

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# DEVO

JANUARY 13 - 17, 2025

# THE STORY OF US

Sermon Series  
Jan 5 - Mar 2



# MONDAY

Read **Ephesians 2:11-22; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13**

As believers, we are called to unity in Christ—union and community are common themes throughout Paul’s epistles. In Ephesians 2:11-12, Paul reminds Gentile believers in Ephesus of how they were former outsiders alienated from Christ and thereby hopelessly stumbling toward God’s judgment. Unlike believing Ephesians with Jewish roots, these believers did not have the platform of Israel’s historic rites and rituals—picturing the Messiah—nor outward signs (circumcision, etc.) of commitment to God as references.

Yet via God’s redemptive work in Christ, the former signs of old covenant relationship with God (“biblical Judaism”) were now rendered obsolete. Accordingly, these Ephesian believers—like us—were to be grateful and joy-filled regarding God’s generosity and inclusion.

Paul also wanted to preempt factions from forming in the Ephesian church, an issue he addressed elsewhere. Sadly, even in Christ all remnants of our fallenness do not disappear. We may still have tendencies toward seeing ourselves “more worthy,” sometimes lumping others into marginalized outgroups. Ironically, such attitudes disrespect the very mercy and grace that God provides in Christ. Gentile and Jewish believers in the ancient Church wrestled with this similarly, thus Paul’s unity emphasis.

There is another notable, subtler theme in today’s Ephesian’s passage. Each of us, like ancient Ephesian Christians, have not always been God’s children. Despite common, sentimental views prevailing in contemporary culture, we were formerly “*children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3), “*enemies ... of God*” (Romans 5:10) and under “*the curse*” plaguing fallen humankind and creation (Galatians 3:13). This theme, while unpopular, is biblical. Though all humans were made in God’s image (Genesis 1:27), we are born in rebellion against God and His ways. Eternal life is God-granted only through a saving relationship with Christ.

Are you grateful for God’s inclusion in His Kingdom and eternal family? Does this show up in an attitude and lifestyle reflecting joy and grateful faithfulness? Do you know anyone apparently believing that “we’re all God’s children from birth—a loving God will not punish ‘good people’”? How will you lovingly show someone like this that, although “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8), He must judge sin in His righteous holiness?

## QUESTIONS

What advantages did ethnic Jews have over Gentiles regarding knowing the Messiah? How does Scripture address that common sentiment that “every human being is a child of God”?

## PRAYER

Thank you, God, for our inclusion in Your family. Please show us how to be united through You.

# TUESDAY

Read **Ephesians 2:18-19; Matthew 22:1-10; Isaiah 55:3-5**

Three of my four grandparents were born in Europe, not unusual for my generation. The US is a country of immigrants, yet I—like many—have always identified as an American. Many of us do not self-classify as “*foreigners and strangers*”—yet that is what Ephesians 2:19 calls us during our pre-Christian days.

Today’s Scriptures trumpet the Gospel’s glory: God’s salvation in Christ is available to all who repent and believe on Jesus, even formerly disenfranchised Gentiles like most of us! There are no other qualifications—the mercy (not getting what we deserve: God’s judgment) and grace (getting what is undeserved: Jesus’ righteous standing before the Father and adoption into God’s eternal family) via Jesus’ atoning sacrifice have no basis in one’s personal merit. Paul penned accordingly in Romans 11:6: “[salvation] cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.”

Most of us are of the second wave of invited guests to the king’s wedding banquet for his son (Matthew 22:1-10). We are represented by “*all the people [the king’s servants] could find, the bad as well as the good ... [who filled] the wedding hall*” (v. 10).

Isaiah 55:5 refers to non-Jews called to Christ as “*nations you do not know*.” Those who were “*not My people*” (Hosea 2:23)—believers with Gentile heritage—become “*children of God through faith*” (Galatians 3:26). Jesus came not only as “*the Son of David*” (Matthew 12:23)—a favorite Jewish Messianic title—but also “*the Son of Man*” (Mark 2:10). Our Lord’s agenda is the salvation of humankind, His sacrifice made to reverse the curse accompanying our and creation’s fall.

Have you ever felt out of place? Spiritually, you have been—both formerly as an unbelieving “*stranger*” to God and presently as the citizen of another Kingdom (Philippians 3:20). C.S. Lewis summarized accordingly: “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.” What apparent “*foreigners and strangers*” do you know, living futilely apart from Jesus Christ? Invite them to join you at the King’s wedding banquet!

