

12/24/19 - Ephesians 2:19-22 (Christmas Eve)

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[0:00] I can remember the very, very early moments of holding Micah for the first time. I remember that unforgettable moment, the great excitement, anticipation, and emotions that came with that of holding that dear child.

And I remember very vividly all four of our children holding them for the first time and just looking at them and gazing upon them. And I began to wonder, what is this child's mission and purpose going to be?

And, you know, we reluctantly expect all these milestones in life. You get the birthdays. Each birthday, you're just like, wow, where's time going? I'm already thinking that, especially with Micah. He's six years old. I just don't know where time went. And, you know, you got the birthdays. You got careers. You got graduation, the dreaded graduation, 18 years old. Just, it's going to be here sooner than I can even imagine.

And, you know, career paths. What career path they're going to choose? And, Lord willing, maybe what grandkids I'm going to be gifted with. I heard grandchild season is really exciting for grandparents.

[1:14] Specifically, I can think of this, that time of, through the perspective of a woman carrying a baby.

168 hours a week. They carry a baby. How many hours are in a week? 6,720 hours carrying that baby in the womb for full term, 40 weeks.

And, you can just imagine, thinking from a woman's perspective, carrying that child, every flutter, every kick. Wondering, what is this mission and the purpose of this child going to be?

Samson's parents, we're kind of in the middle of the book of Judges. And, we're going to be picking that up starting in January, the first Sunday in January. And, we're going to be getting to chapter 13, which is Samson.

And, his parents pondered the same thing. In Judges 13, verse 12. And, Samson's father, before Samson was born, Manoah, he said, Now, when your words come true, he said to the angel of God, What is to be the child's manner in life?

[2:32] What is his mission? We can imagine, you know, it's Christmas time. You know, what Mary was thinking. You know, despite the, despite modern opinion of the common popular song, Mary, Did You Know?

I hate to break it to you, she did know. The angel came and told her. And, she knew exactly who she was carrying. She knew all of it.

Most importantly, every kick and flutter that Mary had in that womb, she knew that that was going, that her child was going to lead a life that would lead to suffering and death on a cross.

The Messiah she carried. So, we all came by the same means. And, those same pondering questions often spring up in our own day, in our own lives, of what is my purpose and mission on this earth?

So, let's look at Scripture and allow Scripture to answer this for us tonight. Let's have a moment of prayer before we read. Please join me in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we come to You today, and we come under Your Word and Your text.

[3:52] And, Father, I pray that with Your Word being a double-edged sword and a living and breathing book that is constantly ministering, it never gets old, it never gets dry.

But, Father, through the power of Your Holy Spirit, bring these words to life in this church at this moment and this time for all who need to hear. Father, help me to proclaim Your Word with boldness and humility.

Use me tonight, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. We need more coffee. I didn't hear any amens. Amen? Amen. Okay.

All right. That's good. So, let's read in Ephesians 2, chapter 2, verse 19.

It says, So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens and saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

[5 : 05] In Him, you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. This verse starts out talking about the life apart from Christ.

In verse 19, it says, And then you are no longer strangers and aliens, referring to a pastime. This verse highlights the origins of life. And despite what you might think about yourself, the world will do just fine without any of us.

The little world does not need us. The Bible clearly states who we are apart from Christ, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are complete strangers and aliens of God.

And Paul is actually talking about the Gentiles in this passage. They were outcasts from the covenants. And we all are separated from Him before Christ by sin.

And this is not just religious talk. This is biblical reality. And I believe that in order to keep proper perspective of the future, we have to have a proper perspective of the past, of where we came from.

[6 : 17] We were once outside a relationship with Christ. That is an anchor that reminds us that the grace that we have received is not of our own doing, but is a free gift of God.

You must remember who you were, so you remember where you're going. So speaking upon purpose and mission, let's talk about Satan. Satan has a purpose and a mission, and that is to keep us away from Christ as long as possible, as strangers and aliens.

