

CrossRoads Baptist Church
December 3, 2006 10:00 am
Ephesians 2:11-22
Neighbor Series #7

“Loving My Neighbor...Across the Line”

One of the greatest issues that has affected our United States of America and especially the south is the issue of race.

- I love Seinfeld and one of my favorite characters is Kramer. I have laughed at his antics, his twitches and his unusual stunts. However, the real character Michael Richards is no laughing matter. He was onstage at a Los Angeles comedy club last week. After being heckled by a couple of black men in the audience, Richards snaps, cutting loose with a lengthy rant that features not only a generous helping of the N-word but also a vicious reference to lynching by saying, “Fifty years ago, we’d have you upside down....” He has apologized and said he was sorry, and rightly so.

But this morning I speak to a congregation that may not feel the hurt of racism because we have the privilege of being in the majority. Whiteness is not an issue for us, we say, so why should blackness be an issue?

I am aware that the issue of race relations in America is bigger than black and white. We live in a society that is multi-racial with infinite shadings and transracial families and the influx into America of thousands of blacks who do not have three hundred years of painful heritage to deal with in this land.

John Piper in his book “Brothers, We Are Not Professionals” writes:

“Are our churches thermometers registering the racial attitudes and actions of the world; or are they thermostats raising the warmth of commitment to racial understanding and love and demonstrable harmony? Most of the Christians in the majority white culture never even think about the issue. That is not a sign of peace but of obliviousness.”

What does the issue of race have to do with the gospel? Where does this fit in with the gospel?

Ephesians 2: 11-12 speaks of the alienation between Jews and Gentiles. This divide between Jews and Gentiles was not small or simple or shallow. It included:

- Religious

The Jews knew the one true God and Christians knew the only Son of God, Jesus.

The Gentiles were pagans confessing no gods.

- Cultural or social

They were divided over lots of ceremonies and practices like circumcision and dietary regulations and rules of cleanliness.

The Gentiles did not keep these ceremonies and were considered grossly unclean and unfit.

- Racial

The Jews had a true bloodline going back to Abraham, Jacob. They were true bloods. The Gentiles were not.

The division between the Jews and Gentiles were deeper, wider and more hated than anything we see today between black and white or red or white or Asian and African-American.

But look at Ephesians 2: 14-22 and we see the reconciliation between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

- We are one Verse 14
- The walls of division have been broken down Verse 14
- The enmity has been abolished Verse 15
- We are created as one man Verse 15
- We know have peace Verse 14, 17
- We both have access by one Spirit to the Father Verse 18
- We are no more strangers Verse 19
- We are no longer foreigners Verse 19
- We are now fellow citizens, equal. Verse 19
- We are fellow members of the household of God, not fighting members of that household. Verse 19
- We have the same foundation of Christ and the apostles. Verse 20
- We are one whole building Verse 21
- We are joined together. Verse 21
- We are growing together. Verse 21
- We are being built up. Verse 22
- We all have the Spirit of God living in us. Verse 22

What is the difference? What happened between the description of the alienation and separation between Jews and Gentiles in verses 11-12 and the full reconciliation and unity described in verses 14-22?

Ephesians 2: 13-18 is full of meaning, but the simple fact is that Jesus Christ, God’s

Son, died.

Note, verse 13 and the emphasis on “the blood of Christ.”

Verse 15 “in His flesh.”

Verse 16 “through the cross.”

When Christ died shedding his blood in His flesh on the cross, He broke down the middle wall of division between us, he brought us near to God and to one another, making one new man from the two – thus creating peace.

No more racial lines to divide us. No more social and economic lines to divide us. No more religious lines to divide us. Now we are one in Christ.

Revelation 5: 9-10

“And they sang a new song, saying, “worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

Heaven is going to be a multi-racial, ethnic, place where the unity is going to be in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus died for oneness and for the walls to come down between us. I need to as a follower of His at least let the walls come down in my heart and then actively pursuit building bridges across the lines that have divided us. We are about redemption.

Breaking down the walls and crossing the lines that divide us is all about redemption....salvation....our mission.

Michael Richards hired Howard Rubinstein, a PR manager, to do some damage control for him and he reports that Richards has already begun psychiatric counseling to manage his anger. But is counseling what he needs? Or does he need a change of heart? Does he need the Lord?