

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on November 11, 2018:**

**"Life Lessons of Transformation for
the Church Today from Ephesus:
Part 1 (Ephesians 1:1-2)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman emphasizes that the purpose of the church is to worship God and then to witness God's love to others around us.]

Notes

Introduction:

- This morning, pastor Craig is starting a new series – “The Life Lessons of Transformation for the Church Today from Ephesus.”
- We’re going to take a guided tour through the book of Ephesians and see what the church learned at that time and then a step forward into the present to see what it has to say to each one of us.
- And to see the life God has given us and the relationship He’s welcomed us into, which we know is about family and that salvation is all about relationship.

“Both Sides of the Story” Phil Collins (1993):

- Pastor Craig asks us to step back in time, about 21 years, with him.
- In 1997, in the Finley church pastor Craig and another pastor gathered together a group of churches in Ohio for a basketball weekend.
- They had church services along with YOU youth basketball games.

- Pastor Craig was giving the sermon that weekend and he decided to give a multi-visual, a multi-media presentation.
- It started off with a song from Phil Collins, “Both Sides of the Story” – It was because the words of this song just resonated with pastor Craig.
- The title of his message was, “Heaven or Hollywood.”

- The sermon started out by playing the song with Phil Collins on the drums, along with a bass guitar and bagpipes playing.
- The song was a hit with the audience especially when pastor Craig saw his dad, sitting in the audience, give him a big grin and a thumbs up on it.

- Now let’s walk through the words together.
- And we’ll see that it’s a timeless message in that it’s still relevant today as it was over 20 years ago.

“Both Sides of the Story”

*We always need to hear both sides of the story
And the lights are all on, the world is watching now*

*people looking for truth, we must not fail them now
be sure, before we close our eyes
don't walk away from here
'til you hear both sides*

- What we're going to see today and acknowledge is that there is still two sides to the story.
- Back in 1997, it was "Heaven or Hollywood".
- Today, it's "Seeing the World from the Churched or the Unchurched Point of View." (What a difference that makes.)

*Find yourself in the gutter
in a lonely part of town
where death waits in the darkness
with a weapon to cut some stranger down
sleeping with an empty bottle,
he's a sad and an empty hearted man
all he needs is a job,
and a little respect,
so he can get out while he can*

- Now, some of the things we experience today is the heartache of not knowing who we are – and that's talking to the world around us.
- And when one lives in a relationship apart from God and doesn't experience that each of us is a beloved child of God, then our world is different.
- When we go through issues like unemployment or illness or relationship heartache and see them through the eyes of the Father, Son and Spirit, it makes a big difference.
- Now for those, not living in that relationship with God, they don't know that the Father is good, that Jesus is good, that the Spirit is good, they then live their lives out of their own humanity.
- And so today, representing the church, we are saddened by their heartaches.

*A neighborhood peace is shattered
it's the middle of the night
young faces hide in the shadows,
while they watch their mother and father fight
he says she's been unfaithful,
she says her love for him has gone
and the brother shrugs to his sister and says
"looks like it's just us from now on"*

- How many families have been torn apart because they didn't know who they were in the Father, Son and Spirit?
- How many young children grow up without both parents because of the vagaries of human relationships?
- If there is going to be any hope or light for those living in darkness, then at this time it has to be us in the church to exhibit it.

*Here we are all gathered
in what seems to be the center of the storm
neighbors once friendly now stand
each side of the line that has been drawn
they've been fighting here for years,
but now there's killing on the streets
while small coffins are lined up sadly,
now united in defeat*

The church's role today:

- You see, when someone doesn't have a relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit and lives out of their humanity un-enlightened as the beloved children of God, then the powers of darkness unite them in defeat.
- But, when we are united in Christ, that's a whole different story than united in defeat.
- We can't fail those people, who are looking for truth.

- And if we can just let that settle in for a moment and realize that we live in world where we can see both sides of the story – one united in Christ, represented by the church, one united in defeat, those who don't have a relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- And we also need to realize that we have been given a role to play, by God – to reach out to others about His love for them.
- We'll see from Paul's letter to the Ephesians that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are reaching out to enlighten and to call those out of that darkness and into light.

- If people are looking for truth, where will they find it?
- It's the church who proclaims that Jesus is the Truth.
- When people are looking for truth, they can find it in the church.
- They find the truth among those people who believe, those who have faith, those who have trust and confidence in the fact that Jesus did it all.

