# *Oikos* Sermon Outline Week 4

## Title: The Household of God

### Bible Verses: Ephesians 2:19

### Key Take-Away: Faith creates a new reality.

### 30-Second Summary: When we believe in God, our sense of identity changes and our allegiances shift. We become part of a new household which transcends our previous marks of belonging. Through participating in this new household under God, we join with the Kingdom of God at work in the world.

### Introduction:

Where do we belong? That is what so much of our conversation about *oikos* has been about.

In the Bible and the early Church, we see the movement of their understanding of the household and their identity. The changes in their identity and where they find their sense of belonging is perhaps made most clear in Galatians 3:27-29: ‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (v28).

The old markers of identity – gender and ethnicity – are being done away with. A new form of identity has begun. A new people, adopted into the family of Abraham but who are not defined by obedience to the Law, has been instituted as a marker of the rule and reign of Christ. A new household has been created.

### Context:

* In the Jewish world, there were Jews and Gentiles. To become a Jew meant coming under the covenant of Moses, going through circumcision and keeping the Law. This led to some of the biggest arguments for the early Church.
* Some Jewish Christians believed converts to Jesus needed to submit to the covenant of Moses first and be circumcised in order to inherit God’s promises. Paul argued that it was faith that justifies, not matters of the flesh or the Law, and that this was how to become part of the Kingdom of God. Identity was not defined by being Jew or Gentile, by those who kept the Law and those who didn’t. All of that distinction was done away with by faith.
* Instead, the only identity that mattered was to be in Christ or not in Christ. This was radical and, for many, an unacceptable understanding of the gospel and the Kingdom of God.
* In the Roman Empire, there were Romans and barbarians. Or, put another way, citizens and subjects. What made someone Roman was ultimately their allegiance to Caesar - there was only one Lord and that was Caesar. There could be no other pretenders.
* For Christians, some of whom were also Roman citizens, there was a yet higher authority. Christ alone was Lord, not Caesar. Jesus was the high King, ruler of this world, and was the highest authority beyond the Roman emperor. To be Christian meant having a negotiated loyalty to any human authority and, as such, their identity as Roman was subordinated to their identity of being in Christ.

### Main Thought:

* Faith in Christ creates a new kind of identity which is grounded in our relationship with Jesus, not in our gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, or any other kind of distinctive.
* This new identity doesn’t just change our relationship with God, it changes our relationship with other people. Our sense of identity is frequently rooted in what we are not as much as it is in who we are. This was the original reason why the household was so important for determining identity and belonging. If you were part of this household, that meant by definition that you were not part of any other household.
* The new identity of being ‘in Christ’ fundamentally alters this. Our citizenship is with the Kingdom of God. Christ is the ultimate source of authority, not any human power.
* This does two things: it critiques imperial pretensions and national patriotism, and it opens Christianity to a universal audience. Because Christ is King of creation, and not one power within creation, all people in all places are subject to Christ’s rule and can give their allegiance to him. Christians in Rome, Alexandria, Britannia, Carthage and Babylon are all subject to the same authority and as such are all citizens of the same Kingdom. They are united together in a new type of loyalty that renders all other loyalties as subordinate to the rulership of Christ.
* Being subject to Christ, being a citizen of the Kingdom of God, also means becoming part of God’s household. This is a household where everyone is welcome, regardless of where they come from, their economic or social status, their gender or ethnicity, or anything else which the world uses to keep people apart. All that matters is that we are ‘in Christ’.

### Challenge:

* What does it look like to be part of the household of God?   
  What can we do to help form and build a community which is welcoming for everybody, and which enables people to find their identity as being rooted in Christ?

How can we make our own households look like Christ’s household?   
Are there ways that we can create a place where everyone is welcome, and which gives space for people to come to know who they are?

What can we do in our wider communities to be that distinctive voice which works to unite people rather than divide them further?

* It all begins with our own personal commitment to make our loyalty to Christ our first and primary allegiance, and from there to recognise that we are united with people who may seem very different from us but with whom we are in one household, one family, in Christ.