

“REDISCOVERING OUR IDENTITY (#1):  
A MOSAIC OF GOD’S FAMILY”

(Ephesians 2:12-13, 19-21; Galatians 3:26-29)

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**[PROPS: (1) Photo Collage that becomes Photomosaic of Jesus; (2) “Dancing” video clip]**

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 10-5-08]

-I-

1. Read Texts *in different languages*: Ephesians 2:12-13, 19-21; Galatians 3:26-29 and Pray.
2. Many of you know that our church recently adopted a new mission statement that we believe captures the essence of both our identity and calling as a church (on bulletin front): ...we are (say it with me...) **“A Mosaic of God’s family... Gathering, Growing, and Going.”**

A–But what exactly does that mean? And what are its implications not only for us corporately as a congregation, but also for us as individual Christians, as well?

B–These are just some of the questions I want us to explore this month in a new series called “Rediscovering Our Identity” in which we’ll be unpacking the meaning of this new mission statement as the foundation of both who we *are*, & what we’re called to *be & do* as a church.

C–Each week we’ll explore a different dimension of our mission, learn how each dimension builds on the previous ones, and how (taken *together*) they show how we both as a church and as individual Christians can carry out the five biblical functions of people of faith: worship; fellowship; discipleship; service; and evangelism – we won’t use those *terms*, but we’ll discuss their *concepts*.<sup>1</sup>

-II-

3. Now, before we turn our attention (in upcoming weeks) to the “3G’s” of our mission (e.g., Gathering, Growing, Going), today I want us to focus in on the purpose and meaning of the initial descriptive phrase *“A Mosaic of God’s family...”*<sup>2</sup>

A–You know, when we invited congregational feedback several months back, there was probably no more intense discussion than around the one word *“Mosaic”*: ...some people really liked it; some were baffled by it; and some thought we should just scrap it.<sup>3</sup>

1–Admittedly, the word itself is not found anywhere in the Bible.

2–And yet, if we understand its dictionary definition as *“a single composition made up of many, diverse elements”*, then we find its *concept* appearing over & over again.<sup>4</sup>

B–Consider, for example, today’s two scriptures that you’ve already heard read in other languages native to our own members (demonstrating some of our diversity as a congregation).

4. In both of these passages, the apostle Paul is describing how faith in Jesus has broken down various social, cultural, ethnic, and religious barriers in these communities, and has brought *diverse* people *together* to minister for and worship the one God.

A–The Ephesians 2 passage, for instance, describes this diversity in terms of *architecture*: saying that the church there in Ephesus was like a building (a “house”/ “temple”), built (as Verse 20 says) “*brick by brick and stone by stone on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus... as the cornerstone.*”

1–Now, obviously, each piece (or brick) of the structure was different, and some of those bricks represented people who’d previously had *no* faith in God whatsoever.<sup>5</sup>

2–But each brick – each person, Paul says – was vital to the completion of the “house/temple” of God... so it took *all of them together* to complete the building.

B–Another example is the Galatians 3 passage, where we learn how faith in Jesus helped the Christians of Galatia overcome many of the stereotypes and prejudices of their day.

1–In Verse 28, for instance, Paul says that “*There is no longer Jew or Greek... slave or free... male and female; for all of you are ONE in Christ Jesus.*”

2–He’s saying that though we may come to faith as very *different* individuals, God works through our *diversity* to bring about *His* oneness of spirit and action.

5. So with these scriptures in mind, think with me for a bit about what it means to say that we as a church are a “*Mosaic of God’s family...*,” & what that might mean for us as individuals, as well.

–III–

6. First of all, let’s remember that a mosaic of *ARTWORK* is made up of unique, individual, pieces – of a variety of materials, shapes, colors and reflective qualities... all broken, rough, jagged, and imperfect *by themselves*, but capable of being formed into something beautiful.

A–Now, I believe that that’s an accurate description of God’s family, the church – not just *our* church here at East Cobb, but also the *entire* body of Christ around the world, as well.