- Jesus welcomed all of humanity into that relationship, all of humanity being included, whether they have a clue or not.
- And it's when they get the clue about Jesus, their view of the world changes.
- What does it take for a 28 year old man to walk into a bar and grill and kill 13 people, including himself and a police officer and injuring 10 others, just four nights ago?
- And as the line in the song says, "We must not fail them now."

- And so, if we can just lift ourselves up and imagine why the Father, Son and Spirit called each one of us into a relationship with Him and give us salvation.
- God didn't do that to for us to be a part of a "feel-good-club."
- When we were given the gift of the Holy Spirit and the love of the Father and Son, it wasn't just to make us feel good.
- It wasn't just like VIP pass that gets one to the front of the line at Disneyland.
- Now Disneyland is a metaphor about the fact that apart from a relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit, we seek to just pleasure ourselves and go for all the gusto.

- Yes, we have benefits, we have blessings and we have knowledge of who we are and we've been given a lens to see that this life is not what it seems to be like on the surface.
- It's God's supernatural transforming power that changes us and through that change, we'll called to reach out and share God's love with others – loving God and loving others without fear, shame, guilt or doubt.

Ephesians – Content:

- Paul wrote this letter for encouragement, exhortation and challenges.
- It's set against the backdrop of “the powers of darkness” (Eph. 6:12) and the evil we can see from time to time.
- And we also see the good that comes out of our relationship with God even in times of tragedy and sadness.
- Paul also portrays Christ's bringing Jew and Gentile together into the one people of God as his ultimate triumph and glory.

Ephesians – Emphases:

- It emphasizes the cosmic scope of the work of Christ.
- Also Christ's reconciliation of Jew and Gentile through the cross.
- It includes Christ's supremacy over “the powers” for the sake of the church.
 - With apologies to Phil Collins who sings, “those united in defeat”, don't for a moment forget what the Father, Son and Spirit have already done – they have already defeated those powers.
 - Those powers do not have hold or sway over each of us as believers, even though they would like us to believe differently.
 - And when we face life's problems of sickness, pain, unemployment, financial struggles, we do it knowing that there's another side of the story.
 - And the other side of the story is refreshing and uplifting as we need to remind ourselves of the benefits God gives us.
- And Christian behavior that reflects the unity of the Spirit.

Ephesians – Occasion:

- Tychicus, who is carrying this letter (6:21–22), is also carrying two letters to Colosse (Colossians and Philemon [Col 4:7–9]).
- Perhaps after reflecting further on the Colossian situation and on the glory of Christ, and knowing the Asian fear of “the powers of this dark world,” Paul writes a general pastoral letter for the churches of that area.
- We need to realize that the churches of Asia Minor had fear – fear that “the powers of darkness” could overcome them.
- But, we know that through the power of Jesus Christ that is just not the case.
- It's a false fear and we need to remind ourselves of that.
- Now, as we begin Ephesians, there is a lot to learn, by way of transformation and who we are as the church, and who can see both sides of the story.

Ephesians 1:1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

- When Paul was saying that he was “an apostle”, he meant several things.
- First, he meant that he belonged to Jesus Christ.
- Paul also realized that he was “an ambassador of Christ”.
- Now, all of us, as believers, are also “an ambassador of Christ” because we also belong to Jesus Christ.
- This meant for Paul that his life was no longer his own because he belonged to Jesus Christ.

- At first, Paul had struck fear in the heart of the church because of his persecution of it.
- He tried to bring darkness and fear to the church.
- But then an amazing thing happened to him on the road to Damascus.
- It was there that Jesus reached out to him and said, “Paul, why are you persecuting me?”
- Now, even though Paul was persecuting the church, Jesus said that when you persecute the church, you are really persecuting Me.

- Jesus also used a little bit of leverage when He took Paul’s eyesight away, which really got his attention.
- Then Paul, in a moment’s notice went to the other side of the story, because of his response, “Who are you Lord?”
- Now, this should be encouraging to all of us who have friends or family members who we feel may never come to a relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit because of the hardness of their heart.

- Now Jesus didn’t force Paul to make this change, but asked him a couple of thought provoking questions.
- So, going from one side of the story to the other, Paul immediately knew that his life was no longer his own because he belonged to Jesus Christ.

