



Love Incorruptible
The Church (part 1)
May 21, 2017
Courage Church, Detroit, MI.

I want to begin today by getting right into the scripture reading. We will do a little recap of last week after we read this weeks passage...

so if you would please open your bibles to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11-22.

“Therefore remember” -

just for a moment, lets stop there... remember, in the first ten verses, Paul showed us how we were far from God... we were dead in our sins to the things of God... we were alienated from God... now, he is about to show us how we are alienated from each other... but first he shows us in the first ten verses HOW IN CHRIST we were reconciled to God, and created for a purpose... and Paul is telling us here... “if you can remember where you once were, and what Jesus did for you... you should have the strength to work out your relationships in the church.”

“Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and

peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

Let's pray.

Something very powerful happens in the passage that we just read, especially when you read it directly following what we read last week.

It is crucial to understand last week's passage, in order to fully grasp what Paul does in the passage we are about to explore, so if you missed last week's message, make sure you go back and listen to the podcast or watch the sermon on our website... the sermon was called “Grace, Faith, and Poems” - and the whole thing is about how Paul says two different times in ten short verses, that it is by grace alone that we are saved, and he even goes so far as to re-iterate it in verse 8 by saying “THIS IS NOT OF YOUR OWN DOING!!!”

But then he says something fascinating... He says that we are Christ's workmanship.... which is the Greek word “*poiema*” which is where we get our modern day word for “poem.” it is saying that we are art... we are an expression of God...

your life has a story, and God wants to use that story to point people back to him... He wants to use the testimony of your life as an artistic expression of the truth that He saved you, on account of nothing that you did.

and understanding that in an individual sense is important, which is why we spent so much time on it last week...

but understanding it in a CORPORATE SENSE, is absolutely crucial.

Because where your life always should point people to the grace of God... the idea that you represent God by yourself, or that you in your own life can reflect God completely by yourself, is a hallucination. Its a pipe dream.

We talked about this very briefly two weeks ago... especially in today's culture where so many people are turned off by the church... a lot of people who claim to follow Christ are trying to distance themselves from the church.

and where the reasoning may seem sensible... "they don't look like Jesus"

ultimately you have to understand something about the church. Yes... the church needs to look like Jesus... I have said that a million times, and I am not contradicting that with what I am about to say... the church should reflect Jesus by following his words and the way of life that He modeled... but I think that sometimes we get caught up on the idea of modeling our lives in a certain way, that we fail to realize that Jesus actually specifically laid out what the church is supposed to be...

and modeling your life after Jesus' every move will certainly get you to a good place... and like we said last week, in some instances your life and your example may be the only Jesus that someone else ever comes in contact with... but *maybe*, the model that we should set as our example, is the model of the church.

Because we aren't Jesus... and WE ARE THE CHURCH.

Jesus says in John (John 14:12) that we will do things even greater than He did... BECAUSE of the church. Because there is power in people who come together who have the mind of Christ, and who are guided by the Holy Spirit. We have the same Spirit that empowered Jesus to do everything that he ever did... and there are MANY more of us.

The church should be filled with many people who have Christ living in their hearts and are working together for the same purposes that Christ died for...

people.

and what a lot of people fail to realize in all of their individualism... and in all of the ways that they try and separate themselves from the local church and try to create para-movements apart from that, is that there are certain things that ONLY a local church has...

one is, the local church has consistency... at least a healthy local church... it is consistent in the community...

it takes time to build anything that will last...

so coming in with a “one and done” mission, it may feed people but it will still leave them hungry.

There are plenty of organizations that can rally people together and come in and do something big one time... that is part of the reason why we launched our discipleship school BEFORE we launched our short term missions department, which is coming... we need the missions... we need people who will come partner with us for a short time... but what we need even more is consistency and follow through, so we first decided, lets get some full time feet on the ground, to actually SUSTAIN the big impact that we get from 4 days, love Detroit, and other missions teams who come throughout the year.

