

**Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**August 19<sup>th</sup> 2018**  
**Pastor Matthew Ude**

**Eph 4:17-5:2 NKJ <sup>17</sup> This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup> who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.**

There are two choices here; we can live in filth like the unbeliever or walk with Jesus in cleanliness.

When I worked at a rental place during my college years, we had this one customer that lived in filth. You had to squeeze through piles of garbage in their entry way just to get into the house. When I knelt down to take apart their bed, the carpet squelched under my knees and my pants stuck to the carpet. Their kitchen was full of flies. They lived in this filth and didn't seem to care. They had become accustomed to it.

Those who do not know Christ similarly live in filth, and don't really care. They don't even understand how filthy their lives are. They live in ignorance because of the "blindness of their hearts." But we know better we have learned better from Christ.

**<sup>20</sup> But you have not so learned Christ, <sup>21</sup> if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: <sup>22</sup> that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, <sup>23</sup> and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup> and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**

Paul uses the picture of dirty clothes here. You are covered in filth from your day at work, what do you do? You take off your dirty clothes, you wash, you put on your clean clothes. You don't put on your new clothes until you have washed. Similarly Paul says we put off the filth and put on the new man but first we have to be renewed.

Paul is talking about your mind, your thoughts, your desires.

Compare verse 22 and 23. In verse 22 "that you lay aside your former lifestyle( way of living)" And 23 "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." 22 is about your actions, 23 is thoughts and desires. That is because Paul knows your actions will not change unless your thoughts and desires change. Imagine a piece of chocolate cake sitting there in front of you. If you desire to eat that cake you are going to end up eating it. You might withstand for a little while but eventually you will eat the cake. Unless you can change you desire. Eat something healthy instead. Put the cake away so that you forget about it. The desire must change before the action

**Mat 15:19 NKJ** out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,

**Jam 1:15 NKJ** when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin;

When the mind is full of sinful desire the actions will follow. Thus the importance of that middle step “be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”

It is also important to recognize that this middle step is a passive verb. It is something done to you. Not something you do. No twelve step program, no dedicating ourselves to God, no commitment on our parts is going to bring the result of a life of righteousness. But our hearts, our desires need to be changed by the power of God. He must give us that renewal, that rebirth that changes the desire of our hearts. This he does in Baptism and through his word and in the Lords Supper.

That is why that last verse “Christ also loved us and give himself for us” is so important, He renews our minds through His death, through His forgiveness which is given in Scripture.

Paul starts with this renewing of the mind, but quickly moves on also to our tongue and hands.

<sup>25</sup> **Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.** <sup>26</sup> **"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,** <sup>27</sup> **nor give place to the devil.**

Be imitators of Christ with our thoughts and our tongues.

One of Luther’s favorite passages comes from Titus, “God who can not lie.” God can not lie, and He says I love you. I am with you. Yet often we don’t really believe Him. We think well He loves me if . . . Nope that is not what God says. He says I love you, died for you, and forgive you. Why do we find it so hard to trust Him?

Because we have tendency to project our ways on to others even God. We love if . . . So we think God must add an “if.” We lie and because we lie we don’t trust one another. Then we project that lack of trust on to God. We think we can’t really trust that He has our happiness as his goal. We think we can’t really trust Him to provide. But God doesn’t lie.

We lie all the time. And that’s really the terrible thing about lying is that it destroys our trust in one another. But God doesn’t lie, so we can have total confidence in Him.

**Be angry, and do not sin** – Anger in and of itself is not necessarily a bad thing. There are some things that we should be angry about it. But we should not let it control us or our tongue. Anger is not necessarily wrong but losing our temper is.

Control your anger and deal with it in the correct way Paul reminds us. The correct way is to deal with it immediately, “do not let the sun go down.” When you are angry you have two choices.

1. Go and talk to him/her: **Mat 18:15 NKJ** “if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone” – then forgive him
2. Recognize that this isn’t worth getting angry about it and let it go

Do not “let the sun go down,” do not brood, do not go and tell everyone else what a terrible thing so and so did, because now their sin has led you into sin. Now anger has become malice, hatred, an evil festering wound in your heart.

We know better from Christ.

Those who cannot tame their tongue, “gave place to the devil.” They give Satan a seat in your heart. Lying gives Satan opportunity to deceive and lead astray. Unable to control your tongue gives the Devil opportunity to create division and an open festering wound in your soul.

**<sup>28</sup> Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.**

Imitate Christ in your mind, and tongue and with your hands.

We might expect Paul to say, “instead of stealing work so that you have food and don’t have to steal. But Paul goes farther. Those who are evil take what they did not work for. But those who are of Christ work hard so that they have to give. As Christ also gave and gave and gave, pouring out all the blessing of heaven upon us, even though we were sinners.

Mind - Tongue – Hands, the entire body dedicated to imitating Christ.

**<sup>29</sup> Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

Is there anything more annoying than children who just won’t stop bickering? Don’t grieve the Holy Spirit that way that your children grieve you. Paul doesn’t say that the Holy Spirit is going to leave you. God who cannot lie has promised that He is our Father who loves us and will be with us. But why would you want to be that person, who cause the Holy Spirit that grief.

**<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. <sup>5:1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as**

**Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.**

Paul has just laid a heavy burden on our hearts. We cannot read this section without wilting under what seems a heavy burden. But Paul doesn't want to leave us there. He wants us to be lifted up in the Love of Christ. He reminds us, Christ died for you. Christ forgives you. Christ Loves you and this is true regardless.

It really takes the pressure off if we already know the outcome. When I went to take my ACTs, there was little pressure. I was already "in" to the college of my choice (ILC). The ACT wasn't going to affect my future at all. Where others were up all night, super worried, maybe even throwing up. I was fine. I tried hard, I wanted to do well, but there was no extreme pressure.

We already know God's verdict. All His answers are YES in Christ. You're in to heaven. You're forgiven. That is not dependent on any of this stuff. SO the pressure is off. But we still want to be like Jesus. We want to love like He loved. We want to be like him in our hearts, tongue and hands.

AMEN