

June 16, 2013
Interactive Sermon with all ages at the 10:30 service
Based on Paul's Letter to the Galatians

IN CHRIST THERE IS NO EAST OR WEST

I'd like to invite teens and children up front to help me with this sermon. [They gather in front of the altar railing, all remain standing, including me.]

In his Letter to the Galatians, St. Paul tells us how much Christ has brought together people who used to be separated. We're so used to being together that we may not realize what a big change that was. [To the kids] Does anyone have their imaginations plugged in? Would you like to *go back in time* and imagine what it was like before Jesus? [They nod.] Let's each go into our "way back machines" [I and they place each of our hands on top of our own heads and turn, slowly, counter-clockwise a couple of turns.]

O.K., now we're back to before Jesus and -- OH NO! Everyone's divided! *All the women and girls have to go on the pulpit side of the church, all the men and boys on the lectern side of the church!* [A pause, and then people start to move.] If you think I'm making this up, have any of you ever visited a mosque or an orthodox synagogue [my hand and a few others go up]?

But people were divided in other ways too. If we were in the Temple in Jerusalem, there would have been a big wall right here [I point to the altar rail] and no one who was not Jewish would have been allowed past. Sorry, choir!

And people were divided again in another way, based on where they were from! Now, *everyone who was born in New Jersey up front, everyone who was not born in New Jersey follow me to the back of the church.* [Commotion and hub-bub, and a big re-shuffling.] Now, all men who were born outside of New Jersey should be here with me in this corner, all women born outside of New Jersey should be in the other back corner, and all who were born in New Jersey should be up front, but divided by gender.

And in case you're wondering why we have barriers in the middle of the rows of pews in our church, people found yet another way to divide people. Only 100 years ago, pews used to be rented, with the more expensive ones up front and the less expensive ones in the back, and guess who sat in the balcony? I'll give you a hint: it wasn't the organist. So people were divided by money as well as by birthplace and gender.

Do you think this was what Jesus wanted? [A chorus of “No!”] Right! St. Paul says that “Christ has broken down the dividing walls between us,” “Those who once were far off have been brought near” and “In Christ there is no Jew nor Gentile, no male nor female, but we are all one in Christ Jesus.” (sing) “In Christ there is no East or West...”

That’s right! Jesus has brought us together and broken down the dividing walls between us! Let’s get back in the “way back machine” (hands on the tops of heads and spin slowly clockwise) and come back to now, to after Jesus has brought us together. Here we are! Now we can sit anywhere we want with whomever we want, and **we remember that we are all one in Christ Jesus!**

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