But God's purpose in Christ is to reconcile sinners to Himself for those who trust in Him. And so the verse continues, But you are fellow citizens, in verse 19, with the saints and members of the household of God.

So there is good news for the Gentiles in this passage, but bad news for Satan. Satan's purpose and mission are limited to God's purpose and mission in redeeming the lost.

What Christ accomplished on the cross was sufficient. It thwarted the enemy's plans. Consider a life of knowing Christ. If it were ever a color, it would be completely black.

[7 : 33] We were strangers and aliens, as this passage says, just as the Gentiles, who were citizens of darkness, who were members not of the household of God, but we were on our road to be members of the household of hell.

There was no end. There was no new life. There was nothing waiting ahead before knowing Christ. But after those, thinking of Mary, after those long 6,720 hours of carrying Jesus in the womb, the Messiah in her womb, she gave birth to the ultimate remedy to overcome Satan's greatest divide and most crafty scheme on earth.

Colossians states it very clearly, and this purpose of Christ beautifully. In Colossians 1, 13, it says, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

God delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. The result of that deliverance and transferring is not just a green card, a temporary pass to the citizenship as an immigrant into a foreign land.

Think about the United States, the household of God, becoming a citizen. This is not just a green card. This is a new identity.

[9 : 06] This is a new birth certificate. Because of Christ, you are citizens, the full access, members of the household of God.

And Paul takes on another illustration. He moves on from citizens and members of a household, and he takes that with us receiving salvation through God through faith, that they are also God's temple or His church.

Not many of you may know this. Maybe you do. I don't know. Maybe not everybody knows. But I spend most of my professional career in construction, in drafting and design architecture, stuff like that.

Working, pulling contractor's orders at Home Depot when I was just 18, or, you know, getting my first career desk job, nice little cubicle it was, and feeling claustrophobic within those confined walls

as I was just a drafter for commercial construction.

I know what a solid structure looks like. Like any worthy structure that's standing, it takes a good solid foundation in order to, that for anything that's built upon it, will have any chance of standing through the extremities of life, the weather, and that it perseveres.

[10 : 35] So the foundation is key. But the cornerstone also plays a unique role in relationship with the foundation as well. Because the cornerstone aligns the overall structure, it keeps everything plumb, the walls straight up and down, and upon it rests a lot of the weight of the structure that's built upon it, all weighing down upon the foundation.

And what an understanding we can have, then, of Paul's illustration of God's temple. Think about it in verse 20 as it continues. It says, those fellow citizens and members of the household of God are built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

We get quite a glimpse of the purpose and the mission of the apostles and the prophets as well.

Their purpose was not to be recognized or honored or worshiped or prayed to, but to communicate as vessels to the Lord.

They were the plumbing of the water which is to pass through and to lay the foundation for the church. So what is the foundation of the church?

It's the Word. And what is the cornerstone? It's Christ. Think about what previously, what Paul was talking about. If you were with us on Sunday morning, this past Sunday, what we spoke about to bring some context in this.

[12 : 14] Paul finished explaining the implications that Christ brought to the Gentiles by destroying the dividing wall of hostility. Remember that church? Which separated, these separated the Gentiles from the Jews.

We had a picture of the temple. I mean, it was pretty cool. We saw all the divides. We saw what was going on in this passage. Through Christ, all have access to the Holy of Holies. It's not just the high priest.

You don't need any rituals or any cleansing or dietary laws or these restrictions of the old covenants. But all have access through Jesus Christ.

And the cornerstone, which is Christ, positions and aligns all that bears the weight. He bears the weight of that assembled family, the church, the gathering, not just the building.

The church doesn't need a building. The church is a community, people. And it also bears the weight of our individual lives, that you are safe and secure, that your faith will persevere.

[13 : 15] And so three illustrations Paul uses in this part in Ephesians to communicate a profound truth, that the church's unity, all that is established, is built upon truth and sound doctrine.