Because after they are gone... the people are still here... and the needs don't go away just because a couple of them got met.

ultimately people need other people in their lives... they need consistency... they need to know that you actually care about them... and that is one of the most powerful aspects of the local church... is its ability to be consistent.

another thing that I believe people miss about the power of the local church... and this makes it more powerful than just about any other entity, especially the loner Christian who “doesn't need the church...”

and that is our ability to mobilize.

again, anyone can get people together at any given time for a specific cause... but the church LIVES THE CAUSE.

Which of course goes hand in hand with consistency... our consistency gives us direction in how to mobilize... Here is an example:

When Dawn and I lived in New York and worked for the Dream Center, for the first few years we were there we were just consistent. We showed up, we met needs... we made friends, we built trust...

Then, Hurricane Sandy hit... and at the moment, in a greater than normal way, we mobilized.

and it only took a few hours, before other churches in the area, and organizations were calling us asking us "how can we be a part of helping?" Because we already knew exactly where to go... we had a good sense of what to do... and that is what the church should be... they should be the go-to... they should be the ones that everyone else is saying to: "you guys obviously care... how can we be a part?"

And that church wasn't all that much bigger in numbers than we are... they do have more people, but its smaller than you would think when you weigh the numbers, against the impact that they make. Because faithful people who genuinely care, will always make a bigger impact than a crowd who just, for whatever reason, wants to be seen helping.

I have seen the way that the local church can mobilize and the way that it can change a community... but even beyond that, I have read the words of Jesus regarding the church, and I have read Ephesians which is so clearly a guide for the church... and because I have read those things and I have seen those things and I have studied those things...

I get, kind of, "gracefully irritated" with people who just say that they don't need the church.

That all they need is Jesus... it is NOT biblical. And we will talk about this a lot in the coming weeks... there will be 3-4 more messages this series about the church...

and You all know that I have no problem shaking awake a sleeping church... because there are not many things in this world that frustrate me as much as a church that doesn't look like the church is supposed to look...

but I am not a critic of the church. and you shouldn't be either. I am hard on those whom God has entrusted Dawn and I with, but I am the biggest believer in the local church...

because I understand that every word that I speak against the church I am speaking against THE BRIDE OF CHRIST. Yes, sometimes that bride is unfaithful... yes sometimes that bride doesn't act like a bride.

but... you don't talk crap a man's bride, and still expect to have a relationship with Him...

and yet people think that it is okay to say whatever they will about the church as long as they model their lives after Jesus.

But that doesn't work. Because Jesus passed on His mission TO THE CHURCH.

And there is nothing more important to Jesus than His bride...

and that is why Paul dedicates, really this entire book, to the church.

Because we can't reflect Jesus by ourselves... we are each only a part of the body which He is the head of.

and we need to understand what this body is all about...

John Stott says this in his commentary on Ephesians:

“Nobody can emerge from a careful reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians with a privatized gospel. **For Ephesians is the gospel of the church.** It sets forth God's eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new society which stands out in bright relief against the sombre background of the old world. For God's new society is characterized by life in place of death, **by unity and reconciliation in place of division and**

alienation, by the wholesome standards of righteousness in place of the corruption of wickedness, by love and peace in place of hatred and strife, and by unremitting conflict with evil in place of a flabby compromise with it.”

I love the way that he summarizes the book of Ephesians this way... it is the gospel of the church. It is the way that Jesus is going to move forward through the broken people who love him.

and it only happens when they unify... and they get rid of divisions... and they focus on what brings them together, and that is the gospel.

So lets look at some of this, shall we? Verse 12, 13

“remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the **covenants of promise**, having no hope and **without** God in the world. But **now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**”

The reason that these verses are so significant, is that Paul is telling the Ephesians, and us, that without Christ, we were the strangers...

He says “don’t you remember that time... when you didn’t even know about the covenants of promise...”

God all throughout the Old Testament revealed Himself first to the Israelites. He worked through them. They were his chosen people. And what Paul reminds those in Ephesus, is: THATS NOT YOU!

And yet because of what Christ did, you have the same access. The same door is open to you.

What this is saying, is reminding us all... we have no reason to boast. We were outsiders whom Jesus called in. And until you view yourself as that... someone who was apart from the covenant until Jesus died to MAKE YOU THE COVENANT... until you get that, you won’t understand this next section...

verses: 14, 15, 16 - and we will park here for a while.

