

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
August 5, 2018
11th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Exodus 16:2-15; John 6:24-35

Hymns: 398; 430:1-4; 413; 48:3

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ 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; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

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

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Clothes make the man.

This old proverb has been used time again to state that how one presents oneself to the world really does make a difference. Not

only does it make a difference in how you are perceived by others, it actually makes a difference in how you behave, in your attitude about yourself, in your attitude about life. I remember reading a comedy play in which one of the petty criminals was told to dress as a police officer so that the other criminals could abscond with the goods and not get caught. However, being dressed as a policeman this petty criminal couldn't help himself, and he blew the whistle on his comrades, causing them to get caught. He just couldn't help himself because clothes make the man. Conclusion: you are very much the person that you present yourself to be. Now of course life isn't that simple, and there are some very evil people who wear very respectable clothes because it is the Spirit alone who changes hearts through the gospel.

There is however a strong spiritual correlation between how an individual presents himself to the world, and who they really are. Professing Christians are often accused of hypocrisy, and many times it is simply because this world despises the child of God. However there are other times when the lives of children of God fail to match their profession of faith. So it was that the Apostle Paul wrote these words of encouragement to the Christians in Ephesus. Ephesus was a very worldly city with a very hedonistic life philosophy, "Eat drink and be merry!" In our text Paul encourages Christians concerning --

THEME: Living our Faith in Jesus.

We started our discussion of this subject by talking about clothes making the man because Paul addresses this change in life that faith brings in terms of changing our spiritual clothing, putting or taking off the old man and putting on the new man. So let us begin with a bit of a review concerning --

I. Putting off the Old Man.

What we are talking about is our sinful nature, a part of us that remains with us throughout this earthly life. This part of us is plain and simple a lot of human nature that has by corrupted by sin. To characterize some of our behavior as being just human nature doesn't make the bad behavior less simple, or justify anything. We live in the world but we are not to live "of the world." The fact that

we live in the world can't be avoided; in fact the Lord doesn't want us to completely segregate ourselves from the world. He wants us to go into all the world and to share our faith with the world. Whether we are consciously aware of it or not, the world doesn't know Jesus. Oh yes indeed, they can call out His name, a lot, most very often blasphemously, using our Savior's precious name without regard for it being the name of our Redeemer God. That doesn't mean they know Jesus or what Jesus has done for us and our salvation. The people around us in this world are walking in ignorance. Our text describes worldly thinking about morality, righteousness and salvation as "*the futility of their mind.*" (v.17) That means that all their spiritual calculations amount to nothing, get them nowhere closer to God than they were. Again our text describes the result of this futile thinking as being "*alienated from the life of God.*" (v.18) The thinking of this world is foreign, completely foreign from God. It leads people farther and farther away from God, and further from His truth. The world doesn't understand eternal life or true righteousness. It is what it is because the philosophy of this world, the spiritual ideas that proceed from the heart of man are coming out of darkness and spiritual blindness. They can't know the truth because they are incapable of seeing the truth.

The ultimate result of this is that they make up justifications for all kinds of sin and evil. They live in lewdness, and uncleanness, and the world does it with greediness; they just can't get enough of the pleasures of the flesh. After crossing one line of morality to immorality, the sin sears the conscience. Once they are past feeling the sinful nature of man looks to be excited, titillated by some new thing a new level of immorality to celebrate. And indeed the world celebrates immorality.

Now here's the thing with the children of God, *we get drawn in.* Like I said before, we live in the world. We work with people that live in this world. We socialize, play games and sports with people in the world. Indeed it is a blessing if some are Christians even if they are not of our fellowship, but they also live in the world. So we are all inundated with the world's thinking from the books we read, from news reports that actually characterize confessional Christians as being hateful. We enjoy going to the movies listening to music, watching TV dramas, maybe even the late night or early

morning talk shows. Whether we realize it or not our thinking is influenced by the world. Everything we hear starts to make sense; it makes sense to the old man, that part of us that still clings to the pleasures of this world, It makes sense and far too easily because it draws us in, oftentimes just us in a little every day. Sometimes when an issue arises that strikes close to home, to “what I want for my life!” it’s sudden. The world draws us into its thinking that it’s OK to live like the world around us. We are deceived.

That’s what happened in the Garden of Eden, and it has happened in one way or another in each of our lives time and again. So we need, **WE** need “to put off concerning *our* former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the **deceitful** lusts.” (v.22) Deceitful lusts are not only our sinful desires, but the sinful desires and thinking that deceive us. Maybe we are deceived into thinking it doesn’t matter because God forgive all sins anyway, so the more I sin the more grace I receive. Ohhh, that is dangerous thinking to rationalize sin in that way. You know that’s not Jesus’ way of thinking. Or maybe we think this sin isn’t sooo bad that God would care that much. “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.* ⁸ *For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*” (Galatians 6:7-8)

Paul is addressing these words to gentile Christians living in a very worldly city, giving them a reminder of the nature of the world that surrounds them every day, week in and week out. Yes -- that is what we see around us also, and it is equally important for us to receive this reminder of what the world we live in is like. And yes we know, **we know** that it takes people down; down that broad and easy road that leads to destruction. (Matthew 7:13)

“The world with wanton pride Exalts its sinful pleasures
And for them foolishly Gives up the heavenly treasures.
Let others love the world With all its vanity;
I love the Lord, my God – What is the world to me!”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 430:6)

So if we’ve been trying on the spiritual thinking of this world it’s time to be taking it off and --

II. Putting on the New Man.

The new man is not of our own devising, of our own design. The new man within us is a creation of God the Holy Spirit. The new man within us, was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness. But first how did we get there. Paul begins with, “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.” (v. 20, 21) We have been taught by Jesus. No, we haven’t seen Jesus, not ever. We haven’t heard what His voice sounds like. We weren’t in the crowds to hear the Sermon on the Mount, or to hear Jesus farewell address on the night Jesus was betrayed to His enemies, but the Holy Spirit through the apostles and evangelists brought us the truth of Jesus, so that we have been taught by Jesus.

What have we been taught by Jesus? We have heard about the nature of the kingdom of God, that it is spiritual and not material and temporal. We have heard the call to repentance that we are to turn away from sin abhorring the sin in our lives that we might be holy even as our Father in heaven is holy. We are to turn to Jesus seeking the righteousness of grace through faith. We know that Jesus has done for us what no one else could ever do. Jesus lived the perfect holy life fulfilling the law in our place. Jesus took our sins upon Himself, and bore our sins in His own body, being scourged, crucified, cursed by God and afflicted. He **died** for us, for you and me as well as the Christians in Ephesus. He did this that we might be credited with His righteousness, and ransomed from sin, death, and the devil. Jesus and only Jesus could secure for us true and eternal peace with God through faith in His name.

This is what we have learned of Christ. It is the farthest thing possible from a license to sin. It is a call to turn away from sin and live in righteousness. We are to be dead indeed unto sin and alive to righteousness. We are to live to the glory of His name. **That** is our joy, our crown, our high calling. We **wear** Christ so that when people look at us and see our manner of life, they see something very different from the philosophy of the world. They see the love of Christ. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:16)

“What is the world to me! My Jesus is my Treasure.
My Life, my Health, my Wealth, My Friend, my Love, my
Pleasure,
My Joy, my Crown, my All, My bliss eternally.
Once more than I declare: What is the world to me!”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 430:6)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep
your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.