

# HOPE BEYOND HEADLINES, PT.1

## SERMON OUTLINE

### Introduction

Relevant issues: exclusion, citizenship, aliens, barrier/dividing wall, hostility, name-calling ("the uncircumcision")

### 1. A problem—a biblical example of a universal tendency

*Ephesians 2:12 – ... the covenants of promise...*

*Genesis 12:3 – (The Lord to Abraham) "...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

*Deut. 7:7-8 – 7 "The Lord did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! 8 Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you..."*

*Ephesians 2:14 – ...the dividing wall of hostility...*

"... Pride is essentially competitive ... (It) gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If every one else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest ... Christians are right: it is Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began ... Pride always means enmity – it is enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God."

– C.S. Lewis, "The Great Sin," Mere Christianity

### 2. A purpose—God sent Jesus to address the problem.

*Ephesians 2:14-16 – 14 ... (Jesus) himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 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, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

*Ephesians 4:16 – From him (i.e., from Jesus as the head) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

### 3. A plan—God intends to heal the world through the church.

*Ephesians 2:8-10 – 8 ... it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship (poiema → poetry), created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

### Purposeful reflecting...

- Ask the Lord to speak, then spend five minutes in silence. (Use a timer!) Notice what you notice (maybe take notes).

#### Experience

- What struck you as personally significant in the message? How might God be speaking to you through that?
- Where in our community do you see unhealthy divisions between people of different cultures, races, social classes, religious traditions, etc.? How do you feel about these divisions? How do you imagine Jesus feels about them? Can you think of a story in Scripture where He dealt with something similar? How do His words or example impact you?

#### Transform

- Re-read the C.S. Lewis quotation about pride. Do you see any way you're tempted to use some talent, gift or blessing as the basis for your identity? If so, what impact does this have on your attitude or behavior toward others? Ask the Lord to show you how He would have you change.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern your attitudes and feelings about those who are different from you. (If you're doing the prayer-walking experiment, you may want to apply this to specific neighbors.) Talk to the Lord honestly about what you notice, then ask Him to bless those who come to mind, being as specific as you can.

#### Share

- Has the Spirit highlighted some attitude, speech (e.g., a derisive label) or behavior toward another group or culture He'd like you to change? If so, tell someone about this. If the opportunity arises, discuss what you've experienced with that person.
- Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity to do one act of kindness for someone far different from you. (No words or explanations are necessary unless you're asked why you've done it.)