

A 20-Minute Preaching Manuscript for CPC Plainview & Rochester, MN
Sunday, July 5, 2026
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Title: *The Church: God's Household in Christ*

Scripture: *Ephesians 2:19–22*

Grace and peace to you in the name of God our Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today is a very meaningful day for me and for my family. This is my first official sermon as your pastor, and I give thanks to God for the privilege of beginning this journey of ministry together with you.

I want to begin by sharing something from last week.

Last week, my wife and I drove around Plainview and Rochester. We did not only drive around to learn the roads, the buildings, and the neighborhoods. We also prayed. We prayed for these towns. We prayed for the people who live here. We prayed for the families, the children, the schools, the businesses, the farms, the hospitals, the neighborhoods, and the churches. And especially, we prayed for this congregation and for the ministry God is calling us to share together.

As we drove around, we noticed some interesting things.

In Plainview, we noticed that we did not see traffic lights, even along the main road, South Wabasha Street, Road 42. It felt simple, peaceful, and easy to pass through. But in Rochester, there were many traffic lights, many roads, and sometimes confusing intersections. It was a bigger city, with more movement, more signs, and more directions to watch carefully.

Yet, even though Plainview and Rochester are different, we were able to pass through both places.

This made me think about the church.

Every community is different. Every congregation is different. Some places may feel small and simple. Some places may feel larger and more complex. Some roads are quiet. Some roads have many lights and turns. Some ministries may feel clear and peaceful. Some ministries may require patience, attention, and careful guidance.

But God is present in both places.

As my wife and I drove around these communities, we also noticed that both small towns and larger cities have many churches. There are churches of different denominations, different names, different histories, different traditions, and different styles of worship. But as Christians, we know this deep truth: we worship the same Triune God — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But in Jesus Christ, we belong to one God, one faith, one Lord, and one household of grace.

This is why our Scripture today is so meaningful for the beginning of our ministry together. In Ephesians 2:19–22, the Apostle Paul tells us what the church truly is. Scholars often observe that

this passage moves from reconciliation to identity: those who were once far away are now gathered into God's new people, God's household, and God's dwelling place.

The church is not only a building.

The church is not only a Sunday worship service.

The church is not only an institution, a committee, a program, or an organization.

The church is God's household in Christ.

Paul says that in Christ, we are no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. We are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. And together, we are being built spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

So today, as we begin this new chapter of ministry together, I would like us to listen to God's Word under this title:

The Church: God's Household in Christ.

And we will think together about three truths from this passage.

First, in Christ, we are no longer strangers, but members of God's household.

Second, in Christ, the church is built on Jesus Christ, the cornerstone.

Third, in Christ, we are being built together as a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

First, in Christ, *we are no longer strangers, but members of God's household.*

Paul begins verse 19 by saying, "*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.*"

This is a word of belonging.

In the background of this passage is the division between Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles had once been described as outsiders, strangers, and aliens. *Andrew Lincoln* explains that the separation between Jews and Gentiles was not only religious but also social and relational; each group could look at the other with suspicion and distance. But in Christ, Paul announces a new reality: those who were once far away have been brought near.

Many of us know what it feels like to be new. We know what it feels like to enter a new place, a new city, a new school, a new job, a new congregation, or a new season of life. When we are new, we may ask quiet questions in our hearts: Will I be welcomed here? Will people understand me? Will I have a place? Will I be accepted? Can I truly belong?

Human beings need more than a house. We need a home.

A house has walls, a roof, windows, doors, rooms, and furniture. But a home has love. A home has welcome. A home has shared life. A home has stories. A home has forgiveness. A home has patience. A home has a table where people can sit together.

Paul says that in Christ, we have become members of God's household. *Ernest Best* calls this household image a warm and close metaphor, because it is more intimate than citizenship language alone. *F. F. Bruce* also emphasizes that Gentile believers are not second-class members or visitors; they are full members of God's people.

That means we do not stand outside the door anymore. We are not guests who are tolerated for a little while. We are not strangers looking through the window. We are children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, members of God's own family.

This is one of the most beautiful truths of the gospel.

In Christ, God does not simply forgive us from far away. God brings us home.

In Christ, God does not only remove our sins. God gives us a family.

In Christ, God does not only give us a private relationship with Him. God places us in a community where we learn to love and be loved.

This is what the church is called to be: a household of grace.

But we must be honest. Every household has challenges. Every family has moments of misunderstanding. Every church has imperfections. Sometimes we hurt one another. Sometimes we disagree. Sometimes we carry old wounds. Sometimes we do not know how to listen well. Sometimes we forget that the church belongs to God and not to us.