## QUESTIONS

In what ways have all of us been “*foreigners and strangers*”? In Jesus’ parable of the king’s wedding feast for his son, who do the second wave of invited guests represent? What’s the significance of Jesus’ favorite Self-title, “*the Son of Man*”?

## PRAYER

Lord, please reveal to us those in our lives who need salvation. Please equip us and provide opportunities for Your love and saving grace to be shared and received.

# WEDNESDAY

Read **Ephesians 2:14-17; Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Matthew 10:34-36**

Today's Ephesians passage calls Jesus "our peace" (2:14), the One "making peace" (2:15) who "came and preached peace" (2:17). Isaiah's Messianic prophecy centuries earlier called Christ "the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Yet the Lord said of His mission, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Given this, imprisoned John the Baptist's question to Jesus—"Are you the [Messiah], or should we expect someone else?" (Matthew 11:3)—is more understandable.

Fueling these challenges, ironically, is the Messianic profile generally expected among ancient Israelites. The 1st century Jews generally anticipated a politically-oriented, military Christ, one focused upon national Israel's interests. They longed for God's Anointed to overthrow Roman oppression, restoring Israel's former glory. The militaristic feel of "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" would resonate with them.

But Christ's peace was with God. Israel's sinfulness, like all of humankind's, broke fellowship with Yahweh. Ancient, legalistic Jews aimed to appease God by dutiful adherence to religious rites and customs. However, these shackles proved more burdensome than Rome's. When God declared, "They shall never enter My rest" (Psalms 95:11), such "rest" was peaceful release from the weight of empty rituals meritoriously aiming to "earn God's favor."

Jesus' referenced "sword" is, I believe, "the word of God ... sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). God's redemptive plan in Christ, the Gospel, is such a "sword." One's heartfelt response to Jesus' penetrating question, "Who do you say I am?" (John 16:15), indicates their eternal destiny, dividing (sword-like) between Christians and unbelievers. This "sword" prompts dynamics still evident when some either accept or reject Christ, breaking from other family members: "[turning] 'a man against his father, ... daughter against ... mother, ... [one's] enemies ... [becoming] the members of [their] own household'" (Matthew 10:35-36).

Many ignorantly strive with God in their fallenness. But our loving God goes to great lengths to call the lost to Jesus Christ, even if the related circumstances He brings might feel unpeaceful, perhaps stinging like a sword's wounds. True, restful peace is knowable only in "the Prince of Peace." Share His peace lovingly with all you know.

## QUESTIONS

Scripture called Jesus "the Prince of Peace," so why did He claim "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword"? What sort of "sword" did He mean? What "rest" was God referring to when declaring of many ancient Israelites, "They shall never enter My rest"?

## PRAYER

Lord, may we rest in Your peace, and know Your Word. Reveal to us areas we need to surrender to You. Reveal those who need encouragement in their lives and current circumstances.

# THURSDAY

Read **Ephesians 2:18-19; 1 Corinthians 11:18-19; Matthew 5:5-9**

On Monday we considered Paul's concerns with preempting Jewish-Gentile schisms within the Ephesian church. Paul emphasized Christian unity, stating, "we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access to the Father by one Spirit" (Ephesians 2:18). Sadly, the social divisiveness troubling Paul remains alive and well, even within the Church.

Recent US elections and political squabbling underscore our fallen tendencies toward polarization and striving with those whose backgrounds and/or views differ from ours. Here is another example: fueled by recent Israel-Hamas conflicts, there were "1,854 Antisemitic incidents on campus during the 2023-2024 academic year," a tenfold increase from the same period 5 years ago. (Hillel International) Of the 11,852 reported US "hate crimes" last year—"record levels" per USA Today—52.5% were motivated by differences in race/ethnicity/ancestry, 18.4% by sexual orientation and 22.5% by religious preferences. (US Department of Justice)

Although regenerate in Christ by the Holy Spirit, even believers remain "recovering humans" subject to ungodly biases and divisiveness—such issues are not unique to non-Christians. "Church conflict is on the rise. ... In the fall of 2023 ... nearly three-quarters (72%) of US churches reported some kind of disagreement or conflict ... [up from] 64 percent in 2020. ... 77 percent of pastors who have considered

leaving pastoral ministry 'once,' 'twice,' or 'a few times' report conflict in their churches." (Christianity Today) The toll upon pastors, other Church leaders and congregations is palpable.

