

“Connected”

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Last week our oldest daughter turned twelve. As with all birthdays in our family, this was a big event and we marked the occasion in a number of ways. The birthday girl started the day with breakfast in bed, she went shopping in morning, spent the afternoon cooling off at the pool, and later, our family came over for a big “birthday dinner.” After the meal, we all lined up for the traditional Eggold birthday parade complete with cake, presents and a somewhat-shaky rendition of “Happy Birthday to You.” This is all standard birthday stuff in our house, but this year we added a new element to our celebration. This year, after the parade, we watched home videos.

It’s amazing what you videotape when you are a new parent. For more than two hours we watched footage of birthday parties, Easter egg hunts, school programs and just about everything in between. Now I know that these images would be boring and completely meaningless to anyone else, but to us they are priceless. They preserve our past and help us to relive some of our most precious memories. Most of all, they remind us that we are members of a household. They show us that no matter how weird or difficult life gets, we belong to a family and will always be connected.

This sense of belonging is critically important to all of us, because so often in our daily lives we are disconnected. Paul picks up on this basic human problem in today’s reading from Ephesians when he writes that by nature we are “foreigners and aliens.” These are uncomfortable, even ugly words, because they are words of exclusion. Aliens are outsiders. Aliens don’t belong. Aliens are disconnected from the community. Alienation is a disturbing concept, and it is also something with which we can all identify.

Alienation is a way of life today, and you can see it in many areas of society. As cities have expanded into suburban sprawl, our culture seems to move farther and farther away from neighbors. The internet provides us with the ability to do our work in isolation, and even though advances in technology may give us the illusion of connection, in many ways we are more disconnected and alienated than we have ever been.

We can blame technology or societal trends all we want, but alienation and disconnection are not new. The disconnection, alienation and separation that we often feel are, and have always been, the results of sin! The devil and our human nature want us to be disconnected. Whether it’s the temptation of Adam and Eve in Garden of Eden, or the daily struggle we each have with our own personal sins, disconnection from God and from each other is always the result.

Today’s reading is meaningful for us because it addresses this disconnection caused by sin. God knows our sins. He sees our hearts. He recognizes our rebellion, and no matter how well we disguise and hide our sins from others, God sees us for what we are: sinful, corrupt people who have disconnected ourselves from His love. How has God responded to the awful reality of our sin? He has responded with promises.

In Deuteronomy 31 God promises that He “will never leave” you alone, and He promises that He will never “forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6). These promises mean that no matter how far you run, no matter how often you fall back into sinful behavior, no matter how hard you try to be disconnected from God, He will never walk away from you.

God not only made these promises to us, but He backed them up with His blood. Paul writes, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13). God didn’t wait for us to show interest in Him. He didn’t wait for us to show remorse for our sin. He didn’t wait for us to decide to “connect” to Him. He didn’t wait for us to take even a step in His direction. Out of His great love for us, the Father sent His Son – to be an alien; to live in this world as a foreigner; to be forsaken; to experience the ultimate disconnection from His Father as He died on the Cross; and He did all of this so that we could be connected to God.

Christ died for you, and because of this great act of love you are connected! In Psalm 68 King David tells us that “God sets the lonely in families” (Psalm 68:8). Today, Paul tells us that because of Christ we are “members of God’s household!” Because of Christ, we are family!

Through the Cross, we have been connected to the family of God, and this is incredible news for us! Family means connection! As Paul writes, it means that “we have access to the Father by one Spirit.” It means that we can talk to God in prayer. It means that we can ask for His help. It means that we can approach God with confidence, because our relationship with Him has been made right.

Family also means forgiveness. Sometimes in our earthly families this can be one of the most difficult things to do, but it is so important. Because of the Cross, not only have we been forgiven, but we have been given the power to forgive others. As we share this gift, God uses it to make connections! In proclaiming and practicing forgiveness, we connect with each other and we connect others to God. It is inevitable that as family members we will hurt each other. But where there is forgiveness, there is healing, and through God’s healing, families can be reconnected.

The other night as we watched our home movies, we saw a “household” that included grandmas and grandpas, aunts, uncles and cousins; but it didn’t stop there. The household we saw on those tapes also included friends, neighbors, co-workers, and church members. For me it was a wonderful reminder of just how big “God’s household” is. Because of the Cross the term “God’s household” takes on a new meaning.

In God’s household, there are no aliens. Paul writes in I Timothy that God “wants all men to be saved” (2:4), and that is exactly what was made possible through the Cross. Jesus Christ died for all people and in Him sins are forgiven, eternal life is promised, sinful people are connected and God’s family grows. The household described by Paul, is a household that includes people from every facet of our lives, and God has placed these people into our lives so that we can share the message of the Cross. As we do this important work, God’s household grows.

In Christ, we are forgiven! Because of that forgiveness we have been “reconciled to God” and we are members of God’s household. We are a family connected through the Cross. Amen.

Reverend Thomas A. Eggold
August 6, 2006