

Sermon Outline

THE LORD IS BUILDING HIS HOUSE!: A CHURCH ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE

Ephesians 2:19-22

I. Introduction

II. A Theme Verse

- A. Most of us have heard sermons on Ephesians 2:19-22 more than once.
- B. The first time I preached Ephesians 2:19-22 was in the context of our series on Ephesians.
- C. Since then, this verse has come to occupy a special place in my thinking, and I hope in yours as well.
- D. Ephesians 2:19-22 is one of the key Scripture texts behind our church's vision statement, which is:

A HOUSEHOLD FOR OUR TRIUNE GOD,
WHERE EACH MEMBER SHINES FORTH HIS HOLY, LIFE-GIVING PRESENCE.
- E. Given the centrality of this passage to the life of our church, it is good to revisit this passage from time to time. Our church's anniversary is a good occasion to do so.

III. The World Outside of Christ (Ephesians 2:1-3)

- A. In Ephesians, Paul teaches believers about...
 - 1. the many blessings that God has given to them in Christ
 - 2. the kind of life they should live as a result of having been given those blessings.
- B. Ephesians shows us what God is doing in the world today.
—Ephesians presents us, if you will, the big picture of God's agenda for the Church of Jesus Christ.
- C. At the start of chapter 2, Paul makes clear that we were once dead in our trespasses and sins. We “once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...” (v 2).

1. The entire world outside of God’s realm of salvation is under the heavy influence of Satan and his ruling powers.
 2. These powers are the ones Paul describes in 6:12 as “the rulers...the authorities...the cosmic powers over this present darkness...the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
 3. Why is it that the world oppose the Law of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ? It’s because of these demonic rulers and authorities that work behind-the-scenes, nudging the world toward greater expressions forms of evil.
 4. The world (in the negative sense) is not limited to just a few items taken out of context. It is entire network of beliefs, values, communities, and institutions that are under the influence of these demonic rulers. The world is the entire society of humankind that resists the Word of God.
- D. It was in this world that all of us once lived, as Paul says, “in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
1. While not everyone engages in the worst possible forms of hedonism, everyone does tend to be ruled by the desires of this present existence.
 2. On the one hand, this explains why there is so much evil in the world.
 3. On the other hand, this also explains why there is so much anxiety in the world—so much hateful competitiveness and rivalry in the world.
 - a. It is because we feel that our present wellbeing is always at stake.
 - b. Thus, we feel that we must win every race no matter how leisurely, every argument however trivial, and gain as much pleasure as possible, sometimes at the expense of others.
 4. This was our way of life in the world. And it continues to be for many others.

IV. “But God...” (Ephesians 2:4-6)

- A. But then, something happened. There was an invasion.
- B. The Lord of Light launches a massive assault on the world, not for the purpose of destroying its people; but for the purpose of freeing them from its clutches.
- C. Paul explains it this way in verses 4-6: “*But God*, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus [.]”

- D. God launches this full scale assault on the world in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.
1. Through Jesus, God sets people free from the clutches of the world.
 2. Instead of executing them for their sins against him, he does the unthinkable: He pardons them. And then he exalts them. He raises them up to sit with him in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. The Purpose of Mercy's Invasion (Ephesians 2:7-10)

- A. There are two reasons given in verses 7-10 for God's invasion of mercy.
- B. *First:* God saved us so that we might be blessed by him forever: “so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
1. We must grasp this truth, because the glory of God as Father is at stake.
 2. The evil one will tempt us away from God is by causing us to doubt the depth of God's love for us.
 3. Ephesians 2:8 shows that God saves us not because we deserves it, but because he is gracious: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God [.]”
 4. We also see that God saves us precisely that he might love us, that he might lavish blessing upon blessing upon us.
 5. God's love is a deep, wild, and wasteful love—in the best sense of those words!
 6. God really, really loves us; and he pours out blessing upon blessing upon us.
- C. *Second:* God saved us that we might live for him: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (v 10).

VI. One New Man in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:11-18)

- A. From verse 11 to verse 18, Paul makes the point that because we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, we are now one with God's people everywhere.
- B. We are one with our Israelite brothers and sisters, with believers from every race, language, and nation.
- C. Even if we do not always speak the same language or share the same views on politics or child-rearing, there is a deep unity that binds us across those differences. This unity is rooted in Jesus Christ himself.

