

The People of God

Rich Nathan
September 16-17, 2006
The Beloved Community Series
Hebrews 8:10

You can't pick up a newspaper or listen to news without becoming aware of the enormous problems facing this country. This past week we commemorated the fifth anniversary of 9/11. There is still so much unhealed pain as a result of that terrorist attack. I don't know if you had the opportunity to watch the very powerful *Frontline* news show this past week which focused upon the impact of 9/11 on people's faith. But as you listen to folks five years later still wrestling with the enormous questions posed by the collapse of the twin towers, questions like: Where was God when the towers fell? Why didn't God stop this attack? Does religion cause intolerance and violence, or is religion a force for good in this world? So many questions of faith were generated by 9/11.

We, of course, are still embroiled in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sometime over this past summer the deaths of American troops killed in our current war passed the number of those murdered in the 9/11 attacks. And we are daily reminded that we Americans are not the only ones who are suffering violence. War has brought horrific suffering to the Iraqi people. There are daily reports of dozens of tortured, mutilated bodies showing up in the streets of Baghdad. Tens of thousands of Iraqis have now been killed in sectarian violence.

There are enormous problems facing this country – terrorism, war, our national debt is ballooning. We saw another record trade deficit last month. Personal debt is at record highs. Many Americans are going without health insurance. Millions of people in the US say that they cannot afford to get sick.

Because of the enormity of the problems facing us as a country, an issue which is often overlooked, but which is at the heart of many of the personal problems we Americans face, is the growing isolation of people from each other in this country. Americans have simply lost the practice of community. As a nation we are very different than we were 40 or 50 years ago. We are more isolated, more lonely, more out of touch with each other.

A few months ago I mentioned to you a recent study by some Duke University sociologists. After a massive multi-year study they discovered that the average American adult has only two significant relationships. The problem of isolation is particularly acute with men. A quarter of all adults in the US have no one to talk to about the most important things in their lives. The problem of being isolated and disconnected from each other has been noted by many students of American culture.

A few years ago I talked to you about a hugely important book titled *Bowling Alone* by the Harvard scholar Robert Putnam. In the book, Dr. Putnam offers an incredible array of statistics showing the decline of various civic associations. Beginning with their high point in the 1960's, he shows how the civic associations are doing 35 years later.

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- The American Association of University Women ↓ 84%
- The American Legion ↓ 47%
- Boy Scout and Girl Scout Leaders ↓ 18%
- The Jaycees ↓ 58%
- The League of Women Voters ↓ 61%
- The Masons ↓ 71%
- The NAACP ↓ 46%
- The PTA ↓ 60%
- Red Cross Volunteers ↓ 61%
- The Rotary ↓ 25%

What difference does the loss of relationship make in terms of human well-being? You could say, so what if people no longer belong to bowling leagues or the PTA, or Civic Associations, or the Knights of Columbus, or the NAACP. Does it matter if people choose to play cards together on Friday night, or sit at home alone watching TV? Does it really matter?

Two Christian psychologists, Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend, said this in their wonderful book titled *How People Grow*:

People's most basic need in life is relationship. People connected to other people thrive and grow, and those not connected wither and die. It is a medical fact, for example, that from infancy to old age, health depends on the amount of social connection people have. Infants and older people die from a lack of relationship, and those in middle age suffer and fail to recover from illness.

At the emotional level, connection is the sustaining factor for the psyche, the heart, and the spirit. Virtually every emotional and psychological problem, from addictions to depression, has alienation or emotional isolation at its core or close to it. Recovery from these problems always involves helping people to get more connected to each other at deeper and healthier levels than they are.

In other words, the worse thing you can do to people is to isolate us from one another as American society tends to do.

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

See, here is the idea. Human beings are created in the image of God. In other words, we human beings are to reflect out into our world something of the very nature and being of God. God intended that what he is like might be reflected out to all of the world through human beings.

What is God like? Well, according to the Bible, God is in his essence, in his essential being, relational. From all of eternity, God has existed as a Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One essential being existing forever in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Trinity - three persons from all eternity, mutually loving, mutually supporting, mutually indwelling each other.

When God created human beings, he created us male and female because the essential way that we express the image of God in the world is through loving relationships. We need relationship to live as much as we need food and water. That's why one of the worst things you can ever do to a human being as punishment is to place them in solitary confinement. It's worse than beatings. When you cut people off entirely from all human contact, we mentally break down. It is dehumanizing to sit alone in an apartment or a house and sit and stare at the TV or a computer screen. It tears at your created image.

