

**“The Missing Peace in Your Masterpiece”**  
**Ephesians 2:1-10**

**Series: *Made for More* Week 2. *Be More***

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X-rays, CAT scans, infra-red photography, lasers, microscopes – as many as fifty women and men in white coats and latex gloves attend the patient. They work with all the intensity you’d expect in an emergency room. Yet they don’t work fast. No, unlike an ER, the healers take their time – a long time – ten years. That’s what you do when your patient is five hundred years old.

The patient in this case is a painting: The Madonna del Cardellino or The Madonna of the Goldfinch by Raphael. The 42 by 30 inch portrait of the Virgin Mary lovingly watching two toddlers – Jesus and John the Baptist – caress a goldfinch is one of the great masterpieces of the Renaissance. Raphael painted it in 1505 as a wedding present for his friend Lorenzo Nasi. It graced his home in Florence for four decades until tragedy struck. In 1547 the house collapsed in an earthquake killing two people and shattering the painting into seventeen pieces. A diligent search for the remnants recovered all but one large piece from the bottom left corner. Since Raphael died twenty-seven years before, one of his friends reassembled the painting with long nails. He then painted over the seams and fissures. Through the centuries, one artist after another attempted to fix, repaint, restore the work. Their combined efforts produced the opposite effect. So many layers of paint and so much dust and brown grimy varnish accumulated that the glory of the original masterpiece was completely lost.

Then in 1998 the Uffizi Gallery decided to heal its shattered patient. They turned to a team of 50 specialists headed by Patrizia Riitano. Before taking a single step, she studied the painting under a microscope for two years. Over the next eight years Patrizia lived, breathed, touched, brushed, cleansed, thought and dreamed about this masterpiece.

To think of it, I have spent more time with it than with my daughter. It was a very long process. We had to decide if to remove, what to remove, when to remove.

You are God’s masterpiece. Last week we learned from chapter 1 of Ephesians, God chose us to be His beloved children even before He created the cosmos. Now in chapter 2:10, Paul calls us God’s *poiema* which can be translated as handiwork, workmanship, work of art and masterpiece. The New Living Translation says:

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT

You are a glorious creation from the Master Artist. You are far more valuable than a Raphael. Yet like the Madonna del Cardellino, the masterpiece God made you to be has been shattered. Earthquakes in your past caused you to fracture or even fall to pieces. Somehow you were able to nail it all back together but the seams and fissures are still under the surface. You’ve tried to paint over the damage, patch the cracks, apply some shiny veneer but it doesn’t really restore you. It only covers things up. In fact, layers of grime and dirt have accumulated from things you did and things that were done to you.

Like the Madonna del Cardellino, you and I have a missing piece: Peace. What I see in the hurry and scurry of our community is a lack of peace. We have no peace because we do not know peace. This is not good for us. This is not God's will for us. He wants to restore the missing peace in you – His masterpiece. God made you for more and that begins by discovering that God wants you to BE More. A principle reason for our missing peace is we are always doing, doing, doing. Before we can DO More, Paul tells us to stop and BE More.

First, **Be at Peace with Yourself.** Before they restored Raphael's masterpiece they spent two years using x-rays and CAT scans to discover what lay underneath the surface, what cracks and wounds were covered up. Paul begins chapter 2 of Ephesians looking at what disturbed our peace in the past. Take the insert in your bulletin and a pen. First draw a line between verses 10 and 11. In the margin beside verses 11-22 you can write, "Peace through the Cross." Draw a line between 12 and 13 and between 18 and 19. Next to verses 11-12 write "Exclusion of the Gentiles" and next to verses 19-22 write "Inclusion of the Gentiles." In the center verse 13-18 write "Jews and Gentiles reconciled to God." We will focus on verses 1-10. Here you can write "Salvation by Grace." Draw a line between verses 3 and 4. In the margin for verses 1-3 write the word "Dead" and for verses 4-10 write the word "Alive." In the first three verses Paul turns a spiritual CAT scan on the condition of our hearts and souls before we came to know Christ. By death Paul means spiritual death. This is anything which separates us from God. First he points to the spiritual diseases in our culture.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 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 2:1-2