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has **broken down in his flesh** *the dividing wall of hostility* ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, **thereby killing the hostility.**”

Verse 14 is fascinating...

It says that He is our peace... which is incredibly significant... the word peace in Hebrew is the word “shalom” and it means wholeness... it means “it is finally complete” it means “it is ALL AS IT SHOULD BE” - one of the things that Paul says about the gospel in Ephesians 6 is he refers to it as “the gospel of peace”

and from the time this was written until now... nobody has a clear example of what peace looks like, because there has never been peace. There have always been nations battling other nations, wars and more wars... mostly driven by pride and by greed... by feeling superior or wanting to be superior... by gaining control or by keeping control.

The world is a place that takes... and the only way that it will stop taking, is if people stop believing that they deserve something more than someone else. Which will never happen apart from the gospel.

The reason it is the gospel of peace is because when it takes shape in your life you slowly begin to understand what it means to lay down your rights... even the things that you have earned... or think you are entitled to.

if both parties approach each other from that type of grace, then there will be peace between them. But **ONLY THE GOSPEL CAN BRING THAT...** an

so he is our peace... now look at the next line... **He made us ONE...**

In John 17, Jesus prays this prayer to the Father and it is very famous, it is known as “The High Priestly Prayer” - and the essence of that prayer is this:

That we, the church, would be one... just as Jesus and His Father are one... and we will really get into this when we get into Ephesians 5, but in Ephesians 5 Paul uses the example of marriage, to describe the church... because marriage is the closest reflection that we will ever be able to get here on this earth, of not only the relationship between Christ and His church but also Christ with the other parts of the Godhead... with God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Paul calls it a great mystery... There is something profound about marriage that points to Christ and the Church in a way that nothing else can. and when you get married, if you didn't know this going in, you instantly learn...

Life is not about you anymore.

You now have this diverse relationship with someone who thinks differently than you, acts differently than you, has different habits than you have...

and your life is now about THAT PERSON.

In fact, all the way back in Genesis (2:24), it says that when you get married... the two become ONE... you become ONE with a person who is different than you are. But there is a purpose that is bigger than both of you... and it is called marriage... it is called a family.

and that is a symbol for the church. Different people who come together around a uniting purpose.

and you will see as we go through the book of Ephesians, how Paul is laying out concepts here in Ephesians two, that he breaks down in more detail a little later in the book.

So then right after that it says: He has **broken down in his flesh** *the dividing wall of hostility*

Now... this statement is NOT a random one. It is not just a message saying that Jesus died so that we would stop fighting... even though that is true too.

We talked about this a couple of months ago, briefly, when we talked about when Jesus cleansed the temple... He went into the temple, he cleansed the whole thing, and he said these words:

“My house shall be called a house of prayer FOR ALL NATIONS.”

The literal word for “nations” there is the Greek word ἔθνος (*ethnos*)” which mean: “Gentiles” - my house shall be called a house of prayer to all Gentiles.

because in the temple, what was happening was: they divided the temple up into four sections:

The Gentiles Court
The Court of Women
The Court of the Jews
and The Holy of Holies

and the ONLY area that Jews would allow the Gentiles to enter, was the first area, the court of the Gentiles. and that ALSO was the area that had been over-run by merchants.

the only place that a Gentile could worship had been over-run by merchants.

and between the Gentiles Court and the rest of the temple there was a literal, physical wall there that had an inscription in it sending a message to the Gentiles saying that (paraphrasing:) “if you go beyond this wall, then you ONLY have yourself to blame for your death.”

In Acts 21, Paul gets arrested in the temple, and in verse 28 one of the accusations that they have against him is that “he brought Greeks into the temple, defiling the Holy Place.”

He took a Greek through the wall that divided the Gentiles Court from the rest of the temple... we know that, because the first court was FOR THE Gentiles... there would be no reason to punish Paul for merely taking a Gentile into the Gentiles court... he took him BEYOND THE WALL.

This wall became known as “the dividing wall of hostility” - so Jesus went into the Temple that day in the final week of his life, and he turned tables over and he chased people out and he made this powerful declaration, NOT ONLY that they had turned his house into a den of thieves... but perhaps even more significantly than that...