The foundation and the cornerstone of God's temple have been set. I'm going to say that one more time. The foundation and the cornerstone of God's temple has been set.

There's no adding to it. There's no taking away. It has been set by the apostles and the prophets.

The mission and the purpose then has been fulfilled and it is complete.

The church now is a building project upon that foundation and the cornerstone. And to grow, as verse 21 says, to grow into a holy temple in the Lord.

The church doesn't need, the church doesn't need gimmicks. It doesn't need Sunday giveaways to keep its people because what you win them with is what you keep them with.

[14 : 21] You don't need me dressing around in an elf costume to entertain you. While entertained you might be, you're going to leave starving for something of substance, something that lasts, solid food and drink which comes only from His Word.

And so now we're left with the foundation and a cornerstone, the foundation being the Word of God, the cornerstone being Christ. Now what? What is left is our reluctance to hear the words of the gospel and respond in obedience and submission to it.

We inherently love the darkness. In our sinful condition, we inherently love the darkness. We love sin. We love the temporal promises of life that flee us as quickly as they come.

But if you want the true purpose and value in this life, I encourage you to repent. To repent and to come to Christ and subject yourself to Christ's purpose and value, which Scripture testifies to.

And yield to Him in accordance to verse 22, which says, in verse 22, in Him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Apart from this purpose in life, there is emptiness and void.

[15:51] Are you seeking darkness or are you seeking light tonight? Are you seeking darkness or are you seeking light? Only you know. I would imagine at this point in the passage, in this point in the sermon, the Holy Spirit's probably already at work and speaking to you very clearly tonight.

So I encourage you to listen. While many of you Christmas as this day of looking upon the baby in a manger, let us not forget that this baby had a mission and a purpose.

That baby was the cornerstone who came according to which all Scripture pivots and points to. You read Genesis, it points to Christ.

You read Deuteronomy, it points to Christ. You read the epistles of the apostles setting the foundation of the church, it points back to Christ. Christ is the hinge and the pivot of all Scripture and testifies to.

All Scripture reveals and testifies to Christ. His life, His death, His burial, and His resurrection. This is in which all the prophets and apostles attest, as well as Mary, all used as nothing more than insignificant heralds, persons for God's purpose and His mission.

[17:17] And this is revealed as His Word being the foundation and aligned with Christ being the cornerstone. So as we come to a close on this Christmas, surveying all history, history, let's take a look at all history of those who entered the purpose and the mission of Christ.

Thinking of the Gentiles within this immediate context who were outcasts. They were added to this temple of grace by grace alone through faith alone.

That includes Luke, Phoebe, Lydia, Philemon, Onesimus, and all the other Gentiles of that day. Also the early and the late church fathers all entered into this temple by grace alone through faith alone.

During the Reformation, God added Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, Cranmer, and many others by grace alone through faith alone. And today, God is still working of building His temple.

And it doesn't have anything to do with this building or these four walls. He's assembling an army. People, you, you are His church.

[18:33] So may God be looking upon you on this day, may be looking upon you as to be one of His living stones of which God is duly the masonry worker and He's also the mortar which holds all together.

You know, just as I was looking back upon my life and holding my kids, gazing and asking myself, what is this child's mission and His purpose? May God be looking upon you tonight.

Is God speaking to you tonight about that mission and purpose? I encourage you, don't let another Christmas go by. Don't let another sermon go by. It's the light of Christ calling you to enter into that mission and purpose that He accomplished through Jesus Christ.

enter into His building project here and now and don't do it alone. Do it together with us at Youngstown Metro Church. We're here for that purpose.

Respond in repentance and turn to obedience to Him tonight quickly and swiftly because we're not promised tomorrow. We're not even promised to walk out these doors. The purpose and mission which entered history and lay in a lowly manger is calling all creation back to Himself.

[19:55] Is He calling you tonight? Let's have a word of prayer. Thank you.