You see, people in our day of isolation will do anything to find relationship with each other. Just open up any newspaper, or go online to any chat rooms, and notice how many people are advertising for a date. What are people saying when they advertise for a date? I say this with all affection, but a person advertising might be saying something like: "I will go out even with a stranger that I know nothing about (he or she could be violent or completely untrusting) because I have no network, no way of connecting with someone I might want to develop a romantic relationship with."

If you go to any bookstore, as I regularly do, you are going to see hundreds and hundreds of titles of books telling us how to have relationships with each other. All of the daytime talk shows center on relationships, perhaps bizarre relationships, but relationships nevertheless. All of these survivor shows and reality TV shows are all about watching people having relationships. As I said before, unfortunately, we don't have friends. We watch Friends on TV.

Relationships are necessary for us. And when people don't have connection with each other, the kind of connection God designed and desires for us, we substitute other things to fill our relational void. Especially in America today we substitute promiscuous sex. At least my body will be connected with another

body, even if I don't have very many people with whom I can completely trust or rely on. How many of you have dulled the pain of feelings of disconnect by connecting your body to another body?

You know, this book that I've been quoting, *Bowling Alone*, has very interesting facts about the effect of church and church going, and church connectedness on us. In all the ways that the breakdowns of social relationships affect us economically, educationally, mentally and medically, relationships in church have exactly the opposite effect. In the inner city, one of the best predictors of whether a young adult is going to have a good full-time job when they grow up is whether they regularly go to church in their teen years. It's better than an employment program. The best predictor of whether an inner city young adult is going to have a good job when they grow up is whether they attend church regularly during their teen years.

The author of *Bowling Alone* said that if a state wanted to dramatically improve the performance of students in school, one of the best things they could do would be to get kids to go to church at least twice a month.

Here's a fact for you. In terms of your physical health, it is a medical toss up whether you either **a)** choose to stop smoking; or **b)** join a church. Smoking is bad, but the health improvements of getting connected in a church are about the same health improvement as stopping smoking.

Or try this one on. They've been measuring people's sense of happiness and well-being for the last century or so in America. And people's sense of happiness is going down. As a general rule, if you massively increase your income you will be happy. And here is the fact, you can get the same happiness boost by either doubling your income, or getting deeply connected to church.

What is God's answer for the contemporary isolation that people experience in America? What is the solution for our isolation and disconnectedness? God has always intended to build a people. This week and for the next four weeks I'm doing a series on the church that I've titled "The Beloved Community." The title is borrowed from Dr. Martin Luther King, who regularly said that his goal in the Civil Rights Movement was not simply political. It was not simply the achievement of voting rights, or equal access to schools. Dr. King was gripped by a prophetic vision that God's ultimate end was to build the beloved community in which all of creation would be restored and all alienation between races and ethnicities and social classes would be eliminated.

I love that phrase, The Beloved Community. That's what is in the heart of God. Let's pray.

You know, compounding the problem of isolation in America is America's preference for individualism. In the US right now the individual and his or her

rights are the be-all and end-all of life. In contemporary America the common good is almost always made subservient to individual rights. So, for example, it is nearly impossible for a landlord to get rid of an obnoxious, abusive, loud, drug-taking, violent tenant. Despite the fact that dozens and dozens of other tenants are adversely impacted by this loud annoying vulgar person, the number of hoops that a landlord needs to jump through in order to evict a tenant who is paying his rent is too high a price for most landlords to pay.

Talk with teachers in public schools. There is an incredible challenge presented to public school teachers and to principals and to superintendents in dealing with a verbally abusive obnoxious defiant bully child or teenager. The due process rules designed to protect the individual rights of the child have so hamstrung teachers' capacity to exercise discipline that many teachers in our public schools become disillusioned. They feel disempowered and unsupported by parents and local school boards and especially by the legal system.

The Bible, while recognizing the importance of every individual, constantly promotes community. And the beloved community that lifts up not only the individual, but the common good, is called the church.

Now, most people, including church members, do not understand the biblical definition of church. For many people the church is a building. We talk about going to church, which means going to a place where a Christian religious service is held. Very commonly, Americans have what I call a customer service definition of church. Church is a place where my spiritual needs are met. I received a recent email from someone in this congregation who advised me about the way the church ought to relate to her. She said, "As the CEO of a large corporation, I would have expected more from you as a customer." In her mind, the church was a kind of Wal-Mart of religious goods and services.