“My house shall be called a house of prayer for EVERYONE.”

not just the Jews... not just the Gentiles... on other words...

this wall must come down.

and then just two chapters later, Mark 13 begins with Jesus talking about the temple... and this is what he said:

“Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

Do you see what is happening? Because Jesus cleansing the temple in the moment did not lead the Jews to real change... and they continued in their business practices and they continued leaving up their dividing wall of hostility that made it so some were in and some were out, and we know that things stayed that way, by the way they treated Paul when he took a Greek into the temple...

so Jesus says here that the whole thing will fall... and in fact he puts it this way... he says “not one stone will remain standing.”

Now, check this out...

In A.D. 70, the temple was destroyed. Just as Jesus promised.

But it was ORDERED NOT TO BE DESTROYED.

Titus who commanded the army and later became Emperor of Rome, told their soldiers that the temple itself... the structure, was not to be destroyed in the siege... which is actually important... because the leader of Rome said “don’t destroy it.”

but what ended up happening, and Josephus records this in his historical account of the temple, is that a battle broke out between the temple guards and the Roman soldiers, and a fire broke out in the inner court of the temple. One of the soldiers grabbed a torch and hurled it through this door that was made of solid gold, and a fire broke out in the sanctuary...

Some were trying to put the fire out, and Titus continued to demand that the soldiers NOT destroy the temple but to contain the fire and put out the flames... but there came this moment when Titus’s own soldiers just began to completely *disregard* him. The gold that the temple was filled with had begun to melt and even got between the bricks, and in seeing how much gold was everywhere in the temple, they began to destroy the temple themselves to get all of the gold. Brick by brick they destroyed it and removed the gold that had gone between the stones.

It is recorded that: “because of their hatred of the Jews and their desire for riches, the soldiers disregarded the orders of their general.”

This is why this is all so crazy to me.

Paul says that Jesus “killed the hostility and broke down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.”

Jesus physically, in the last week of his life, entered the temple, rebuked the dividing wall of hostility by saying that his house shall be called a house of prayer for EVERYONE... then he said that not one stone will be left of this temple.

and the temple was SO beautiful, that even the leader of Rome, who was TAKING OVER ISRAEL, said Don't destroy that temple. It must be preserved...

but because not a word of Jesus ever goes unfulfilled... the Roman soldiers literally ignored their leader and destroyed the temple anyway.

Because the truth is, as beautiful as that temple was, it needed to be destroyed. It was an idol. It was meant to point people to God, to be a place where people could dwell with God, and instead it pointed people to religion, It was a symbol of religion... and of greed. It was a symbol of racism... of Jewish people in, and everyone else OUT.

But symbols only represent things that are carved into the deeper places of our hearts.

Just because you destroy the dividing wall of hostility doesn't mean that have killed the hostility. The wall is just an image that shows us how screwed up we are...

Destroying a wall doesn't actually destroy hostility.

it doesn't destroy prejudice.

Every culture that has ever existed has some sort of a bend that says that they are superior in some way to others - I don't know *why* that is, beyond what research will tell you, and that is essentially that in our human nature, we all have a natural tendency to lift ourselves up...

In Hebrew, the word pride means "to lift up strength" - and in order to elevate yourself, someone has to be under you.

and most of us today... we go through life saying "WE WOULD NEVER..."

we would never think of someone else as being less than we are...

but hostility takes on whatever form it can culturally *get away with*.

In our culture, you can't get away with being a racist the way people got away with that 60, 70, 80 years ago... of course, that doesn't stop people from having their prejudices, and racism is obviously still alive and well in our world, but there is not much you can get away with in acting on those prejudices without some serious repercussions. Especially in a place like Detroit... it just doesn't fly.

But It is culturally acceptable for a person who has money to keep his distance from the person who is homeless.

it is culturally acceptable to come down on, condemn, and *even judge* people because of their politics. It is normal and accepted that people show hostility toward one another over social differences.

It is culturally acceptable... but it is not acceptable to Jesus. He died so that we wouldn't have to fight over that garbage. The church has a mission, and its an enormous one... and if we are locked on mission, then our differences unite us rather than divide us, because the gospel says that Jesus died so that everyone could have life.

