

**11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Pentecost**  
**August 8, 2021**  
**Southampton, MA**

**Scripture:** Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2

So to keep up with the story of David, the readings for today were about his son, Absalom, attempting to overthrow David. This was the beginning of the fall of David. It was prophesized by Nathan as punishment for David's sin against Uriah. Absalom had long hair, got it caught in a tree and was then killed by one of David's generals. David mourned his death. As I am not a parent I can't really speak to this story with experience in parenting, other than to observe, David was lacking in parental abilities and David also lost sight of his true love, God. So I chose Ephesians, the New Testament reading.

We are entering this reading at the end of the chapter. Paul had a tendency to approach a teaching in 3 stages. The first was to give the teaching or admonition; in this case it is 4:1 – 6. “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness with patience, bearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.” We are called to be followers of God that walk in kindness, patience and support one another. We should be eager to be unified.

The second section would be his argument to support the teaching. In this case it is that you learned Christ you have a new life. N.T. Wright, who the Thursday morning Bible study used, states that this middle section can be sub-titled grown-up Christianity.

The third section is Paul's application. This is also subtitled the new life, or the kindness that imitates God Himself. On first or even second reading you might say we got this, the golden rule, but do we, let's take a closer look.

The first sin is lying. Let us always speak the truth. This is beyond the “how does this make me look” question. This is deep truth, not to do intentional lying, lying to make yourself look good and someone else bad. We are also taught to speak the truth in love (vs. 15), and this

helps the whole body as we become more like Christ. If something is bothering you, speak it out in love, don't say everything is fine when it is not. We are here to support and help each other. There must be trust between and among us, and the foundation of trust is keeping one's word. This brings us to sin # 2 anger.

There are different levels of anger. The Bible often speaks of anger being kindled like a fire, sometimes it smolders and this we call malice, and then when it erupts we call it wrath. Anger is a human emotion. So things can upset us which is ok, it is how we deal with it that is the issue. When we are angry we must make sure it is the offense we are angry with, not the offender. Do we dwell on it, let it smolder and affect us for a while? Think of when a driver cuts in front of you, pulls out, then proceeds to go 5 mph below the speed limit, what is your reaction? Let's bring it closer to home. Something changes at church, you don't like it, do you let it fester, or do you go to someone and say I have a problem with this, let's talk. We are going to be going through changes, both now and when we get our new designated term pastor. I can just about guarantee that not everyone will like everything that happens, including me. But how we deal with it is important. Some things might be a let's try it and see what happens. The results will be obvious right away. It is like a new recipe. You try it, and then decide, never making that again. Or, it works everyone likes it, similar to handing out the masks last year. Obvious quick results, it was a successful ministry. Other things might take longer to decide if it works. Like if you try growing a new variety of vegetable. It takes awhile for it to grow, does it take up a lot of space, require a lot of water, and then how does it taste. All of this takes time, and sometimes that is what change requires; time and patience. How you deal with your reactions to all of this is important. Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

# 3 no longer steal. Paul wrote this to people who were gainfully employed. In my last 5 years with the bank 2 people were fired for stealing, not money but time. A teller was claiming a 30 min lunch and actually taking 50 minutes. An assistant manager, who was salaried made up his own time, did not come in when assigned, and was then stealing time. Paul goes on to say that you work so that you can help others, specifically those in need.

Corrupt speech. Let none come out of your mouth, but only what is good for building us up. I interpret that to mean it doesn't have to be "dirty" to be worthless. When we come to Christ our heart should change. The heart is connected to the mouth, so you change the heart

you change the mouth. Our heart and our mouth should be full of blessing, encouraging each other, helping each other to become better Christians. Words have power to build up and to destroy. Just think about social media.

And last, is bitterness. Bitterness is a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner person. Bitterness leads to wrath; an explosion on the outside of feelings on the inside. It can lead to brawling (clamor) and blasphemy (evil speaking). All of this grieves God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The cause of bitterness is that we cannot forgive. All of this grieves God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Then, what should we be. We need to be kind to one another, tenderhearted and forgive each other. Not one of us is perfect. We all make mistakes, we misspeak, and we get angry and hold onto the anger. Being like Christ, imitators, isn't easy; we need to rely on God's help. 5:1 says imitators of God as beloved children. Parents how many of you remember seeing your toddler following you around with the little rake or lawn mower, or pop pop vacuum? How did you feel? Well that is how we should be with God. Imitate His kindness, walk in His love. Be a fragrant offering in our world. Amen.