What are we to do? Certainly not roll over and turn a blind eye to injustice and other evils, for "any dead fish can float downstream." We must commit to righteousness. However, Paul reminds us that we are "no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and ... members of His household" (Ephesians 2:18). Accordingly, we should not treat others like "foreigners and strangers," but as God's image-bearers (Genesis 1:27), being "merciful ... [as] peacemakers" (Matthew 5:7-9).

Is Jesus' charge to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44) "natural"? By no means! It's better than natural, supernaturally Spirit-enabled in Christ. How will you exhibit righteous, loving peacemaking—whether toward fellow Christians or unbelievers—in 2025?

## QUESTIONS

Which of the trends and statistics regarding polarization and strife in our country most alarm you? What does it mean to be a "recovering human"?

## PRAYER

Lord, reveal areas of division within us, within Your Church, and within our country. God, may You open our eyes to intercede in prayer in these areas and unify in love.

# FRIDAY

Read **Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20**

Have you ever heard a body-conscious person vainly declare, “My body is a temple!”? This statement—like many popular sayings and some doctrine of false religions—is actually a misapplication of biblical truth. Christ followers are “*a holy temple in the Lord, ... a dwelling place for God*” (Ephesians 2:21-22). We now constitute Jesus’ “*Body*” (1 Corinthians 12:27)—interconnected in Him, Christ the “*Cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:20) and “*Head*” (Ephesians 1:22) of this “*whole structure*” (Ephesians 2:22).

During Israel’s Exodus to the Promised Land, God instructed the Jews regarding building the tabernacle (Exodus 27:9-19), the precursor to Jerusalem’s temple first built by King Solomon centuries later. The tabernacle and subsequent temple were not God’s literal “home”—He is omnipresent and Spirit, transcending physical limitations. But ancient Jews—like us presently—needed a physical location to focus corporate worship and gather communally. God considered human needs—not His own—in enabling these structures and displaying His glory among ancient Israelites.

When God had Rome destroy Jerusalem’s temple in 70 AD, among other things this was final confirmation of its obsolescence. In the new covenant in the Savior’s blood, established about 40 years earlier, believers’ bodies supplant the temple as God’s “*dwelling place*.” Believers’ Spirit-indwelled “temples” (bodies) anticipate what God

will do in the future, the indwelling Holy Spirit a sort of “down payment on eternity” along with the Spirit being our Helper, Comforter, Teacher, Advocate, etc.

When Yahweh reconstitutes and merges heaven and earth into the New Jerusalem upon the Lord’s second coming (Revelation 21) there will be “*no temple ..., for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb*” (Revelation 21:22). Upon Christ’s return—when we are resurrected into glorified bodies—no worship place is necessary. We will be in Jesus’ presence and “*shall see him as He is*” (1 John 3:2), needing no artifact or symbol to enable joyful, grateful worship.

The temple—like our present physical bodies—was temporary. However, the community of your brothers and sisters in Christ is not. Are you living like the Spirit’s present temple, lovingly fellowshiping with other believers and serving all for God’s glory?

## QUESTIONS

How is every Christ follower’s body a “temple”? Why did God allow the Romans to destroy the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD? Why will there be no temple in the New Jerusalem upon the Lord’s second coming?

## PRAYER

Lord help us grow our community and fellowship in the areas of our lives You have granted us. May our focus be on You and all that we do be an outpouring of Your love.



## Sources

- C.S. Lewis' quote is from his book, *Mere Christianity* (United Kingdom: Geoffrey Bles; United States: Macmillan Publishers and HarperCollins Publishers, 1952).
- Hillel International's information can be found at <https://www.hillel.org/antisemitism-on-college-campuses-incident-tracking/>.
- *USA Today's* quote is from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/01/05/hate-crimes-hit-record-levels-in-2023-why-2024-could-be-even-worse/72118808007/>.
- The US Department of Justice's "hate crimes" information can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/hate-crime-statistics>.
- *Christianity Today's* quote is from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/04/pastor-leave-church-conflict-hartford-church-health-survey>.

*These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallance Nunneley at [KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org](mailto:KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org). If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.*

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