**SEPTEMBER 22, 2024**

**WELCOME TO THE PASSAGES CLASS!**

**A WALK THROUGH EPHESIANS**

*“When you read the letter of Ephesians, you are looking through both*

*a telescope and a microscope.” (Rev. Rupert Charkham)*

**EPHESIANS 2: 11-22 (NRSV)**

1So then, remember that at one time you gentiles by birth called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— 12remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14For he is our peace;** in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us, 15abolishing the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, 16and might reconcile both to God in one bodythrough the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. 17So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, 18for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

**19So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, 20built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone; 21**in him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22in whom you also are built together spirituallyinto a dwelling place for God.

*Christ gives us this gift of community, to offer to a world that is seeking home. A gift of a community without walls to offer to a world that is homesick and longing to belong to one another. Rev. P.T. Johnson*

**THE MESSAGE VERSION – EPHESIANS 2:11-22**

**But don’t take any of this for granted. It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God’s ways had no idea of any of this, didn’t know the first thing about the way God works, hadn’t the faintest idea of Christ.** You knew nothing of that rich history of God’s covenants and promises in Israel, hadn’t a clue about what God was doing in the world at large. Now because of Christ—dying that death, shedding that blood—you who were once out of it altogether are in on everything.

14-15 The Messiah has made things up between us so that we’re now together on this, both non-Jewish outsiders and Jewish insiders. **He tore down the wall we used to keep each other at a distance.** He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody.

16-18 Christ brought us together through his death on the cross. The Cross got us to embrace, and that was the end of the hostility. Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders. He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father.

19-22**That’s plain enough, isn’t it? You’re no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You’re no longer strangers or outsiders. You *belong* here**, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He’s using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he’s using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home.

*“* This, for me, is the image hanging over Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, that triumphant letter in which he crowns Christ as the ruler of all creation and the church as Christ’s body–not two entities but one–God’s chosen instrument for the reconciliation of the world. *(B. B. Taylor)*