Reconciliation – The Supernatural Result of Christ's Salvation

"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far way, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." Ephesians 2.13-18

Only through Christ can the walls of prejudice come down. Christ came to break down the walls that divide us. Through Christ's work those who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

There seems to be a tendency within us, probably inherited from Adam, not only to hide from God, but to hide from one another as well. There is a tendency to be suspicious of one another. There is a tendency to judge one another. There is a tendency to build walls to separate “us” from “them.” But Christ has come to bring us together in him. And in Christ there is absolutely no reason why we can't come together. No reason, except our disobedience to him.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3.28-29

You must be careful not to wall out the presence of Christ, and not to wall yourself in and find you have built your own prison of prejudice. Christ has come to set us free. Christ has come to make us one.

There are several things that can get in the way of pulling these walls down.

The first is ***an over inflated sense of self-worth.***

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” Romans 12.3-5

Another problem which gets in the way is ***an under inflated sense of self-worth.***

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” 1 Peter 2.9-10

A final hang-up is the problem of ***pressure of culture.***

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12.1-2