Series: A Loving Community of God

Message: Shines Light in the Darkness

Text: Ephesians 5:1-20

Theme:

Date: August 12, 2012

Location: Christ Community EFC

I am going to show a short video but I want to just introduce it a bit first.

It is not a “Christian” video per se’. It is a video that was part of an ad campaign that was run on Australian television a few years ago.

But I think it really makes a point that I want to tap into this morning.

There is one point where you will notice a jump in the music. There was one scene that I felt was not appropriate for a Sunday morning service so I edited that section out.

**[Show video: Children See, Children Do]**

Children do what they see their patients do more than what they hear them say. We all get that.

Even the secular world understands that children will grow up and follow the patterns and examples that were set for them in their homes by their parents.

Now we know that this is a truism. That is this is something that is generally true. It is not a universal absolute law like the law of gravity.

We all have free will and at the end of the day we make our own choices. So the best of parents can have children grow up to make some very bad decisions.

Conversely, you may not have had the best of parents. You might even have had really bad examples or no example at all.

But that does not mean that you are destined to make the same mistakes that they made.

This is especially true for us a Christians, because we have been given a new pattern to follow.

**If you would, please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 5. Let’s pray.**

The last time we were in Ephesians we saw how in chapter 4, starting in verse 17, the apostle Paul had shifted his focus from our lives together as the body of Christ to our individual lives as children of Light—children of God.

With Scotty’s help we looked at the whole idea of putting off the old nature and putting on the new.

It is not enough to just not do wrong things. We need to do what is right. Instead of steeling for yourself you must work and learn to give to others and become generous.

Instead of lying you must become a truth teller.

Then chapter 4 ends in verse 31 where Paul says that instead of **bitterness, rage and anger** you are to “**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you**.”

And it is by God’s grace [God’s riches at Christ expense] that as we cooperate with God, we are made new in Christ.

We then concluded our reading last time with the first 2 verses of chapter 5.

The first two verses of chapter 5 serve as both a conclusion to second half of chapter 4 and as an introduction to the first half of chapter 5.

This is kind of a bridge between the two thoughts.

So we read here in Ephesians 5:1:

“**Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children**”

As we put off the old nature and put on the new we are becoming more and more like Christ. This is our sanctification, our working out of our salvation into every area of our lives.

This ongoing transformation is the continued work of God’s grace in our live. We are saved by God’s grace and we grow in Christlikeness through God’s grace as we yield to the Holy Spirit in obedience.

And now as children of God who are being transformed by the love of God and have had that love modeled before us, we are to pattern our lives, imitate that love in all that we do or even don’t do.

Paul goes on:

“**Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and** [or that is, in this way imitate God as you] **live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God**.

As Christ gave himself up for you as a sacrifice, you too are to give yourselves up for the sake of others and you should do that motivated out of love—a love for God and a love for those whom His Son died for.

In loving God you are to love others more than any “thing” including yourselves, your freedoms in Christ, and even your “rights”.

[Not drinking, not going to church- I don’t need to go to church-but the church needs you]

You were saved because of what Christ did for you, not by what you did or do for that matter.

But what you do can and does have a huge impact on others coming to saving faith in Christ. This is a huge responsibility and a privilege.

That is way Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 10:23-24: “**Everything is permissible"**[In Paul’s example to eat meat sacrificed to idols]**--but not everything is beneficial.** [If it turns others away from God] **"Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive. 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others**.”

As a child of God you are called to pattern your life after God your Father so that others might see Him through you.

Paul goes on in Ephesians 5:3: “**But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people**.”

There is to be not even a hint of immorality or impurity or greed among God’s people.

It is not enough for me to know that I haven’t slept with someone. I don’t even want to be in a position where someone could think that I have.

Think about this. God has chosen you to be holy and blameless. And God has chosen you to represent Him to the people around you.

So you have to guard your integrity and your reputation because public sins dishonor God.

How can you say to people that you want to introduce them to your heavenly Father when you are walking around like you are still a child of the darkness, flirting with temptation?

Coming into work late, leaving early, taking extend breaks, cheating on a test a school, copying someone else’s paper, lying to someone.

