



Sermon Notes

Term – Summer 2019

Series – Ephesians

Gathering & Date – the 10, 14 July

Title – Live a life worthy ... Part 2

Preacher – Paul Langham

Reading – Ephesians 5:1 – 6:9 (read in both the NIV and Who? – see below)

5:1 – literally ‘mimic’ God. How do we do that? By modelling ourselves on Jesus, literally ‘walk agape’ just as Jesus agape’d us and gave himself up for us ... a sacrifice. This is why Paul talks of our being ‘living sacrifices’ in Romans 12.

5:3-7 – Paul argues that the unsavoury things he lists are all in fact idols, replacing God at the centre of our lives. ‘Who are you in partnership with?’ Jesus once made a similar challenge – ‘You cannot serve both God and money’ (Matthew 6:24)

5:8-20 – Paul sets up a number of contrasts – which will we choose?

- darkness / light
- fruitful / fruitless
- impurity / holiness
- secret / visible
- sleep / wakefulness
- death / life
- wise / foolish
- drunk / full of Spirit
- use of tongue – coarse / praise

Paul suggests that gratitude is the best antidote to things of darkness

1. Christ will shine on you – everything illuminated becomes a light (a bit like the moon which produces no light but wonderfully reflects the light of the sun – so we can reflect the light of Jesus day by day, in effect becoming a light)
2. ‘Never miss the chance to shine light into these dark days’ (5:16, Who?)

5:21-33 - Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ

It’s almost impossible for us to hear the word ‘submit’ in anything other than a negative way. The simple truth is that men have oppressed women since the beginning of the human story. These verses have been used to excuse and bolster that, which is so wrong.

[Look out for the ‘Press Red’ Conference on the abuse of women and modern-day trafficking here at Christ Church on Saturday 5 October]

So what is Paul saying here in Ephesians 5?

The first thing to note is that marriage is not an easy subject for many of us – some would love to be married and can’t understand why God hasn’t blessed them in that way. Some are married but the

relationship has turned sour. Others have experienced or are experiencing the pain of separation or divorce. Some grieve the loss through death of their life's partner. So we preach on marriage with that realisation in our minds – but preach on it we do, as Paul wishes to teach us all something profound, about the relationship between Jesus and the church.

The word 'submit' means to bring into order (it was used of military formations and rank) and is a mark of health. Most Christians understand and accept the call to submit to Jesus as Lord (it's fulfilling it that's the hard part!) – this is mainly because we take Jesus at his word when he says that serving him sets us free.

Paul tells husbands to love (agape) their wives – would anyone, on the basis that in this passage Paul addresses this only to husbands, suggest that wives do not need to love their husbands? Of course not! In John 13, Jesus twice gives an overarching command: 'Love one another'. Similarly, in the verse immediately before he tells wives to submit to their husbands, Paul instructs us to 'submit to one another' (5:21).

It is very possible that in the early church, as a result of the legacy of the prevailing culture, there was an issue around wives honouring and respecting their husbands, and around husbands loving their wives fully.

One thing this passage cannot be used to support is the oppression of women within marriage. Paul's charge to the husband is by far the most challenging – he uses the language from the beginning of the chapter, calling husbands to sacrifice themselves for their wives, 'giving themselves up' for them, loving them as their own bodies.

6:1-4 – we miss how revolutionary it was for instruction to be given to parents (fathers in particular) about how to care for their children: in Roman culture, fathers had absolute power over their children.

6:5-9 – Paul has been criticised for not assaulting slavery head on (it is believed that as many as 2/3rds of the Empire's population was owned by the other 1/3rd). But when he says 'Masters, treat your slaves the same way, because Jesus is their Lord as well as yours and he has no favourites', he is sowing a seed of equality that would one day bring slavery to an end.

The Bride of Christ

²⁵ *Husbands, consider the sacrifice Jesus was willing to make for his Church, his bride for whom he paid the ultimate price. ²⁶ He has devoted himself to her restoration, ²⁷ so that she can stand beside him on the 'Big Day', glowing with joy, a picture of perfection. Jesus is one with his body the Church and was willing to die for it. ²⁸ Take him as your model for how much you should love your wives.*

³² *We'll never fully fathom this, but marriage is a picture of Jesus' relationship with his Church. ³³ The intimacy, respect, love and absolute commitment which Jesus shows his Church should be the model for every marriage. (Who?)*

Brides turn heads – all brides except the Bride of Christ. It's high time we started turning heads – the way we will do this is when we live lives worthy of the calling we've received, when we mimic God by walking agape ...

