

Service for Week 15th- 21st July 2024

by Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ you came to bring life in all its fullness: to offer hope beyond the grave. May that confidence shape our attitude not only towards death but to life also.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,

Amen

Bible Reading Eph 2:11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached

peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God

Reflection.

In his letter to the young church group which met in Ephesus, which we read today in the book of 'Ephesians', Paul explains how people from different faiths and cultures have been brought together by Jesus Christ.

Many of the people meeting there in one another's houses were not Jews, (non-Jews were called Gentiles) so they had not been taught about God from the Hebrew scriptures (the first five books of the Old Testament). They would not have known about God's Law's -as written in the ten commandments, or God's promises to love and protect all who put their faith in him. Paul writes – you were 'without hope and without God in the world.'



However, he tells them that situation has fundamentally changed because of the coming of Jesus Christ. It changed when God came in Jesus to bring together everyone including Jews and Gentiles. Jesus Christ 'came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near' Paul tells them. In other words, Jesus came for everyone of different faiths and cultures, including those with no previous knowledge of, or faith in God.

God's purpose through Jesus was to teach the world God's true nature and how God wants us to live. But the most important part of God's purpose was to teach us about our own human nature. Because when we don't consider God's laws and ways it is often the nature of humans to be self-centered and destructive.

God taught us about ourselves through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It revealed the weakness in humans and our self-serving nature. This was clearly demonstrated by the injustice of governing officials and of the religious authorities and factions. At the same time, it also exposed how mob culture -going along with the crowd, can quickly build a person's reputation, as it was with Jesus on Palm Sunday and then equally as swiftly turn, and destroy it as it did on Good Friday. But Paul says, what happened has forever changed things

because all 'who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.' Jesus' death on the Cross has brought us all together, has reconciled all to God. It also confirmed and reassured us of God's promise that just as Jesus returned from the dead, and ascended to return to God so we will return to God at the end of our lives.

Paul goes on to compare Jesus Christ to a 'cornerstone' A cornerstone, sometimes referred to as a "foundation-stone", is a large stone near the base of a building where two walls meet, often giving information about the building. Paul says 'In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.'

Like those early followers in Ephesus my prayer is that wherever you are, whether you are able to meet with others or not that in Paul's words you 'are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.' **Amen**

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus Christ help me to realize that your life, death and resurrection speaks not just about God and the eternal but about daily life- the ordinary, the commonplace and the mundane. Help me to understand that even there, and especially there you bring resurrection. **Amen**

Prayer inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett