

## PREPARING AT HOME

July 16-22, 2018

*Focus reading:* Ephesians 2:11–22 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=389950434>)

*Other lectionary readings:* 2 Samuel 7:1–14a; Psalm 89:20–37; Mark 6:30–34, 53–56

*Theme:* Household of God

As we noted last week, the letter to the Ephesians affirms that Christ unites all things and all people. Jesus' followers are adopted as God's children, with no distinction between Jews and non-Jews. That was a difficult message for some to accept, especially so for Jews who had fervently kept God's laws. We see in this reading that Gentiles were called the "uncircumcised," while Jews were called "the circumcised." These names were more than descriptive. They were used to separate the two groups, with the "uncircumcised" considered to be inferior to "the circumcised." Circumcision was, after all, a sign of the covenant; and the "uncircumcised" were considered to be outside of God's covenant! However, the writer of Ephesians declares that Christ has changed all of that! While Gentiles were once strangers, they are now members of God's household. The original recipients of this letter would most certainly have noticed the decisively political language used here. The Gentiles are "citizens" of the very place where God dwells. They lived in a Roman-occupied land where Roman citizens were entitled to benefits that they were denied. They were told that peace would come as they sacrificed to Caesar, but Ephesians states that they have peace because of Christ's sacrifice. Christ's death breaks down dividing walls and makes peace between people who were estranged. Unity would come through spiritual transformation, brought about by the grace of God.

### FAMILY PICTURE

We are adopted children of God, part of a family that includes many different people from many different places. Draw a picture of some of the people who are in God's family with you. Be sure to put yourself in the picture!

### MAKING PEACE

Jesus is a peacemaker and wants us to be at peace with all people. Are there people with whom you find it hard to be at peace? How can you be a peacemaker? Describe everyday examples of conflict that might happen at home or with friends. Role play ways in which you could be a peacemaker.

### PRAYER

Loving God, you have made us one in Jesus Christ;  
yet, we do not always treat people as our equals or as your children.

Forgive us.

We give thanks that we are members of your big family  
and pray that we would live in peace with all people.

Amen.

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