

Title: It's all about the family "Outcast No More"

Text: Ephesians 2:10-22 (Supporting passages: 2 Corinthians 1:20-22, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, John 14:6, Hebrews 2:10-11, Ephesians 2:4-9, Ephesians 3:14-21)

Sermon Summary: This message looks deeply at what it means to be a part of the family of God! In our text Paul makes it clear, Jew and Gentile believers are equally a part of the Body of Christ and are being built together to be a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit! A person who has accepted Jesus into their life through faith, is no longer an outcast, but a member of the body of Christ. God does not want us to live as outcasts, but to connect with His family, and to allow His Holy Spirit to dwell within us to accomplish great things! We were never meant to be outcast, and it's not cool to be an outcast because we miss out on the benefits of being a part of God's family. Our inclusion into the family of God was costly to God and happens when we place our faith in what Jesus did for us on the cross! This message seeks to answer this question: How does a person stop being an outcast, and get connected to the family of God through meaningful relationships?

Introduction:

"You are stronger! Sin is broken, You have saved me" We should all be grateful that Jesus was stronger than our sin! He broke the chains of sin so we could be set free from its destructive power and its eternal consequences! But another reason Jesus wanted to free us from our slavery to sin, was so we could be adopted into the family of God! And what an honor and privilege to be a part of God's family, to be outcast no more! Let's pray and ask God to help us understand all that it means to be a part of His family! Pray!

In the United States and Canada, advertising is all about the individual. It's all about me! In many other cultures of the world, advertising is not so much about me as it is about WE! Why? Because in much of the world, community and family play a much bigger role in life than it does here in the U.S.

Video of a motorcycle group in Taiwan.

When I saw that video, I thought to myself, that's the kind of friends I want. That's the kind of team I want to be on. That's the kind of human family I want to be a part of! A family who is there for one another when times are tough, encouraging each other not to give up and to keep on living! Advertising in the United States is different because the majority of Americans make decisions based on the potential for success, advancement of personal goals, financial gain, and the what's in it for me factor.

Randy Frazee, in his book "Making Room for Life," makes this statement...

"In America success is defined by the next purchase. In other places around the world success is defined by a simple meal and conversation with family and friends."

That is a powerful statement and one that should bring conviction to each of our hearts. And if that doesn't, I pray that God will use the words of our text today to bring that conviction. There are some in this room today who would be quick to say, "Pastor Larry, I would love to have a life that is connected to a family. My personal family is not that close. We just live under the same roof, and to make things worse, I don't have any close friends that I can share my heart with. I'm not really connected with anybody at church. I just come on Sundays. I don't feel I have a place in God's family. In fact, if I were honest with you, I kinda feel like an outcast." What is an outcast?

As a Noun - a person who has been rejected by society or a social group.

As an Adjective - rejected or cast out.

So kids think about it this way: an outcast is someone who has been "cast out". Just flip the two words! Out cast - cast out!

And here's the deal: sin, the wrong things in our lives, unrighteousness and wickedness, separates us from God and causes us to be cast out from the presence of God and the family of God! Is there hope for any of us to be "outcast no more?" Yes! God's Word brings great news to all the outcasts of the world! You can be an "outcast no more!" In our passage of Scripture we're about to read, Paul makes it clear, Jew and Gentile believers are equally a part of the Body of Christ and are being built together to be a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit! So if you have accepted Christ as your Savior God wants you to stop living as an outcast! He wants you to connect with His family, and to allow Him to live in you by His Spirit! It's all about "relationships!" In fact for the next few weeks, we're going to be talking about the faith family, getting connected to the family of God and why the relationships you will develop are vital to your spiritual well being! Here's a question you'll hear over and over today...How does a person stop being an outcast, and get connected to the family of God through meaningful relationships? First you must realize...

You were never meant to be an outcast!

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Isn't it interesting how Paul said, ... we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. In America, with our individualism, we would have preferred Paul write...

"For YOU are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for YOU to do." But He didn't say YOU, He said WE and US!

It's all about the family! Sometimes Hollywood brings up a good point in a movie. In the first Iron Man movie, Iron man and a scientist who have been kidnapped by terrorists, are talking. Stark asks the question: "Got a family?" The scientist replies: "Yes, and I will see them when I leave

here. And you Stark?" To which Ironman replies: "No." The scientist says, "So, you're a man who has everything, and nothing!"