Now, she was simply communicating what is a very common mindset as people approach the subject of church. You see, we have all been deeply affected by the American philosophy of consumeristic individualism. I am and you are, as individuals, the be all and end all of life. And the way that we often approach church, if we are brutally honest is does this church meet my needs? That's how we judge church. We view ourselves as being like those old fashioned ice cube trays that you used to fill with water. I don't know do they still exist any longer? But we see ourselves as basically being a collection of needs. We have a need for security and a need to be inspired in worship and a need to be encouraged, and a need to be loved, and a need for our kids to have a moral foundation, and a need to be respected, and a need to be affirmed, and a need to be challenged, and a need to be taught. We have needs for relationship. And the goodness or badness of a church is measured by how many of the little ice cube tray slots this particular church is able to fill.

How different from this individualistic consumer-oriented view of church is the biblical view of the beloved community. According to the Bible, the way for you and me to become happy is not by having every single square of our ice cube tray of needs filled. The way of becoming truly happy, according to the Bible, is to plunge ourselves into something bigger than ourselves, to get caught up in something greater than you.

Friend, I say this with all affection, but I don't care how amazing your story is, or how fascinating your life has been up till now, there is nothing in your life more amazing or more fascinating than the work and story of the people of God. And however satisfied you are right now with your life's journey, there is nothing more satisfying than drinking from the spring of water found in the Christian church. To properly appreciate this series that I'm doing on the church, you and I have to take off our individualistic glasses. We need to take off our consumer-oriented glasses. We need to stop asking the question for a moment: What's in it for me? We need to start seeing the church from God's perspective. In contrast with most contemporary views of Christianity, God is not primarily interested in saving a bunch of disconnected individuals. He is interested in that, but God's primary interest is in forming the people of God. Listen to these verses from the Bible regarding the people of God.

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Lk 1:17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Ac 15:14 Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles.

2Co 6:16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Heb 4:9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;

Heb 8:10 This is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Heb 13:12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.

1Pe 2:10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

What is the central promise of the new covenant? What did Jesus come to do? Most of us would say that Jesus came to die for my sins on the cross. But here is the promise of the new covenant - what Jesus established by his blood,

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Jer 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

This prophecy of Jeremiah is repeated over and over again in many different ways in the New Testament. I love the way the apostle Paul interprets the death of Jesus Christ in Titus 2:13-14.

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Tit 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Tit 2:14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

The biblical concern is not just on the individual, it is on a people as a whole. And though we enter salvation individually, one by one, salvation is never thought of as simply a one on one relationship with God. When an individual enters a relationship with God through trust in Jesus Christ, we are immediately joined to the people of God.

The early church father, Cyprian, had it right when he said:

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There is no salvation outside the church.

Because God is saving a people for his name. He is not just saving a disconnected group of isolated individuals.

And this leads us to an understanding of God's ultimate purpose in creation. God's ultimate purpose in creation, friends, is to not get some individuals saved for heaven. God's ultimate purpose in creation is to bring about the beloved community where you and I live in healed, restored, loving relationship with God,

with ourselves, with our environment, and with all other people. The train of God's purpose in creation and redemption won't stop until there is a fully reconciled new humanity living in a renewed creation, enjoying complete community with God and with one another.

Now, do you think that purpose is slightly more compelling than whether you receive proper customer service from our receptionist?

Let me press this out a little further for you in this initial talk on the beloved community. Why must you, if you are to fulfill God's plan for your life, reject isolation and reject the individualism of America and really start seeing your life as part of the people of God? Why must you, in order to grow spiritually, but get deeply connected with a particular group of people in a particular church?

One of the most overlooked words in the Bible is the little Greek word

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Allelon = One another; Each other

It means one another or each other. Everything according to the apostle Paul is done allelon. We are members of one another.

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Ro 12:5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We are to build one another up.

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1Th 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

We are to care for one another.

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1Co 12:25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

We are to love one another.

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1Th 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

We are to pursue one another's good.

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1Th 5:15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

We are to bear with one another in love.

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Eph 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

We are to bear one another's burdens.

SLIDE – Galatians 6.1.

We are to be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving one another.

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Eph 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

We are to submit to one another.

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Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

We are to consider one another better than ourselves.

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Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

We are to be devoted to one another in love.

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Ro 12:10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

And we are to live in harmony with one another.

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Ro 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not think you are superior.

