

I've Just Seen Jesus

A Sermon by Rev. David Johnson

Vicki and I have a wonderful relationship. We have learned from each other, and tried to see life through the other's eyes for over 40 years." Now some of you may be thinking, "Oh, isn't that wonderful." And it is...but I'm not talking about always agreeing on situations, or never having disagreements. What I mean is that Vicki is more near-sighted, and I am decidedly, far-sighted. She puts her glasses on when we're driving (*especially at night*), and I hand her the menu when we eat out (*especially in dimly-lit restaurants*). I tell her what's coming up down the road, and she can read me the fine-print on documents and fortune-cookies. For most of our marriage, we've seen life "*from the other's perspective.*"

Some of you may have similar problems with your eye-sight. However, regardless of the condition you may have, the facts remain - there is absolutely nothing you can do to will your eyes to improve. Their impairment will continue without outside evaluation and optical correction. So both sides are basically in the same identical situation, they can't see properly without outside assistance... *glasses*. Vicki puts hers on to see far away, and I put mine on to see what's before me.

Our Epistle for today addresses a similar concern. Only it's not an optical problem, but spiritual—an issue of the heart.

Eph 2:11 "Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," {which is} performed in the flesh by human hands-- 12 {remember} that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Paul begins by doing some diagnosing. He turns his attention to those he calls "gentiles in the flesh" or "gentiles by birth." He points out that due to their lack of circumcision, their "alien" birth, his readers do not have the benefit of either a physical or a spiritual connection with Israel - or their God. They were uncircumcised from a fleshly viewpoint, causing both a spiritual and a social division. They were also "uncircumcised" in heart, resulting in their complete separation from God, and His promises. No circumcision meant no spiritual benefits. This wasn't simply unfortunate, it left these gentiles completely without God, and therefore, without hope. They could be in no sadder and desperate situation.

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

These gentile readers were in an absolutely hopeless situation. From a physical perspective, there was nothing they could do to bridge the gap. They would forever be gentiles and social outcasts. Spiritually

speaking, they were as far away from God as possible and without any means of redemption.

"But now..." what a fantastic phrase in Scripture. The implication is that whatever the previous statement declared, it is now changed somehow, or completely nonexistent. "But God..." "But now..."

"But now in Christ Jesus..." all of that has changed. The chasm was bridged, the spiritual relationship restored. As the Christian music group, *Point of Grace* used to sing, "There's a bridge to cross the great divide – There's a Cross to bridge the great divide." The blood of Christ brought redemption and reunion, bringing the gentile into the family both socially and spiritually. In fact, the term used by the later Jews when speaking of incorporating a gentile was to "bring them near."

Eph 2:14 "For He Himself is our peace, who made both {groups into} one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, {which is} the Law of commandments {contained} in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, {thus} establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."

Imagine, peace in a nation where hostility, anger, and war have been a way of life for centuries. Peace between both social and spiritual groups that have for eons been combative and antagonistic. The haves and the have nots, "brought near" by the blood of one who was sent to die for both. For it would be in the finished work of Christ, where enemies would be reconciled, and animosity (*enmity*) would be killed.

Suddenly, through the blood of an innocent sacrifice, peace *has* come - not *may* come at some unknown point in time. Peace *has* come. In a moment, all the promises that once applied to Israel alone became available to any who would come to the foot of the cross of Jesus. Those who had vision problems from far away were brought near. Those with vision problems from nearby are given a broader perspective and healed.

In that miraculous moment, enemies were made not into friends, not even brothers, but one single man in Christ. As Paul writes in Romans and Corinthians:

Romans 12:5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Cor. 12:12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Paul goes on to explain that this marvelous grace not only formed one body out of Gentile and Israelite, it completely removed the enmity (hostility, anger, antagonism) from these two warring parties. He didn't just stop the war. Jesus completely wiped away the anger and resentment that was so firmly inbred in the hearts of these two groups of extremes. When people come to the Cross of Christ, all anger and hostility are wiped away and replaced with perfect and lasting peace.

And this peace is for all who come to Christ in humility, regardless of whether they started their journey from far or near. Both have been provided access to the very same Heavenly Father through one in the same Holy Spirit.

Eph 2:17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner {stone,} 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Regardless of whether you begin your spiritual journey from afar or from nearby, from the ranks of the Gentile or the family of the Jews - all have the same basic condition, and all have the same basic need. We need our vision restored. We all need to see Jesus, and then allow Him to forgive and transform us into the singular body of Christ that He desires us to be.