Ouch! God created us for family! Personal family and God's family! One of the messages in this series will be about the responsibilities of each family member, so I'm not going to hang out here, or talk today about what those works are, I just want you to realize God has some very important reasons for connecting us together as a family! You were never meant to be an outcast! Two questions. First: How did it feel, or how does it feel to be an outcast? Second: What difference does it make to know that from your very beginning, you were the workmanship of God, created with a purpose and with things to accomplish with your life? It should make a huge difference! Now here's our main question again: How does a person stop being an outcast, and get connected to the family of God through meaningful relationships? You must realize...

It's not cool to be an outcast!

Ephesians 2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Some people think it's cool, rad, and awesome to be an outcast! Some people find their identity in being different in an outcast kind of way! In other words, some people want to be different just to be different! Some people try to be different in a shocking kind of way that draws attention to themselves, so they isolate themselves from everyone else on purpose! Gangs are sometimes formed by small groups of outcasts because everyone has a need to be a part of a family. But that's not a good kind of family group! On the other hand, I'm not trying to encourage you to do whatever it takes to fit in with the crowd! That's not the family you want to be a part of either! Let me explain it this way... I don't mind being an outcast when it comes to acceptance by the world. I don't have to be a part of the crowd and don't want to be, especially when they are doing things that are wrong and ungodly!! Again, I don't mind being considered an outcast for Jesus! But you must realize what you're missing if you decide to remain an outcast from the family of God! Trust me, you don't want to be that kind of outcast! We're going to spend some time on this one because it's that important! Listen again to what Paul says...

Ephesians 2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Wow!! Did you get that? Did you see what you give up if you decide to remain an outcast?

- a. To remain an outcast is to remain separated from Christ.

Without Christ we can't have a personal relationship with God, because Jesus is the connection between us and the Father. Jesus Himself said this...

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (NIV)

Paul described this separation a few verses earlier in his letter to the Ephesians...

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,
Ephesians 2:2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.
Ephesians 2:3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

If you choose to remain an outcast, you miss out on the love, grace and forgiveness that is offered to you in Jesus. But there's more you miss. Let's look at the first part of verse 12 again...

Ephesians 2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners...

b. An outcast is excluded from citizenship in Israel.

Why does that matter? The people of Israel were God's chosen people. Not because they were better than others, but because He chose them to be the first of many chosen. He wanted them to be His ambassadors to the world to show His love and His desire to bring all who would come into the family of God. However, the people of Israel refused to be His ambassadors to the world. That responsibility has now fallen to the Church! Listen to what Paul said to the church at Corinth ...

2 Corinthians 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: (NIV)

2 Corinthians 5:19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.(NIV)

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.(NIV)

Why do we implore people to be reconciled to God? Because if they are not reconciled to God they remain outcast! Not only is an outcast separated from Christ and excluded from citizenship in Israel, but an outcast also...

c. Loses out on all the promises of God's Word!

Ephesians 2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise...

What a tragedy to lose the promises of God! Here's the deal, when you get connected to Christ and His family, you also get connected to all the promises of God's Word. Every promise made to Israel becomes a promise to you. You become one of God's Chosen People.

2 Corinthians 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 1:21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,

2 Corinthians 1:22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

My question is, "Why would you want to remain an outcast and miss out on the wonderful promises of God?" Our text goes on to tell us one of the worst things about being an outcast. An outcast is...

d. Without hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

I don't want to be without hope and without God in this world. It's a tough world out there. I remember what it was like before I met Jesus. The sense of hopelessness and not having God's love, His strength and His wisdom to guide me. Some people love to say this..."I don't have to go to church to believe in God!" While this is true, and I tell people all the time, you don't have to be connected to Northshore Church to be a Christian, or to be adopted into God's family, but you do have to be connected to God in a personal relationship with Christ. And listen to me, if you have a relationship with Christ, you're automatically a part of His family whether you like it or not. You've been adopted into His family. You might not want to have anything to do with the family, but you are a part of it! And if you don't believe me, believe God's Word...

Hebrews 2:10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.(NIV)

Hebrews 2:11 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.(NIV)

When a person accepts Christ as their Savior, they become a part of the Body of Christ! The Body of Christ is the family of God. The Church is the Body of Christ. When you refuse to be a part of the fellowship of God's people, you lose and we lose. You lose the meaningful relationships and ministry we could bring into your life and we lose the privilege of getting to know you as a friend and the ministry your unique gifts and talents could contribute to our mission! You might ask, "if I'm already a member of the Body of Christ and a part of His family when I accept Him as my Savior, why do you have that thing called covenant membership?"