B–Consider that we’ve experienced just a *bit* of this individual, unique diversity in our worship services today:

1–Within our own fellowship, we have people of different ethnicities, languages, races, nationalities, socio-economic backgrounds, *political* persuasions, *theological* persuasions... – and in a true mosaic, there’s room for *all of these!*<sup>6</sup>

2–What’s more is that there are those among us who are *passionate* about the value of traditional styles of worship; *And* those among us who are equally passionate about the value of more contemporary/non-traditional styles – and in a true mosaic, there’s a place for *both* without *either* jeopardizing or endangering the other.

B–Consider, too, that no matter how passionate we feel about *our particular* perspective on politics, theology, style of worship, or anything else, that in the end every single one of us – like the pieces of a mosaic – are merely broken, rough, imperfect, human beings.<sup>7</sup>

7. And yet (*also* like a mosaic), we’re capable of being made into something *more*. So what, then, does it take for that to happen? ...to make those broken, imperfect pieces into a *beautiful* mosaic?

A–You know, I could take a whole bunch of individual mosaic pieces and throw them down on a canvas somewhere. But that wouldn’t necessarily make them pretty to look at – I might just have a jumbled, ugly mess!

B–No. What makes a mosaic *beautiful* is the hand of a *Master Artist* who can arrange all the pieces in a certain way, and who can then apply a *sealant* to hold them all together in the form of a beautiful image.

C–Now friends, isn’t that work of God in the body of Christ (the church)... here and around the world?

1–Isn’t one of God’s roles to take our individual differences of opinion and diverse ways of thinking and worshiping, and apply the “sealant” of the Holy Spirit?

2–Isn’t that what we mean when we sing songs like “*Blest Be the Tie That Binds*”? or “*Bind Us Together, Lord*”?

3–And isn’t that exactly what being “*A Mosaic of God’s family*” is all about?...

(a) ...the idea that the *whole* can be more than the sum of the *parts*...

(b) ...that each of us by ourselves are merely a broken, imperfect piece, but that – put together and *held* together by God’s *love* – we can become a beautiful image/reflection of our Savior to the world around us?

(c) ...Much like this... **[On Media Screen: COLLAGE OF CONGREGATION PHOTOS BECOMES PHOTO MOSAIC PICTURE OF JESUS...]**

8. You see, being a “*Mosaic of God’s family*” is not meant to be a clever slogan or some irrelevant catch-phrase thought up by your church leaders.

A–No. It’s a description of who we as a church *already partially ARE* in Christ, and who (with God’s help) we hope to more fully *become* as we follow His path for our future.

B–So today, as we share in Holy Communion with Christians around the world, we celebrate the “mosaic” (the diversity) of our faith, ...with those like us and not, we together celebrate the “dance” of God’s life in us...

**[WATCH VIDEO CLIP “*Dancing*” (Time: 4:31)** Video end wording: “*Who in the world will be celebrating the dance of Holy Communion today? ‘As it is, there are many members, yet one body.’ 1 Corinthians 12:20*”]

9. [PRAYER]

10. [HOLY COMMUNION]

11. [CLOSING SONG]

### **ENDNOTES:**

1. These five biblical functions/purposes of a Christian community of faith (a “church”) are described extensively in Rick Warren’s book The Purpose-Driven Church (Zondervan, 1995). It’s our belief that the ministries we offer as a church should spring forth from this mission, and can help provide us with both a direction to go, and a roadmap to get us there. As we explore these different dimensions of our church’s mission, I think we’ll find it interesting to see how they also reveal a biblical blueprint for individual Christian living, too.
2. This initial phrase is not so much a separate “dimension” of our mission as it is a overarching description both of what we partially already are, and a goal for what we fully hope to be in the future.
3. There certainly were other words/phrases we could have chosen, like “diversity,” “potpourri,” “patchwork quilt,” “medley,” etc. Indeed, our leaders experimented with variations of many of these. However, in the end the leadership felt that most the alternative words simply carried too much cultural baggage to be truly useful.
4. See the definitions of “mosaic” in the Merriam-Webster dictionary ([www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mosaic](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mosaic)) and at the website Dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mosaic>)
5. Find this in Ephesians 2:12.
6. Not only is there room, but it’s a prerequisite; For if we were all alike, there’d be no mosaic at all!
7. This is what the Bible means when Isaiah 53:6 says “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we’ve all turned to our own way.*” It’s what is meant when it refers to human without God as “*sinners.*”