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

Connect

1. In what ways do you already mimic God?
2. What have you learnt about living a life worthy?
3. What does it mean in daily life to walk agape?

Grow

4. Are their idols in your life? Anything which takes the proper place of God at the centre of your focus and worship?
5. With whom or what are you in partnership?
6. Of the choices Paul lists in 5:8-20, which are the most challenging for you?
7. How are you living out the double call to 'Love one another' (John 13) and to 'submit to one another' (Eph 5)?
8. If marriage is a challenge to you – in any of the ways mentioned above – please do ask for some pastoral help

Influence

9. How do you respond to the idea that whatever is illuminated becomes a light (5:13)? How can you shine with the light of Jesus this week?
10. Talk about being the bride of Christ? Why, so often, are we the one bride that doesn't turn heads? What needs to change for that to start happening?

CONNECT | GROW | INFLUENCE

Ephesians 5:1 – 6:9 (Who?)

¹ I love watching a little boy with his dad. All he wants to do is be like him and copy what he's doing. We need to learn to copy God, ² and the best way to do that is to devote ourselves to being like his Son, Jesus, who loved us so much that he sacrificed his life for us.

³ There are so many squatters looking for a heart to call home: immorality, impurity, greed, ⁴ carelessly obscene words and thoughtless humour. ⁵ Bar the doors! Change all your locks! Gratitude is the best security system against all these intruders. Allowing them in means worshipping something other than God himself. ⁶ Don't fall for any fine-sounding but foolish arguments that say how we live doesn't matter. God will judge those who flout his principles, barring them from his Kingdom. ⁷ Make sure you don't get locked out with them.

⁸ Life with Jesus and life without him is like light compared with darkness. ⁹ Now you're children of light, your lives should radiate goodness, justice and truth. ¹⁰ Make pleasing God your life's goal. ¹¹ Foul things grow in dark, dank places. Drag them out into the light and the air. ¹² Put an end to shameful secrets. ¹³ Live life out in the open, in the light of God's love. As God's word says,

¹⁴ Wake up! Shake off the living death of sin and step into the light of Jesus.

¹⁵ Step carefully along life's way. Be wise rather than foolish. ¹⁶ Never miss the chance to shine light into these dark days. ¹⁷ Be clear what Jesus wants you to do. ¹⁸ Why get drunk and lose control of yourself when you can be filled with the very Spirit of God? ¹⁹ Speak words and sing songs from the heart to one another and to the Lord; ²⁰ and never stop thanking God for everything he has given us in Jesus.

²¹ Your life together should be marked by a constant willingness to put others ahead of yourselves, for mutual submission is a true hallmark of Christian community.

²²⁻²⁴ Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Jesus and his Church. For a marriage to be the blessing God has designed it to be, both husband and wife must give themselves to the service of the other. Wives, honour your husbands as you would king Jesus himself, because your husbands have responsibility to care for you, just as Jesus cares for the Church, his body here on earth.

²⁵ Husbands, consider the sacrifice Jesus was willing to make for his Church, his bride for whom he paid the ultimate price. ²⁶ He has devoted himself to her restoration, ²⁷ so that she can stand beside him on the 'Big Day', glowing with joy, a picture of perfection. Jesus is one with his body the Church and was willing to die for it. ²⁸ Take him as your model for how much you should love your wives. ²⁹ We don't hate our bodies but cherish them – and Jesus cherishes use, ³⁰ because we are his body on earth.

³¹ At the very beginning of the human story, we read how

the timeless pattern of human relationship was established. Generation after generation, men and women leave their childhood homes, commit themselves to one another and become one.

³² We'll never fully fathom this, but marriage is a picture of Jesus' relationship with his Church. ³³ The intimacy, respect, love and absolute commitment which Jesus shows his Church should be the model for every marriage.

6 ¹ Children, please God by doing what your parents tell you. ² One of God's 'Ten Commandments' promises that if we honour our parents ³ God will bless us with long life. ⁴ Dads, don't drive your children up the wall but introduce them to Jesus and train them to follow him.

⁵ Workers, always give of your very best and show your employers genuine respect, ⁶ not only when they're watching or to get into their good books. ⁷ Put your heart into every job as if you were doing it for Jesus himself. ⁸ If you do that, you can look forward to his reward on top of your pay packet.

⁹ Employers, look after your workforce. Don't bully them because God is their Lord every bit as much as yours. The God of heaven has no favourites.