The Mystery of Union
Delivered: Nov 8 - Solomon's Porch (Hong Kong)
Scriptures: Ephesians 1:9-10

Introduction - The first kidney transplant

…For months, Ronald had been with Richard, at his bedside and in his corner. None of that saved him. Richard lived when something of his brother was placed inside him.

I want to talk this morning about what it means that Jesus took on our flesh, so that He could live His life through us.

(**Slide 1**)
The gospel promises that being "in Christ" means that whatever happened to Jesus happened to anyone who believes in Him,

(**Slide 2**)

> "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

(**Slide 3**)

> Romans 6:5 - "For if we have been united together in His death, we also shall be united in His resurrection."

When Jesus died, we died. And when he rose, we rose to new life.
And we now live in His life.

The gospel of the kingdom isn't good news because it promises salvation for sinners, or heaven for those who are destined for hell; the gospel is good news because it promises union between God and man.

I have 4 points:
(**Slide 4**)
#1 - Union was God's design from the beginning

#2 - Sin separates us from God
#3 - Jesus restores what Adam lost
#4 - We now live from union

Point 1 - Union Was God's Design from the Beginning

Let's go back to the very beginning: Genesis 1:26,
(**Slide 5**)

> "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness…"

God's original design for humanity was that man would re-present Him in the earth.

Does being made in God's image mean we look like God? No.

Jesus says in John 4:24,

> "God is *Spirit*…"

So when God says "Let us make man in our image and likeness" that means we are spiritual beings.

Spirit has no boundary to it. It's not confined by skin; Spirits don't sit side by side like bricks; spirit mingles together like breath. In God's design, one spirit can be joined with another spirit without either spirit losing itself.
(**Slide 6**)
God designed you to be one with Him while preserving both of your identities.
This is the mystery of the Trinity: the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Spirit. God is perfectly in union with Himself and completely distinct in His identity as Father, as Son, as Spirit.

So when God says "Let us make man in our image and likeness," this means we were designed as spiritual beings to be one with God while having our own unique *created* purpose.

That's the good news. The bad news is point #2.
(**Slide 7**)

Point 2 - Sin Separates us From God

When Adam sinned, he removed himself from the will of God by acting according to his own will.

He separated himself from God. That's what sin does;

(**Slide 8**)

it separates us from God and it always leads to death. Adam's sin caused him to become a man of the flesh even though God's will was that Adam would be a man of the spirit.

Genesis 1 tells us that everything in creation re-creates itself according to it's own kind. Cows make more cows, apple trees make more apple trees, etc.

So as sons and daughters of Adam, we've been re-created in the likeness of sinful Adam…the man of flesh who separated Himself from God. We inherited Adam's separation. We inherited Adam's brokenness. We inherited the consequences of Adam's rebellion against God.

(**Slide 9**)

Romans 3:23 says,

> "We *all* sin and fall short of the glory of God."

In Adam, we are born with a gravitational pull away from God. And just like Adam, when we sin, there's nothing we can do to bridge that gap of separation between us and God. Like Adam, we have removed ourselves from God's will of living in union with Him.

So that's the problem: sin separates us from the God who created us to be with Him.

So what is a loving God going to do?

(**Slide 10**)

Point 3 - Jesus Restores What Adam Lost

He takes on flesh, is born into the family line of Adam, lives the life of Adam, dies the death of Adam, but because He refused to sin the sin of Adam, death has no power over this Man. Death is a consequence of sin. Jesus never sinned. But for the sake of the

Father being one with you and I, Jesus allowed Himself to die our death so that we can live His life.

But His death doesn't just save us from Adam's sin. It restores us back to the original Genesis 1:26 design of union with God.

We aren't just with God. We are in Him and He is in us. This is the mystery hidden for ages; Christ in you, the hope of glory.

With and *in* and two very different things. On the cross there were two thieves who were "with Christ" but only one was "in Christ." The promise of the gospel is that we now live and move and have our being in Christ.

Most Christians believe that Jesus died to save them from their sins. Jesus didn't die to save you from your sins. He died to so you could be joined to Him forever. Saving you from your sin was just the starting point. Salvation is not the goal. Union is the goal. To only believe that Jesus died to set us free from sin is like saying, "I got married to set my wife free from being single."

Before I married my wife, her identity was single. But I didn't marry my wife because she was single. I married her because I love her. And the covenant we made because of our love changed our identity…and joined us together as one flesh. As Paul says in Ephesians 5:32, "This is a great mystery."

In the same way, Jesus didn't die because of your identity. He died because of His great love for you. Forgiveness of sin was what was accomplished, but not what motivated Him. Jesus died because sin had separated us from the Father, and that was not ok with Him. We were created to be one with God. Jesus died to bring us back into union with God.

