

Text: Ephesians 3:1-12

Theme: All or One

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Epistle Lesson of Saint Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, chapter three verses one through twelve.

Good Morning Gentlemen and ladies, how are you doing this morning? I pray that you are doing well. Do you know what I have here? Right! I have a copy of the pledge of allegiance. We pledge our loyalty to the nation as it's citizens. There is one important part of the pledge that I think illustrates what Saint Paul is writing about in our text for today, "One nation under God." Who or what is that one nation under God? What has Jesus done to make us a nation under God? Ponder these questions, as we hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

Old Covenant only One nation under God, Israel

If we are thinking of the United States of America as the one nation under God, then we are in the wrong. Biblically, according to the Old Testament, there is only one nation under God. That nation is Israel, the people whom God has specifically chosen for Himself. Those people from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve tribes. Every other nation? They are not chosen by God, known as the Gentiles, the

uncircumcised. They are aliens and strangers. Outsiders to the covenants and all of the promises of God. They have no fellowship or connection to Israel. Thus, they are outside of the promises of God and have no hope of salvation.

Realistically, that is us! Or at least it should be us. We are those who are outside of the hope of salvation. None of us are observant Jews or can claim them as our direct descendants in our family lines. None of us should have any of the promises of God made in the Old Testament. We are outside the plan of salvation and we have done it ourselves. Because of our many great and grievous sins, God should just cast us outside and not allow us entry into heaven.

Outsiders Became Insiders

So what happened? What Changed? How can we dare to apply the promises of the Old Testament to our current day and time? It is all because of Jesus! Jesus has come in the flesh for us. He has perfectly fulfilled every single one of the Old Testament promises. As Isaiah and Micha promise, He was born of a virgin in the city of David, Bethlehem, as well as many more promises. He was born of a woman, born under the Law to redeem those under the Law. Living a perfect life in our place, Jesus goes to the cross. There Jesus suffers, bleeds and dies, bearing the pain and punishment for us. He declares with His dying breath an end to the old covenant as He shouts, "It is Finished." The once for all sacrifice has been paid, all sin is forgiven, all the demands of the Law have been satisfied, all the promises are fulfilled. Having risen from the dead, in what we

commonly call the Great Commission, Jesus calls for followers to be made of all nations, not just Israel.

All Nations Become One

In order for all nations to be made into follows, they must first hear the good news of the Gospel. Jesus sends apostles like Paul to all people not just Jews. As Acts records, first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. The great mystery revealed by Paul in our text for today is that the nation under God is no longer just the Jews but the Gentiles are included in it as well. This means that you and I are a part of the nation under God! We are no longer outsiders, no longer strangers, we have been welcomed into the nation of God with open arms and a beaming smile. We have not been kicked out of heaven, rather the gates of heaven have been thrown open for us. This is not because of anything we have done, but because of the grace and mercy shown to us because of Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection for us. What happened is that the message and the promises of God came to us, in our time and place, and we have become “fellow heirs and members of the body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph 3:6)

Our Lord has come to us as outsiders and made us insiders, members of His Kingdom. He still continues to come to us whenever, and where ever His Word is proclaimed. He comes to us in, with, and under the bread and the wine of the Holy Eucharist, in, with, and under the water of Holy Baptism. Your Lord comes to you to save you, redeem you, and make you His own. Though Jesus, and alongside Jesus, you petition the Father as Jesus does. You talk to God about your neighbor, and then you

talk to your neighbor about your God, joining Jesus, your great High Priest, in holy work that more and more, all around the world may be included along with us in His holy family, that we may indeed be one nation under God. God still sends His son to preach of the Son. He sends preachers here and around the world, to Ghana, India, the Dominican Republic, and many more. The Son sends preachers who preach about he Son, bringing the broken and despairing into His Church, no matter the race, color, or size of sin. And the Church stands, even though all the gates of hell stand against it.

Let all hell break loose. But do not fear! You are so secure in his wounds, drenched by his blood in baptismal splashing and drinking of the river of life at the rail, that you do not run. Rather, you, his Church, face westward, into the wind and storm . . . snuggled right behind him, dragging others with you. Amen.

May the Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.