Not everything in our culture opposes God. Yet when we follow the ways of this world instead of the ways of the Lord, we will end up in completely different places. Even a small deviation, over time, can take us far from God. What's more, Paul says there is a dark force working behind the scenes. He calls the devil "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work." The devil pretends to be our friend but his real goal is to disturb your peace. He is most effective when we don't think he exists. Then he can go about his business without any resistance. He can use anything – even good things – to tempt us.

This leads to the second disease – the spiritual disease in our cravings.

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. Ephesians 2:3

The devil works through the culture to encourage a selfish life. His most effective strategy is to put a mirror between you and God. He wants to take your eyes off God and put them on yourself. This connects with our inner cravings. We give into self-pity, self-centeredness, self-indulgence, self-righteousness, selfishness. The craving to throw a pity party, nurse a grudge, push my agenda, get high, get revenge – these spiritual diseases divide marriages, families, neighbors and nations.

If you think I am exaggerating, look at the way the Corona Virus – a physical disease – is overwhelming our world. An outer virus which spreads through droplets in the air from person to

person, which multiplies in communities like a petri dish, infects the inner systems of your body causing fever, coughing, shortness of breath, pneumonia, organ failure and death. There is no way to stop it, no vaccination for it. In just a few short weeks it has caused a severe drop in air travel, the shutdown of university classes and businesses, the cancellation of large concert events, the quarantining of cities and countries. People are afraid to leave their homes. This is a serious crisis and every reasonable safety procedure should be taken. So I ask you: if we sit up and take action about a physical disease which can destroy the body, why aren't we even more alarmed about the spiritual disease of sin which can destroy both the body and the soul? The outer culture and inner cravings are conspiring to destroy your peace – now and eternally. What's the cure?

**Be at Peace with God.** They may find a cure for the Corona virus. Thankfully God has a cure for the spiritual disease of sin. If verses 1-3 describe how we were spiritually dead, in verses 4-7 Paul shows how we become spiritual alive:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 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. Ephesians 2:4-7

Notice God is the one who does everything in these verses. He makes us alive with Christ, He raises us up with Christ, He seats us on the throne in heaven with Christ, He shows us the incredible riches He has waiting for us in Christ. Why does Paul say we are already resurrected and reigning with Christ now? Think of it like a spiritual quarantine. While we continue to live here on earth in the body, our spirits belong to God. He is keeping them safe and protected from the deadly effects of sin still spreading in the air. This cure is available to everyone.

If the Center for Disease Control suddenly announced a vaccine which guarantees a cure for the Corona virus it would be celebrated around the world, rapidly developed by pharmaceutical companies and quickly deployed to stop the pandemic. In fact, if a research team withheld this information or a pharma company charged exorbitant prices for it, the outcry against such injustice would be universal. Yet when God offers the one and only cure for the deadly spiritual disease of sin, the outcry is just the opposite. “Don't talk about it. Don't offend people. Keep quiet! Keep it to yourself.” When God provides a guaranteed antidote for sin for free, the majority refuse it and choose to do things their way, to find their own cure, to follow earthly advice, to make their own homemade remedy.

Yet there is no earthly cure for the deadly disease of sin. Paul reminds us,

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Every religion, philosophy, and popular opinion states you can develop your own cure for sin. My wife and I recently watched the first episode of a TV show called “The Good Place.” A woman wakes up in the afterlife and finds she is in the Good Place – a new age version of heaven. What qualified her for acceptance? A complex algorithm which weighs all her good deeds against her bad. A very tiny number make the cut. It's the same cruel lie: do lots of good works and you will

earn your way into the Good Place. Why is it cruel? How do you know which works are good? How do you know if you've ever done enough? Is there any forgiveness for the bad mistakes and sins you've made? There is no peace in this prescription.