And if that is true, then why are so many people walking around, still dead?

One of my favorite words is the word intention.

and this is what intention looks like... intention sees a bigger picture... it sees a world without Jesus... a world without hope... with the understanding that they will NEVER see Jesus, and they will NEVER experience HOPE... if the church doesn't do its job.

Jesus empowered the church to be his body... his literally hands and feet, that reflect him and point people to him and *when* that is our goal, our differences become futile. They are pointless, and are not worth us giving time to.

We bicker when we get OFF MISSION.

We are sucked into the petty, when we get OFF MISSION.

and *its intentional*... when we aren't intentional to stay on mission, we are going to get off mission... because the devil is very intentional to distract you and give you every reason to get off course. Because when the church is off course, the world burns.

If our eyes are locked on the mission we have been given, which is to go into all the world and make disciples (Matthew 28) - then we can push right through the petty distractions that try to eat away our time and our passions and our hearts for people.

The church should look like a mosaic. A thousand different, broken pieces that all come together to create something that is whole. But only together, with each other and connected to Christ, are we whole.

Paul says that in Christ there is no Jew or Gentile.

There is no slave and free.

There is only that... IN CHRIST.

but Jesus didn't just destroy the wall of hostility - HE KILLED THE HOSTILITY.

Whenever I am describing the gospel to people, one of my defaults is 2 Corinthians 5... because it really shows us what a Christian community should look like... and that is "the ministry of reconciliation"... and the way that you achieve reconciliation is by being ambassadors of Christ... representing Him in every way, and when you come in contact with a person who is APART from him, this is how Paul says you reach them:

by NOT COUNTING THEIR TRESPASSES AGAINST THEM.

Then he sums up the whole gospel in 2 Corinthians 5:21 when he says "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Jesus took on our sin. He took it on himself. He became the things that were wrong about our lives so that we could live righteously because of his.

He took the hostility on himself... all the times we fought over nothing... all the times we thought we were fighting for something... but the point is...

we were fighting, when we should be been shining.

We should have come together and been the church, because only together can we properly reflect Christ... only together are we his body.

and if in the church spends the same amount of time fighting about the same things as the rest of the world does, then what in the world is different about us?

Jesus says the world will know His disciples by their LOVE ONE FOR ANOTHER... People will see Jesus not only in the way that we serve them, and show *them* his love... but also in the love that we have for each other... and truthfully, if we can't get it right in here, how will we ever get it right out there?

When you understand the full gospel... you understand everything that Jesus actually accomplished on the cross and all the things that you have done and that you and I do to each other that put him there in the first place... it should change the way that we live.

If Jesus killed the hostility, why do Christians remain hostile?

the answer is that they haven't grasped the grace of God... they haven't come to terms with being poor in Spirit... realizing that there is nothing about them that should be elevated above anyone else, because apart of Jesus we are all, as Paul puts it in the first verses of Ephesians 2, dead in our sins. Thats a lot to grasp. You once were literally DEAD in your sins.

The only difference is, and it is the one reason why hostility should absolutely NOT BE NAMED AMONG US, is we have experienced a resurrection.

and our church should be filled with people who look different from one another... yet love one another. There should be no walls... There should be no divides. There should only be "In Christ" - In Christ we are WHOLE.

In Christ... we are FREE.

In Christ... we are ONE.

Now, 19-22...

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

one thing that we are going to really focus on in two weeks... in two weeks we are going to finally be into the second half of Ephesians, and we are going to talk about Ephesians 4 which again, is about the church... and what Paul emphasizes in chapter 4 is the necessity of Christians growing up...

last week we talked about how we have been "born again" - but what Paul tells us here in these scriptures, and he goes way more into it in Ephesians 4, is that we can't stay babies forever. According to Ephesians 4... Courage Church exists to equip you all... the saints...to do the work of the ministry... the work of reconciling people back to God. And something has to take place in your heart where there actually is growth.

So **we are no longer strangers... no longer aliens...** no longer outsiders, but now we are actually members of the house of God. and if you look closely at this, you notice a progression.