The point is, if you are not deeply connected to God's people, you can't obey several dozen commands in the Bible. In other words, it is impossible to say, "I have a good relationship with Christ, even though I'm not in close relationship with the people of God" because immediately someone might ask you, "Well, how do you have a good relationship with Christ when you aren't doing what he says in dozens of places? If you aren't caring for other Christians, if you aren't loving other Christians, if you aren't bearing another Christian's burden, if you aren't forgiving other Christians for the hurt they've caused you, if you aren't devoted to other Christians, if you aren't submitting to other Christians, if you aren't considering other Christians better than yourself, then you are not obeying Christ and you do not have a warm, intimate relationship with Christ.

You say, "But why do I have to be connected to the church? I have a few good Christian friends that I totally enjoy relating to. These friends do not disappoint me the way the church has done. These friends are not weird. I've got my own little fellowship group at my college or at my work. I've got a few Christian buddies that I've been friends with for years. Isn't it enough that we hang out together? What's the big deal about connecting with the church?"

Let's be frank and say that there are many weird people in the church. There are needy people. There are people who say odd things to us. There are folks who lack social grace. There are people that you may not feel particularly comfortable hanging around with. There are people in the church who break commitments. Is it enough that you've got a few good Christian friends that you or you and your spouse enjoy going out to dinner with? Do you also need to connect deeply with the church?

C.S. Lewis, my favorite Christian writer, in his great book of essays called *God In The Dock*, said this:

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When I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn't go to the churches and Gospel Halls; ...I disliked very much their hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit.

But you know, it is not just the recognition that in the guise of some odd or different person there may be a saint of God. The beauty of deeply connecting with the church rather than just gathering together with a few chosen Christian friends, the beauty of becoming part of a small group rather than just hanging around with a few chosen friends at your college or in your workplace, is that in small groups and in the church you don't pick the people, God does. So much of the growth that is going to take place in your life is the result of God putting you in the midst of a group of people that you haven't picked so that he, in his fatherly love and care, can put in your life the attitudes and qualities that will make you look like his Son Jesus Christ.

God knows your impatience, your lack of forbearance, your judgment of others, your pride and conceit, your sense of superiority, your petty preferences, your unwillingness to let go of grudges and hurt. He wants to work all of those things out of you and me, but he can't do it unless we give him the sovereign permission to pick the group of people that he is going to surround us with. If we insist on always determining which people we are going to relate to, we are limiting what God can do in our lives. The beauty of deep connection to a church, the beauty of joining a small group, lies precisely in this: You don't get to pick the people. You let God in his sovereign love pick folks he wishes to surround you with.

Another way to put it is, our commonality is not merely naturally. The reason why most people hang together is because they have some purely natural commonality. Well, we all work together. We all went to the same college. We all are from the same little town. We all have the same background. We all live in the same neighborhood. We all are the same age. We all are married. We all have little kids. There is nothing miraculous about birds of a feather flocking together.

But the church is meant to be a miracle. It is a miracle to be part of a group which is together not because of any natural connections. It is a miracle to be part of a group whose commonness is created by the Holy Spirit. Me, as a Jew; you as a Gentile, Asian, Hispanic, Black, White, Single, Married, young, old, wealthy, poor, educated, uneducated, socially adept, socially inept – join together because we all have been led by the Spirit into this incredible journey of following Jesus Christ. Through faith in Christ you and I become part of the people of God.

The people of God. You know, virtually everything God does in this world he does through people. Occasionally, you hear about God directly zapping someone from heaven without the mediation of another person. But that is not God's ordinary way of working. God's ordinary way of working is in and through other people.

Think about this with me with a couple of closing applications here. How does God save people? How does God reconcile alienated people to himself? Folks who are at odds with God? We've got our backs turned towards the Lord. We don't give God the time of day. We don't give God a passing thought. How does God work out his relationship with people so that they discover his infinite goodness and love? Does he send an angel to interrupt our lives and to announce to us that God is a God of love and goodness and that he sent his Son to break down the alienation between us and God and to reconcile us to our Father in heaven? Not ordinarily.

Does he simply zap us with an open vision or a dream? These things might prepare us. But God's ordinary way of reconciling alienated people to himself is by sending another person to them with the good news about Jesus Christ.