Glad you asked! It's simple. God knows who's on His team. He doesn't need a signature on a piece of paper, He sees right inside your heart. He knows what you believe and your level of commitment. I'm not God and I can't see inside your heart. I wish I had the time to get to know everyone of you on a personal and even daily basis and could just say, "yes, I know that person well, they're on our team, they're committed to Christ." Since I can't humanly do that, nor can Jay, or Andrew or any of our staff, we teach a class called Northshore Orientation. In that class we talk about what it means to have that personal relationship with God. We talk about our church's purpose, mission and vision, our core beliefs, our leadership structure, our support of missions. A person who has accepted Christ as their Savior is already a member of the Body of Christ. However, when they go through the class and affix their signature on our covenant membership form, it lets us know they are okay with the basic doctrines, teachings, core values, purpose, mission, and vision of our church. It lets us know a person has made the decision to follow Christ and that they desire to connect with us and be a part of the Body of Christ at Northshore Church to help us fulfill our God-given mission! That's why we require leaders in our ministries, like Shorekids, 180, and small groups, be covenant members and also be involved in worship on Sundays. It's a part of being in the family!

Okay, let's ask the question again: How does a person stop being an outcast, and get connected to the family of God through meaningful relationships? This happens when you realize...

Your inclusion was costly!

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

Ephesians 2:15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,(NIV)

Ephesians 2:16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.(NIV)

Wow! What a price! What love! Jesus died so that Jews and non-Jews alike could become a part of the family of God. He tore down the dividing walls that had separated the Jews and the Gentiles. He made it possible for anyone who would accept God's love to be reconciled to God and to become a joint heir with Christ! He made it possible for us to be "outcast no more!" And have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus became an outcast for you so that you would be an outcast no more? This was prophesied many years before Jesus was even born. Listen...

Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Jesus was willing to become an outcast so you could no longer be an outcast! Yes you are worth that much to Him! Here comes the question again: How does a person stop being an outcast, and get connected to the family of God through meaningful relationships? By realizing...

Your inclusion comes when you decide to trust Jesus!

Ephesians 2:17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.(NIV)

It is no longer adherence to the law that makes a person right with God or brings peace into their life, rather it is the grace and mercy of God given through Christ and His message. In fact, Paul had just mentioned this in the verses leading up to our text...

Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,(NIV)

Ephesians 2:5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions —it is by grace you have been saved.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,(NIV)

Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—(NIV)

Ephesians 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.(NIV)

Jew and Gentiles alike have access to God the Father through the Son. And our access to God is 24/7 because God actually lives in us by way of His precious Holy Spirit. We are never alone!! Once we are in Christ, we are outcast no more!!

And if the amazing grace and love of Jesus are not enough to get you to give up your outcast status, what other incentives could motivate a person to stop being an outcast, and get connected to the family of God through meaningful relationships?

Your inclusion comes with benefits!

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,(NIV)

Ephesians 2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.(NIV)

Ephesians 2:22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
(NIV)

Did you see that list? It contains the benefits or consequences of being in the family of God!

- *No longer foreigners and aliens
- *Fellow citizens with God's people
- *Members of God's household
- *Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets
- *With Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone
- *Joined together rising to become a holy temple in the Lord
- *Built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Let me put it this way...

Outcast no more! Aimless no more! Disconnected no more! Powerless no more! Lonely no more! Insecure no more!

The video I showed you earlier inspires me because those guys got together and overcame their old age, their physical difficulties, their tragedies, their pain, and accomplished something amazing. What will we accomplish if we come together as the family of God, together with the power of His Holy Spirit, and our God-given purpose and mission? What will we accomplish for the Glory of God? And sometimes it's the little things we do for one another that makes such a big difference! I got a text last year that read...

"Thanks for everything you and the church have done for our family this past two weeks. Our church has shown so many people just such a huge amount of awesomeness with helping with the funeral... It has impressed so many of our relatives just the extra mile that our church has gone for our relative who was not even a member of the church!"

Paul put it this way a few verses later in his letter...

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father,

Ephesians 3:15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Ephesians 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Ephesians 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

Ephesians 3:18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Ephesians 3:19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Ephesians 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

It takes faith to be a part of the faith family. If you've never placed your faith in what Jesus did for you on the Cross and allowed Him to help you have a personal relationship with God, admit you need Him, believe in Him, and commit your life to Him today! And if you're already connected to Jesus, but not His family, we welcome you to connect with us today, we need each other!

Let's Pray!