But the beautiful truth is this: we do not belong to one another because we are perfect. We belong to one another because Christ has brought us together.

We do not belong to one another because we are all the same. We belong to one another because the same Lord has welcomed us.

We do not belong to one another because we always agree. We belong to one another because Jesus Christ is our peace.

This is the church.

The church becomes beautiful when strangers become family. The church becomes faithful when we make room for one another. The church becomes a witness when people can come among us and say, "*Here, I can see the love of Christ.*"

When my wife and I drove through Plainview and Rochester, we prayed not only for roads and buildings. We prayed for people. We prayed for real lives. Every house we passed has a story. Every family has joys and burdens. Every person has hopes and struggles. And God knows them all.

That is why the church is so important. The church is not here only for itself. The church is here as God's household, open to the people God loves.

The church is called to say to the lonely, "You are not alone."

The church is called to say to the stranger, "There is room for you."

The church is called to say to the wounded, “There is grace and healing in Christ.”
 The church is called to say to the searching, “Come and see the goodness of the Lord.”

So, the first calling from this passage is simple, but deep: let us live as God’s household.

Let us welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us.
 Let us speak to one another with grace.
 Let us carry one another’s burdens.
 Let us pray for one another.
 Let us forgive one another.
 Let us make room at the table for those who feel forgotten.
 Let us notice those who are quiet.
 Let us encourage those who are weary.
 Let us honor those who have served faithfully for many years.
 Let us bless the children and young people among us.
 Let us open our hearts to those whom God is bringing into this family.

Because the church is God’s household in Christ.

Second, in Christ, *the church is built on Jesus Christ, the cornerstone.*

Paul says in verse 20 that this household is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.”

Here Paul moves from the image of family to the image of construction. He says that the church is like a building, but not a dead building made only of stone and wood. It is a living building, a spiritual house, a holy temple.

Every building needs a foundation. If the foundation is weak, the whole building is in danger. A beautiful building cannot stand for long if the foundation is not strong.

Paul says the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This means the church is built on the witness of Scripture, the gospel message, the faith handed down to us, and the truth proclaimed by those who first bore witness to God’s saving work. *Lincoln* and *Best* both discuss the apostles and prophets as foundational to the church’s life and witness.

But then Paul says something even more important: Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

In ancient buildings, the cornerstone was very important. It helped set the direction, alignment, and stability of the whole structure. *Harold Hoehner* explains that the cornerstone was the stone by which the rest of the building was measured and aligned.

So, Paul is saying that Jesus Christ is not simply one piece of the church. Jesus is the central stone. Jesus is the foundation and direction. Jesus is the One who holds everything together.

This is very important for every congregation to remember.

The church does not belong to the pastor.
 The church does not belong to the session.
 The church does not belong to one family.
 The church does not belong to one generation.

The church does not belong to one tradition, one culture, one preference, or one personal opinion.

The church belongs to Jesus Christ.

This truth gives us humility. We are not owners of the church; we are stewards. We are not building our own kingdom; we are serving the kingdom of God. We are not here to make our own name great; we are here to glorify the name of Christ.

This truth also gives us hope. If the church depended only on human strength, we would be afraid. Human strength gets tired. Human wisdom is limited. Human leaders come and go. Human plans change. Human energy rises and falls.

But Christ remains.

The church stands because Christ is faithful.
The church continues because Christ is alive.
The church has hope because Christ is the cornerstone.

When we worship, Christ must be the center.
When we preach, Christ must be the message.
When we serve, Christ must be the example.
When we forgive, Christ must be the reason.
When we love, Christ must be the source.
When we face the future, Christ must be our hope.

A church built on Christ may still face challenges, but it will not be without a foundation. A church built on Christ may need to learn new ways of ministry, but it will not lose its true mission. A church built on Christ may have many different voices, but it learns to sing one song: Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is especially important for a shared ministry. Two congregations may have different histories, different towns, different rhythms, and different needs. One may feel more like Plainview, with quiet roads and no traffic lights. Another may feel more like Rochester, with more lights, more turns, and more complexity. But the question for both churches is the same: Are we built on Christ?

Not on fear.
Not on control.
Not on the past only.
Not on personal preference.
Not on human strength alone.

But on Christ.

So we must keep asking ourselves:

Are we building on Christ?
Are our decisions centered on Christ?
Are our relationships shaped by Christ?
Are our hopes rooted in Christ?

Are our ministries pointing people to Christ?
Are our words and actions showing the love of Christ?

