

Pastor Jon's Sermon from August 7/8

Text: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

“We all have a past... and a new future in Christ.”

You once were, but you are now. Can you fill in the blanks?

You once were _____. But you are now_____.

The Hymn Amazing Grace says it this way, “I once was lost, but now am found... was blind but now I see.”

This is the appeal of our Ephesians text for today as Paul is encouraging people to live the Christian life in community. He reminds them:

You once were... living in darkness. But you are now... living in the light.

You once were dead in your sins, but you are now alive in Christ.

Does being a Christian change how we should live and talk? Absolutely. Do always going to get it right? No. But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ that we made righteous through the cross and called to live out our Christian Ethics to the best of our ability.

In the book of Ephesians, the church in Ephesus was made up of Jews and Gentiles (non-jews) who had divisions about how to be in Christian community. Should you go on living the old way before you got to know Christ? Or should you try to follow Christ's example living in love and putting aside your selfish interests. The evangelist uses the metaphor that you are now all part of one Body of Christ, the church, and the cross of Christ reconciles us one to another.

So today, we have some reminders on how to live the Christian life in community. Rules for the new life in Christ. This text is also great for families to read in the home in order to keep the peace.

It starts off by saying put away falsehood. Literally in the Greek it says, put away your lies. But let us speak the truth to our neighbors. A neighbor here is defined as anyone close to you. Can family be a neighbor? Yes. A community in Christ is to be built on honesty. Speaking the truth in love.

Next, it says, “Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil.”

We will get angry. Being upset with another person is an aspect of being in community. Would you agree? It’s what you do with that anger that matters. If not dealt with properly... like before the sun goes down... it could lead to sinful actions or grudges held toward others. I am thankful for my spouse, Jeranna, because she tries to live this out daily. If we have a fight, she makes sure we try to reconcile before the sun goes down. It is working, we will be married 24 years on August 9th. The longer things fester, the more time the devil has to work evil schemes and destroy community.

Anger could also be a good thing that could spur you on to seek justice. Like our vicar, Kellie, said in Bible Study this week. She sees this text as a call to action. To do something about your anger. Don’t passively stand by and watch people suffer. Do something about it.

I think of the show, “What Would You Do?” Sometimes you just have to say or do something. Look at Jesus when he had holy anger in the temple when he saw the money making scheme of the priests and how it was devouring people’s savings, especially widows. He flipped the tables over in the temple and drove the animals out. “Do not make my Father’s house a marketplace.”

Verse 28 says, “Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.” How about this ethic? If you are able to, get out and work. Don’t steal or take resources from someone else by . The positive here is to work so that have something to share with the needy.

Finally, my favorite verse, verse 29. “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need so that your words may give grace to those who hear. Evil can also be translated as unwholesome talk, or worthless talk, or disgusting talk.” The goal here is to share words that build others and the community up, not tear it down.

The author of Ephesians, written in the Apostle Paul’s name, but disputed as an authentic letter of Paul, is appealing to the church in Ephesus to live differently now that they are in Christ Jesus.

Keep in mind that this part of the letter is near the end of the book and is filled with exhortations on how to live the Christian life. Recall that earlier in the book of Ephesians, psuedo Paul says “We are saved by grace through faith on account of Christ alone, not by our own works so that no one may boast.

May we find ways to live in community even amidst our differences! Amen.