Paul even goes on to say that among you there should be no “**obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.**”

Does the way you speak at work or at school or when you are around certain people reflect the Holy Spirit who now lives within you?

Would you be embarrassed to get up here on a Sunday morning and tell the same jokes you told last week at work?

Let me tell you, the same God who is here at church was there with you last week. But the big difference is that there were unsaved people there who heard you and thought “Yep, there are too many hypocrites in the church.”

This is one of the main reasons given by unsaved people who say they want nothing to do with Christianity.

Paul goes on in verse 5:

“**For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God**.

Look, an idol is anything that you put above or before God, sport, hobbies, work, and even family. It doesn’t have to be “bad” things.

There is no way you can truly love God, when you truly understand who He is and what He has done for you **and** love the things of this world.

It amazes me how Christians can treat God and His church like a menu item that they pick from out of all the options before them today.

So Paul goes on in verse 6:

“**Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them**.”

There are a lot of people out there who say they are Christians. But their lives say a different story.

And when Paul says that we should not partner with them he is not saying that we should not have anything to do with the unsaved.

No, but we are not to take up with or take on their practices and habits.

Look at verse 8:

“**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord**.”

Children see and children do. Are you looking to God’s word to find out what pleases Him?

And equally important, are you letting that light shine through you?

You see Paul tells us in verse 11 and following that we are to:

“**Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, 14 for it is light that makes everything visible.**

Then Paul quotes from what was probably an early Christian hymn: **This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you**.”

Now he is not saying that we are to go around pointing out everyone’s sin, at least not directly.

But as we live in the light, according to what pleases God we will by way of contrast expose the darkness of those around us.

When we show up at work or at school and do everything as unto the Lord there will be a difference in the way we work and interact with people around us. And it will make other peoples actions obvious.

And you can count on those who are still in the darkness not responding too well to you. There is a reason bars tend to not have windows.

The darkness loves the dark. When the sun shines in it exposes just how dark it is on the inside.

But you and I are called to let our light shine! This little light of mine!

In fact Paul warns us starting in verse 15:

“**Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil**.”

Paul says look, be careful make sure you are letting your light shine and aren’t letting your light get snuffed out by compromising with the darkness.

He goes on to say in verse 17:

“**Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is**.”

When it comes to God’s will, we tend to think about God’s will on three different levels.

First there is God’s sovereign will. That is His absolute will. Jesus was the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world.

This is God’s will and plans that will come about, no matter what.

Paul says in Philippians 1:6: “…**being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you** [that is God] **will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus**.”

Then there is God’s permissive will. This has to do more with God and human free will. In God’s sovereign will He has given us free well.

In doing so, there are times when we chose to do things that violate God’s laws. God doesn’t cause our sins but he allows, or gives us permission to exorcise our free will.

And finally there is God’s revealed will. We find this in God’s word, the Bible. Here are just a few examples of some of the bottom line, summary statements concerning God’s revealed will for you.

**Micah 6:8 (NIV) 8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NIV) 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality;**

**James 1:27 (NIV) 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**

Unless we are obedient to God’s clear will we will never know God’s specific will for our lives.

And in addition to God’s word we have also been given God’s Spirit.

Let’s look on at Ephesians 5:18:

“**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.**

He is using the idea here of how wine, when you are drunk, takes over everything, your thinking, your motor skills, your vision and actions.

In fact, your judgment is so impaired that you actually think you are sober enough to drive!

But as Christians, children of the light, you should be controlled by the Spirit. He says we are to be filled with, under the control of the Spirit.

The moment we accept Christ as our savior we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God comes within us. We have all of the Spirit we will ever get.

But we must continually submit to the Spirit and allow the Spirit to take control; we must be filled with the Spirit.

But all too often we fight with the Spirit. You since that need to call someone, maybe go visit them, or say something to them but you shake your head and talk yourself out of it.

But when we are submitted to the Spirit it is evident and it will reflect in all of our relationships. We will:

**19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.**

Our communication with one another will point to God.

**Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

And our communication with God will be worshipful and God centered not self-centered.

So let me ask you. Are you a child of God? If so, are you going to let your light shine?