This is not only a question for church leaders. This is a question for all of us.

If Christ is the cornerstone, then our life together must be aligned with Him. We cannot build the church on pride, fear, nostalgia, personal preference, or human control. We must build on Christ: His grace, His truth, His cross, His resurrection, His love, and His mission.

Christ is the cornerstone of God's household.

Third, in Christ, *we are being built together as a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

Paul says in verses 21 and 22, "In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God."

This is amazing.

In the Old Testament, the temple was the special place where God's presence was known among His people. The temple was holy because God's presence was there. People came to worship, pray, offer sacrifices, and remember that the Lord was their God.

But now, through Jesus Christ, Paul says something wonderful: God is building His people together as a living temple. God's presence is not limited to one building in one place. By the Holy Spirit, God dwells among His people.

Commentators note that Ephesians 2:21–22 presents the church as a unified temple, growing together in Christ. *Lincoln* reads "the whole building" as the whole structure joined together in Christ. *Hoehner* and *Thielman* also discuss the phrase as a corporate image of God's people being formed into one dwelling place. *G. K. Beale* connects this temple imagery to the larger biblical story of God's presence dwelling with His people.

This means the church is not only a place where we go to meet God. The church is the people among whom God chooses to dwell.

God lives among His people by the Spirit.
God shapes His people by the Spirit.
God sends His people by the Spirit.
God reveals His love through His people by the Spirit.

This means our life together matters.

When the church loves, people can see something of God's love.
When the church forgives, people can see something of God's mercy.
When the church welcomes strangers, people can see something of God's grace.
When the church cares for the weak, people can see something of God's compassion.
When the church speaks truth with humility, people can see something of God's holiness.
When the church worships with joy, people can see something of God's glory.

Paul says we are being built together. That means God's work in us is not finished yet.

The church is not a museum of perfect saints. The church is a living household where God is still forming His people. The church is a construction place of grace. God is building, shaping, repairing, strengthening, and joining us together.

Sometimes construction is messy. When a house is being built or repaired, there may be noise, dust, tools, open spaces, and unfinished corners. Sometimes it does not look beautiful yet. But the builder sees what is coming.

In the same way, God's work in the church may sometimes feel uncomfortable. God may stretch us. God may ask us to be patient. God may teach us to listen. God may call us to welcome new people. God may invite us to heal old wounds. God may lead us into a new season of mission.

But the good news is this: God is the builder, and God does not abandon His house.

God is building us together.

That word "together" is very important.

We are not built separately. We are not built as isolated individuals. We are not called to follow Jesus alone. We are built together. God joins us to Christ, and God joins us to one another.

This is one of the great callings of the church: to be joined together in Christ.

We may have different gifts.
 We may have different stories.
 We may have different ages.
 We may have different experiences.
 We may have different backgrounds.
 We may have different personalities.
 We may have different hopes and concerns.

But the Spirit of God joins us into one dwelling place.

As I begin this ministry with you, I come with gratitude, humility, and hope. I know that I am new to you, and you are still getting to know me. I am also learning you, your stories, your traditions, your gifts, your joys, and your hopes for the future.

But we do not begin with ourselves. We begin with Christ.

Christ brought us here.
 Christ calls us together.
 Christ is the cornerstone.
 Christ will guide us forward.

And the Holy Spirit will help us learn how to walk together.

So, what does this passage mean for us today?

It means we must practice welcome, because God has welcomed us.

It means we must keep Christ at the center, because Christ is the cornerstone.

It means we must be patient with one another, because God is still building us together.

It means we must not think of church only as something we attend, but as a household where we belong and a mission we share.

It means every person matters. Every prayer matters. Every act of service matters. Every word of encouragement matters. Every visit, every meal, every hymn, every conversation, every offering, every small act of faith becomes part of the house God is building.

Brothers and sisters, the church is God's household in Christ.

The church is God's household because Christ has brought us near.

The church is God's household because Christ is our cornerstone.

The church is God's household because the Spirit is building us together into a dwelling place for God.

This is our identity. This is our calling. This is our hope.

Let us be a community where strangers become family, where broken people find healing, where tired people find rest, where young people find faith, where older people share wisdom, and where all people are invited to see Jesus Christ.

And as we begin this journey together, let us trust that God is still building.

May God build His household among us.

May Jesus Christ remain our cornerstone.

May the Holy Spirit dwell in us and among us.

And may the church, God's household in Christ, become a blessing to one another and a faithful witness to the world.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reference Notes

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3. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, pp. 377, 397–399, 407–408.
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