1. Paul says in verses 14-16: *For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*

D. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are one in Jesus Christ!

E. Although we do not yet see all things submitted to Christ, we are on the way.

1. If Christ has arrived at his goal, we who are part of him will get there in time.
2. So we don't allow strife to overly disturb us. We don't let differences of opinion even amongst us discourage us. We will get there, because Jesus Christ our Lord is already there.

VII. Fellow Citizens of the Household of God (Ephesians 2:19)

A. Verse 19: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God [.]"

1. Because of what the Lord Jesus has done, you and I who believe in him are no longer outsiders to God or to his people.
2. We are fellow members and citizens of the worldwide family of God.

B. Since we in Providence are a part of this family, those words also apply to us today.

1. While we may not be equally close with every member of the Church, from God's angle, we are all one family.
2. Our church is one little corner of this massive, worldwide family of God.
3. With each baptism or transference of membership, God builds his house. God is forming a people who would become like his Son Jesus Christ.

VIII. Our Founding Fathers (Ephesians 2:20)

A. Although our particular corner of the Church came into existence only nineteen years ago, it's important to remember that our roots go back earlier than that.

B. By that, we don't just mean that our founding members were formerly from other churches. We mean that our real founders were the apostles and prophets themselves.

—Verse 20: "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone [.]"

—These holy men, the core members of God's new Israel, are the foundation of our little corner of the Church.

- C. Christ Jesus, as the cornerstone, holds all the other founding stones in position.
—As the Source of the Church, Jesus is the One who brings everything together by the power of his Spirit.

IX. What God Is Now Doing in Providence (Ephesians 2:21, 22)

- A. Verse 21 goes on to talk about what is happening to the Church today.
- B. In Christ, the cornerstone, “the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.”
- C. Paul is talking about the “whole structure” here, which suggests that he has more in mind than one particular church. He is speaking about the whole Church of Jesus Christ across the world.
—It is this entire Church that is now, even as we speak, “being joined together,” and is growing “into a holy temple in the Lord.”
- D. At the level of the local church, we do not necessarily see the full picture.
1. It is tempting to compare ourselves to bigger, older, and more established churches.
 2. But small churches like ours are included in the Ephesians 2 vision as well!
 3. While we may want Providence to be as active as the larger Church you came from, we should remember that God is doing a work that far exceeds what even other big churches are doing, a work that is far deeper than what our eyes can see.
 4. God is the One who is building his global Church, and God alone knows what the Church will finally look like when it is finished.
- E. It is important to remember what God is building his Church into—“into a holy temple in the Lord.”
1. In the end, the Church is God’s house. It is where God’s Holy Spirit will dwell.
 2. Since God wants to dwell with his people, the Church is also the final home of the Christian.
 3. This means that the Church ought to be a place of holy rest.
 - a. The Church is where you and I learn to shed the sinful, destructive ways of the world, and take on the new ways of God.
 - b. The Church is also where we find rest from the anxieties and cares that the world imposes upon us.
 - c. All of this is because the Church is in Jesus Christ, the Lord who has entered into his rest.

- F. If God is moving his Church toward that end, it means that Providence is along for the ride. You and I are organically linked to this larger work that God is doing.
1. Every time we...
 - gather in the name of Jesus
 - worship God through Jesus Christ
 - come under the name of the Lord in the waters of baptism
 - partake of the Lord through the symbols of the Lord's Table
—we are being *joined* to this larger work that God is doing.
 2. If this is where God is leading us, toward becoming a household for himself, then I am happy to say that we can see God working in our midst.
- G. Finally, verse 22: “In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”
1. This verse basically restates what we saw in verse 21.
 2. God is building us into his final home in this world.
 3. But the point is that *God* is the One who is doing the building, not us.
 4. You and I are being acted upon by the power of God's Spirit.
 5. This does not mean that we are inactive. We pray. We plan. We teach. We encourage and exhort. But it means that even our best efforts are nothing but the expression of God in us. They are the work of God through us.

X. The Mandate of Thanksgiving

Let's thank God for what he is doing in us. And let's thank God for one another.