God doesn't give a grade. God offers a gift: grace. Salvation is not our work. It's God's. He gives us peace in person through a person: Jesus.

For he himself is our peace...His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Ephesians 2:14-18

Imagine for a minute that everyone is afflicted with a contagious disease far worse than the Corona virus. It kills every victim. Then imagine a researcher discovers his child is immune. An antidote to save the world can be developed from the child's blood but it will require the child's life. I don't know if I could make such a sacrifice but I do know this: God did. His Son's death on the Cross became our cure. Jesus took the full brunt of the punishment we deserved. Jesus endured the wrath our sin earned. Jesus reconciles us to God. Jesus gives us peace with God. For free. That's grace.

How do you receive this cure? How can you be filled with God's peace? Through faith. Faith is letting go of your way and receiving the peace of God. Let His peace settle down in your life. You don't have to prove anything, earn anything, achieve anything. For a moment: stop doing and just be. When I ask you to spend quiet time alone with God, it's not so you can squeeze one more task into an overstuffed schedule. Time alone with God is a gift of peace He wants to give you. I've heard we are like icebergs – a little bit shows on the top but there's a lot more, perhaps 90%, hidden under the surface. There's a lot going on down there: resentments and rage, cravings and compulsions, wounds and weariness. Let God's peace heal your hidden brokenness, cure your spiritual diseases, restore the masterpiece He made you to be. And when you can Be at Peace with God and Peace with yourself then you can...

**Be at Peace with Others.** Why does God save us and make peace with us? So He can pour His peace through us to others.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT

God restores the masterpiece in you so He can restore the masterpieces around you through you. Everyone in this church is designed by God for a unique masterpiece mission in the world. For too long the church has asked you to show up on Sunday, join a Growth Group, help out in a ministry or mission. That's all good. But you were made for more than that. For too long the basic message from church leaders is, "We can do it, you can help." That's not God's plan. It's supposed to be "You can do it, we can help." God uniquely forms you, shapes you, equips you and sends you to a place where you can restore the hurting, broken people of this world, where you can help God heal their spiritual diseases, where you can show them how they can have peace. It's our job to help you find your personal masterpiece calling and do it. Starting on Easter Sunday, we will begin a series that will help you discover your gifts, your passions, your calling and the place where God

is calling you to serve. Imagine the difference it would make if we filled every nook and cranny of our community with the healing love, grace and peace of Jesus Christ. Rob Wegner tells us what this looks like in the life of a guy from Kansas City named Andy.

He was involved with numerous programs of the church doing everything he was asked to do as a faithful volunteer. And like many, honestly, he found himself over-committed and struggling with a continued sense of purposelessness. Andy ran the HR department for a national theater chain and was given the task of figuring out how they might meaningfully employ the disabled. He'd been pushing that memo to the back of his desk for weeks out of a sense of inability.

But in his discipleship group and his daily Bible engagement it led him to this passage: "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly. Defend the rights of the poor and the needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9) As he read that passage the Spirit of God moved powerfully inside of him. He sensed God saying to him, "Let me out. I want to create those processes through you Andy. I want to bring my power to bear on this project. These people with disabilities are my people. And I'm sending you to reach them for me." In an instant Andy's entire attitude changed. He now had a people and a cause – giving those with disabilities a shot at employment and an opportunity to receive dignity through work.

Since that time, what started as a project in one theater in Kansas City spread to every theater in that nation chain. Andy was asked to share his developments with other organizations like Google and even the White House. He discovered his calling. Now Andy has left his job and started his own consulting firm for this purpose. He now serves Starbucks and Hobby Lobby and other large companies helping them develop best practices for hiring and maintaining effective working relationships with people affected with disabilities. And since that time a few years ago close to twenty thousand people with disabilities have now found meaningful work. That's a masterpiece mission. And Jesus has one of those for every single person in your congregation.

Let God put His peace in you and bring out your masterpiece.