(**Slide 11**)

Point 4 - We Now Live From Union

Let's look at Ephesians 1:7-10

(**Slide 12**)

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,
according to the riches of His grace
8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,
9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good
pleasure which He purposed in Himself,
10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in
one *all things in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him."

In this one section of Scripture, Paul uses the phrase "in Him/in Christ" 9x. Before the end of this letter, Paul will have used that phrase 25x. This is a central theme of this letter, and the gospel:

(**Slide 13**)

The mystery of God's will is that all things would be found in Christ…and *nothing* of eternal value is found outside of Christ.

The mystery of God's will is that
you would be gathered
out of the world,
out of your sin & separation,
out of your wrong ideas about who you are and who God is,
out of your trauma and shame and addiction…
and everything else you inherited from Adam…
God's will is to gather you out of *all* those things,
together with *other* sons of Adam who are *also* gathered out of their situations, and place us all in one-ness with Jesus forever.

(**Slide 14**)

You were born to be filled with God…forever. To be joined in union with the God who created you.

If you believe that Jesus is who He says He is, then you are the dwelling place of God in the earth. And His will for:
where you live,

what you do for a living,
the way you raise your children,
how you spend your time & money,

and every other micro thing that we give all of our attention to…God's will is that all of those things would flow from, and come into order because of, the superior reality that you are in Christ.

Jesus is now living His life through you.

The mystery of the gospel, is that anyone who puts their faith in Jesus have died to their old life, and by way of that death they bury everything they inherited from the first Adam, and are now re-born into the *image* and *likeness* of the last Adam…which means our spirit, which *was* dead because of sin, has now come alive with the life of God and we are restored back to union with Him.

This is incredible news!

So why do so few of us actually live with the reality that God lives in us? Three reasons:

(**Slide 15**)
Reason #1: we just don't believe it's true. We can't believe that an infinite God could dwell in us. It's ok…Paul calls it a mystery. And you don't have figure out God's mysteries. He reveals them to His people.

The mystery of union isn't for scholars…it's for lovers…it's for those with faith like a child.

(**Slide 16**)
Reason #2 many of us don't live with the reality that God lives in us: we **once** believed the mystery, but that moment of faith wasn't strengthened with testimonies and encounters. So you grew cold. Scripture teaches us that we are to be continually filled with the Spirit.
(**Slide 17**)

"Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18)

The original Greek for "be filled" is a continuous, ongoing action verb…not a one time event. A better translation would be,
(**Slide 18**)

"Keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit."

Some believers think: "I have the Holy Spirit, why would I need to fill something that's already full?" Try filling a cup of water in the morning, carry it all day, and see how much has spilled out as you move through your day. You bump into things and what's in the cup leaks out. Not because there's anything wrong with the water, but because life happening around you.

Someone asked DL Moody why he needed to be continually filled with the Spirit. He said, "Because I leak."

Some of you once burned for God, living with an awareness that your life was hidden in Christ…but you've let that passion leak out.

You can't live off yesterday's bread. God has designed us to constantly breathe in the fresh breath of His Spirit. You can't live on the breath you took this morning. That's by design. God designed us to need fresh breath to remind us to remain in Him in the same way we remain in oxygen.

(**Slide 19**)
Reason #3 many of us don't live with the reality that God lives in us, and I believe it's the biggest reason: we've never been told. We've been told Jesus can forgive our sins, but we've never been told we're no longer sons of Adam.

Hiroo Onoda story…

…Question: if death is what sets me free from sin and joins me to God, then what saves me, death or Jesus? Because my Bible makes it pretty clear that Jesus is the Savior. So that

means I need to stop waiting for death to send me to heaven and start living like Jesus brought heaven to earth and gathered together *all* things in Himself.

Hear me this morning: if you are in Christ, the Spirit of God lives in you. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Freedom from everything you've ever done as a result of being born into Adam's family, and freedom from every temptation that still tries to re-identify you by your former name. You're not part of that family anymore…you've been adopted, given a new name on a new birth certificate, re-coded, given a blood transfusion, and now bear the image of a holy God.

If you've never been told this, then friend, perhaps you've never actually heard the gospel. That's not your fault; a lot of Christians were raised in a brand of Christianity that was tame and safe and didn't know what to do with mystery, so mystery was either ignored or explained away as something for the age to come. But today you can choose to believe the message that Jesus died to tell you… *in Him* is life, and living the rest of your life *in Him* is what this life was always intended to be.

Too many of us stop at salvation. Salvation is a great place to start but a terrible place to stop. You weren't born to be saved. God created you to be one with God, to re-present Him in creation. To show the world what God looks like. To boldly say, just as Jesus did, I and the Father are One…if you've seen me, you've seen Him. This is 1 John 4:17, (**Slide 20**)

> "As He is, so are you in this world."

Sounds crazy, I know…but this is the language of those who have been gathered out of Adam and into Christ.

In Closing

The design of the lightbulb.