**Racial Reconciliation**

**The Word**

Read together Ephesians 2:11-22

**The Big Idea**

On the cross, Christ reconciles us to God and reconciles us to each other. God’s purpose in the church is to gather a diverse group of people together who display his power and wisdom to the watching world. As Christians who have been reconciled to God, we are to live lives of reconciliation with people who may be very different from us.

**Questions for Discussion**1. Consider the gospel passage from Sunday. Spend some time quietly sitting with verses 13-18. What phrase or idea from that passage is most powerful to you and why?

2. As you consider how your own life has intersected with issues of race and ethnicity, what have been the most formative experiences for you (positive or negative), and what have been the most helpful “resources” (these “resources” might be specific people in your life, books you’ve read, experiences you’ve had, or whatever)?

3. What is one key idea or perspective from Sunday’s message that you’d like to hang onto and carry with you?

4. The issue of race obviously triggers lots of emotions, reactions, and questions, and Sunday’s message was only skimming the surface. What questions and issues were left hanging for you that would be worth pursuing?

5. As you consider your own life at this time, are there any specific steps you’d like to take in the coming months as a part of towards being a person who lives out the gospel of reconciliation?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

 A. We have seen a lot of racial tension surface in the last 3 years in our nation

B. Each of us brings our own perspectives and assumptions to this issue that are larger shaped by our own experiences.

C. It’s easy to view the gospel individually as God saving individuals, but the gospel is also that God is forming a community of reconciled people.

II. The Passage

 A. Jew and Gentile hostility in the ancient world (see v. 11-12)

 1. There were racial, cultural, and spiritual divisions between them

 2. This led to mistrust, feelings of superiority, and implicit and explicit tension

 B. Jesus’ reconciling work on the cross (v. 13-18)

1. Jesus sets aside the law with its commandments that was a very real barrier between Jews and Gentiles.

a. Observing Sabbath, eating kosher, offering sacrifices, practicing circumcision, etc. were all ways Jews lived to be clean and acceptable to God, and since Gentiles didn’t do those things, they viewed them as unclean.

b. Jesus perfectly fulfilled all the requirements of the law and then offered the perfect sacrifice for sin.

c. He did away with the law as the way we are made clean and acceptable to God. We are acceptable by faith alone, and faith is available to Jews and Gentiles.

 2. Jesus reconciles both Jews and Gentiles to God on the cross (v. 16)

a. Since Jews are reconciled to God (by faith) and Gentiles are reconciled to God (by faith), that means they are reconciled to each other.

 b. They have the same Father and the same Spirit living within them (v. 18)

c. The cross offers vertical reconciliation (between people and God) and horizontal reconciliation (between people)

 3. Now there can be peace, reconciliation, and unity

a. He made the two one (v. 14), He created one new humanity (v. 15)

b. We are one nation, one household, one temple (v. 19-22)

c. See Colossians 3:11

C. God’s intent to display his own wisdom and glory through the multi-colored community he is creating (see Ephesians 3:10)

1. God is a like an artist making a beautiful painting (=the church community) with a multi-colored pallet (John Piper)

2. A diverse group of people loving each other well displays God’s wisdom and power more than a homogenous group of people loving each other well.

 3. See the final community in Revelation 7:9-10

III. Some practical suggestions

A. Let’s have a posture of humility and a willingness to listen to the voices that are crying injustice.

1. See James 1:19

2. Consider the lived experience of other people which may be very different than our own experience

 B. Work hard to form friendships across racial/ethnic boundaries

1. We don’t need more social media on this, we need people sitting across a table together seeking to understand each other.

2. Bring a posture eager to learn, willing to admit our own implicit biases as they pop up, and willing to give grace to each other.

3. For those of us who are white, engaging in these friendships can help us make sense of our own experience as white people and help us understand the experience of those who are not in the majority culture.

C. Take the easy steps to engage this issue more

1. Read books written by Christians who have thought a lot about race and racial reconciliation

2. Watch movies that get at racial issues and talk about them together

D. There are no quick fixes, and this is about the long process of moving in the right direction.