Here is what we read in Romans 10.9-15,

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⁹ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

In vv. 9-10 we read this:

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⁹ If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

The heart and mouth, inward belief and outward confession – simple trust on the part of the hearer and calling on the name of the Lord results in the salvation of an individual. Thus, we read in v. 13,

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¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

But to speak to us about how God uses his people in saving individuals, Paul asks four consecutive questions. First, in order to be saved, sinners must call on

the name of the Lord. How, then, in v. 14, can they call on the one they have not believed in?

Calling on the name of Christ presupposes that people know and believe in Jesus that he died and that he was raised from the dead and that he is Lord. The second, how can they believe in the one in whom they have not heard? You can't call on Jesus unless you believe in him and you can't believe in him unless you've heard of him. Which leads to the third question, how can they hear without someone preaching to them? You can't have a hearer unless someone is speaking. And fourth, someone won't speak unless they are sent.

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A person is sent by God



They preach



We hear the message



We believe



We call on the name of the Lord



We are saved

Here is the logic of biblical evangelism. God sends you and I out to share the message about Jesus, who he is, what he has done for us, how he has come to reconcile us to God, to bring us into relationship with God. People hear this message about Jesus. They believe it. They call on the name of Christ. And they are saved. Virtually everything God does in this world he does through his people. This is why it is so important that you and I bear witness to our families, to our kids, to our parents and siblings, to roommates, and co-workers. He saves us through his people and he rescues us from our isolation and individualism through his people.

You know, God doesn't just want to bring you and me into relationship with himself. When God saves us he makes us part of the people of God. And this is God's great answer to American isolation and individualism. You know, loneliness and isolation is the most common experience that people have in America today. Rich kids whose parents travel or work all the time, who are left alone or to be tended by some nanny. Rich kids are lonely and isolated. Foster kids who have no sense of belonging anywhere and are moved from family to family feel lonely and isolated. Children from single parent homes who struggle with the loss of one of their parents through death and divorce feel lonely and isolated. Only children who long for a brother or sister, children from large families who feel lost in the crowd – there is almost no kid who doesn't feel lonely and isolated.

Single adults feel lonely and isolated. Many single adults believe: If only I was with someone. If only I had a spouse, then I wouldn't feel lonely and isolated. But guess what? Married people feel lonely and isolated too. Sometimes it is because marriage isn't all that great. Maybe the only thing people share is the same bed. Maybe the only thing they agree to is to stop talking. Even spouses in great marriages feel lonely and isolated. Young couples are so busy working, going to class, trying to make money. Young mothers may be struggling at home while their husbands are away on business trips. A husband can spend the night in a lonely hotel room. People work their whole lives looking forward to retirement only to have their spouse slip away into Alzheimer's. Friends move away. People change. Soldiers are sent overseas and miss their families. Kids go off to college. A person ends up in a hospital room by themselves. Folks are sent to prison.

Every where, all the time, we find ourselves lonely and isolated. We want to be cared about. We desire intimacy. We need relationship. What is God's solution for our loneliness and isolation? It's not just marriage; God's answer is not just family.

God created the people of God, the beloved community. And as society today we're big on family, but we tend to think about family in narrow terms – our own personal nuclear families, maybe including our parents, our brothers and sisters. But when someone told Jesus that his mother and brothers wanted to speak to him, he asked,

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Matt. 12:48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?"

⁴⁹ Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers.

⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus redefined and enlarged the meaning of family, for Jesus, family meant being a part of the family of God.

But friend, you need to choose whether you are going to relieve your loneliness and overcome your isolation by connecting with God's people, or whether you are just going to continue to try to go at life by yourself and miss the plan and purpose of God for you. You say, "I am isolated. I am lonely. I am not connected with the church the way I need to be. I am not in the kind of relationships that God intends me to have." Let me show you a brief video and then we are going to close.

VIDEO

Why not ask God to reveal to you what is holding you back. Is it fear? I just don't know if I am going to be able to connect with this group of people. I don't know if they will accept me. I don't know that much about the Bible or about Christianity. I'm not used to small groups. Is it fear?

Is it pride? I only want to be around people that I approve of, that I judge to be worthy of me?

Is it some other issue? Ask God to show you.

The People of God

Rich Nathan

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The Beloved Community Series

Hebrews 8:10

I. Two Great Problems

- A. The Problem Of Isolation.
- B. The Problem Of Individualism.

II. One Great Solution

- A. Becoming Part Of A People.
- B. A Frequently Overlooked Phrase: "One Another".

III. An Objection To Church

IV. The Way God Works

- A. In Salvation (Rom. 10.8-15)
- B. In Relieving Loneliness
- C. In Working Justice