

THE BEAUTY OF ETHNIC HARMONY IN THE CHURCH

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How do you define beauty? One definition that I found helpful is this: “Beauty is a quality that makes something especially good or attractive.”⁷⁴ There are many qualities about the church of Jesus Christ that make it especially good and attractive, one of them being ethnic harmony. When men and women of different ethnicities lovingly and peaceably share life together in the church they provide a good, attractive, and distinctive picture of gospel fruit in a world filled with ethnic disharmony.

God Created All Ethnicities

One of the qualities that makes God’s creation beautiful is that he created people of different ethnicities, in his image. God’s creative beauty is displayed in people who are black and white, Hispanic and Asian, European and Middle Eastern. What enhances that beauty is when people from every tribe, tongue, and nation live in harmony together in the church for the glory of God.

However, because of the fall in Genesis 3, things are not the way they are supposed to be. God’s beautiful design for harmony was corrupted by sin and we now live in a fallen world marred by disharmony, including ethnic disharmony. But God declared in Genesis 3:15 that he would conquer sin by sending One who would bruise the head of Satan. This sin-conquering work would be for people from all ethnicities.

God promised as much to Abraham when he said, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). We know that this sin-conquering blessing was not just for Abraham’s physical descendants but for all those who place their faith in Christ.

As Paul writes,

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:26, 28-29).

⁷⁴ Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/beauty>.

God's promise to Abraham to bless all nations is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ in the gospel, where the blessing of salvation is offered to people of all ethnicities.

God Saves From All Ethnicities

One of the qualities that makes the gospel beautiful is that it reaches people of different ethnicities granting them salvation, uniting them in Christ, and creating harmony where there was disharmony. Paul writes,

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (Eph. 2:13-16).

In other words, there will be no true ethnic harmony apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ because our sin-conquering Savior broke down the dividing wall of hostility and united people of all ethnicities in him.

God Desires the Unity of All Ethnicities

One of the qualities that makes the church beautiful is that it is filled with people from different ethnicities who love and serve one another. Ethnic harmony is an area of recent growth in Sovereign Grace. We celebrate God's grace at work there, and we pray for more. As I talk with the pastors and members of Sovereign Grace churches, I hear a clear desire to grow in ethnic diversity and ethnic harmony.

That desire springs from the gospel itself and not a desire to artificially create ethnic harmony by our own efforts. It's a gospel desire, not a cultural trend. It's a right desire that the pastors and members of our churches have because only the gospel will produce authentic, genuine, lasting ethnic harmony that brings Christ glory. Therefore, with a dependence on God, and with a hope in the power of the gospel, let's pray for ethnic harmony, share the gospel with all people in our community, and seek ways to share life with the people of different ethnicities in our churches.

Of course, your ability to do these things is dependent upon the context your church is in. However, keep in mind that the world is changing, we are more globally diverse now than in the past. You may be surprised at how God answers earnest prayers for diversity. Maybe people from different ethnicities will move near you.

Presently, we have partner churches, or churches pursuing partnership in Sovereign Grace, from at least 21 different nations. Our churches are filled with Filipinos, Australians, Indians, Nepalese, Koreans, Africans, Germans, British, Italians, Belarusians, Jamaicans, Mexicans, Costa Ricans, Colombians, Bolivians, Brazilians, Canadians, Americans, and others. My hope is that through missions trips, conferences, and other

events we can learn from one another, serve one another, and increasingly experience the beauty of ethnic harmony that the gospel creates.

Ethnic Diversity in Heaven

One of the qualities that makes Scripture's portrayals of heaven so glorious is the beauty of ethnic harmony that we will enjoy. The book of Revelation portrays it so well.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb...and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" ... and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." (Rev. 7:9-10, 12).

One day you and I will stand in the midst of a great multitude of people from every nation, tribe, and people singing in the most beautiful worship service we have ever experienced. It will be beautiful because people of all ethnicities who have been redeemed by the Lamb will sing with one voice praising the One who conquered sin and broke down the dividing wall of hostility. My prayer for Sovereign Grace is that God would use this beautiful portrait of a future reality in eternity to stir us to pray for ethnic harmony so that the beauty and the power of the gospel can be revealed in our churches for the glory of God alone.