First Paul calls us citizens... then he calls us members of the house.

As a citizen in a kingdom your loyalty should be with your King... but as a member of a family, you know that your real loyalty lies with your family.

Nobody should ever chose country over family, and anyone in their right mind wouldn't.

Do you see how this becomes more intimate?

A Father has a much more intimate relationship with his children, than a King or president may have with his citizens. One is distant, one is close.

If you are a citizen of a country... you may pay taxes to that country, you cast your vote for who you want to run it... but you can be involved OR you can hide behind the scenes... there are plenty of citizens of our country who don't speak up, who don't get involved...

but in a family, you can't do that. You can't just not be a part of where that family is going. If the family goes on a vacation, you are getting in the car and going with them.

There is no "just sitting in the back and never actually being a part of it.

As we grow in Christ, into the body of which He is the head... we begin to see the places that we fit, and we realize... "its really not enough to just sit on the sidelines while the church serves the world... while the church is the church."

No... you and I, together... we are the church. And we are part of the family of Christ which means we do the things that the family does. For us, right now, that type of "growing up" spiritually for you may look like coming out and serving at Kids Club... it may look like serving at Adopt-a-Block... It may look like a Saturday serve or 4 days... it may look like volunteering at the new Courage House to help with a project.

Being a part of a family takes work, but it is worth ever ounce of blood, sweat, and tears that you put into it, because it is only together that we reflect Christ the way that He is meant to be reflected... in all of His glory.

Now, again, its a progression. It is a measurement of spiritual growth... sometimes what people need more than anything for a season is just to come into this place, and enjoy the presence of God and find the healing

that they need from whatever wounds they may have coming in. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...

but the question is, are you moving along in the progression? Are you progressing?

Is something tugging at your heart saying, "I can do more for Jesus... I can do more for the body of Christ... I have a bigger part to play in this family..."

in this beautiful, diverse family...

if that is you... please get involved!

We have a little team book in the back that lists all of the things happening this summer, and a little sheet for you to fill out so that we can plug you in. We are having a great time serving our community. This Thursday was amazing... it felt like we had like, double to turn out for our second week of adopt a block and kids club than we did the first week...

and there is this powerful moment each week, when we break all of the kids up into small groups, and leaders begin to talk to them, and pour into them, and hear from them... I walked around just listening on Thursday to the things that some of these kids were saying to the leaders, and my heart was so stirred... We are being the church in these kids lives...

and that is something that you can be involved in... you can be part of. and if you find yourself there, and maybe you weren't there this time last year... that's progress. It is a progression. It is what it means to begin to grow up in the body of Christ.

and then, the final thing we see in this progression is, that with Christ as the cornerstone of the whole structure, when we join together, we grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

We GROW. Together.

Into something that people can come in to... and instantly be a part of... instantly find some healing... because they see this mosaic of incredibly broken people who realized that they are better together...

because people are broken... but Jesus made the church whole.

I was looking through my notes from past sermons that I have done on the church, it is one of my favorite subjects, and because we chose to do Ephesians right now, it means that I am going to get the opportunity to give several sermons on it in the coming weeks... but I found this line that I had jotted down during a previous study and it really stuck out to me this week, because most people think of the church as the building... the brick and the mortar... the stain glass... the temple that was destroyed... and here is what I wrote down:

Buildings Break.

But the church is a collection of people who already know that they are broken.

We know we aren't perfect... but we know we are being perfected.

We know we don't deserve Jesus... yet we know that Jesus is waiting for us at the end of the isle, ready to make the broken things whole.

and here in this place, what we see and what we dream about is a church that is not defined by our stained glass, by our great music or even our amazing kids program...

but rather that we are a place that is known for our love.

Who when someone comes into those doors, they see people who look nothing like them, and yet love them... they see people from all backgrounds, living the love of Christ amongst each other.

We want to be a place that has no walls... that has no dividing lines. But rather, just a place that has Jesus. and carries his love out to our broken world.

We want to be a place who lives knowing that the hostility has been killed, and because of that, we can grow together....

because only together, as verse 22 says, are we built into the dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Only together, are we the church.