- Secondly, Paul lived out of the power of Jesus Christ.
- The same power of the Spirit given to Paul to reach out to others is given to us.
- The love and the joy and the peace that comes from the Spirit are given to those who believe.
- Jesus calls us to participate in that rescue mission in whatever capacity we may be in.

- Paul recognized that he received the power from the Holy Spirit to do what he was doing and also recognized that it was Jesus’ relationship with him that drove him to fulfill his commission.
- Our called out life is not about being a part of a Disneyland “feel-good-club”, it’s about sharing the love of the Father, Son and Spirit, with others, which is what the church is all about.
- So the church comes together – to number one: worship and then we go to witness.
- Worship and witness are the purposes of the church and as we witness, we share that other side to the story.
- To those who don’t have the reservoir of grace or peace, God brings us to them to share that in whatever way we might have.

- We could take verse from John 6:44, “No one can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him”, and think we should be entering a spiritual conversation with someone because we don’t know if God is calling them.
- But, the reality is that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, right now are in and on a plan of redemption and reconciliation right now for all of mankind.
- Jesus came here to the world to save the world, to forgive everyone’s sins, which He has done.
- Yet, the majority of humanity doesn’t know this now.
- Our role, individually and well as a church, is to shine Jesus’ light of forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption on them and to share with them what it means to be a beloved child of God.
- That’s our role – that’s the Good News to share the hope we have.
- We are sent to others through relationships and to respond to their accounts of their life.
- We aren’t sent to another part of the world, but rather we are sent to right where we live and work and play and worship.
- Now, the “will of God” is simply God’s good pleasure and His desire to call Paul to be an apostle despite the horrible resume he had up to that point.

1b) To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

- Now each one of us are “saints”.
- The Greek word for “saint” is *hagios*, which means “holy, sanctified, set apart, called out, reconciled, redeemed.”
- To have faith means to have absolute trust and confidence in the One who has saved us, redeemed us, reconciled us, made us holy, made us righteous, forgiven our sins – past, present and future and then to live out our lives with this understanding, as different people.
- As faithful believers, we live out our lives from the other side of the story.
- Now, we weren’t called as saints into a “feel-good-club”.
- Jesus didn’t start Rotary International.
- Rather, He started the church and the church has a message and that message is about His redemption and reconciliation for all humanity.
- The church is to set our worship seat against the wall and to go to others as the church is scattered in its mission.
- Yes, God is calling everyone, but not everyone is willing to listen.
- And if they are not willing to listen now, that’s OK for us, because that’s not our job – it’s the job of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit is the ultimate “fixer” who will fix our troubles, who will fix our pains, and who also will fix our belief.
- We just get out of the way and let the Holy Spirit do His role.
- Yet, God has still given us a role to play – to share His love with others and we don’t do this with fear, with shame, with guilt or with doubt.

2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- The Greek word for ‘grace’ is *charis* (charisma is also derived from this word) which means “completely undeserved.”
 - None of us did anything nor could we do anything to deserve God’s grace.
 - Grace speaks very highly to the God we love and worship and honor because He’s not a God that seeks, but rather He is a God who reaches out and seeks us.
 - And He does this through grace.
 - And, so no matter what we face in life, God’s love was given to us because He desired to give us His love.
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- Now the Greek word for “peace” is *eirene*, which means “to have an inner tranquility that can’t be explained by the external circumstances around us.”
 - It can mean that while the whole hill is blazing in fire around us, the peace given to us by God gives us inner tranquility.
 - It can mean that while we are facing the doctor with an unknown future, we have an inner tranquility.
 - It can mean that when we walk into a restaurant and someone pulls out a semi-automatic weapon, we have internal tranquility because of God.
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- Now that’s something we can’t buy down at the local store.
 - It comes to us by virtue of being a saint and by living out our story.
 - It comes to us by not just be willing to accept the blessings that God has given us, but to understand why those blessings have been given to us in concerning our role and calling to share God’s love to those around us.
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- We are called to be a light, to be a shoulder, to be a lifter of others.
 - That’s what Paul has written to the church at Ephesus to understand.
 - And in this letter, there are plenty of words of encouragement as well as many words of challenge.
 - These words are to help us realize that we are called for a purpose, which we can praise God for that.

Closing prayer