

## Ephesians 5:1-8 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent [Okuli] 28.2.2016

*Live as children of God!*

<sup>1</sup> Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. <sup>2</sup> Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

[<sup>3</sup> Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. <sup>4</sup> Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes — these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. <sup>5</sup> You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshipping the things of this world.

<sup>6</sup> Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. <sup>7</sup> Don't participate in the things these people do.] <sup>8</sup> For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! <sup>9</sup> For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. [NLT]

How often have you heard it said, that a child is just like its father or mother. The young person may not have a physical resemblance to the parent in question, but just by the way the child speaks or acts, you can see a reflection of the parent. And they learn either the good or the bad habits equally well because the truth of the matter is, that we learn better from the example somebody gives us, much more than from what they tell us how we should speak, and what we should do.

So, if our actions speak louder than our words, it is a good idea, if you start setting a good example for your children. If we want others to live act and speak in a certain way, then it is up to us to show them the way, by how we act.

Following the example of the parents - that is true also of our life as children of God. The call to us today - and always - is:

*Live as children of God!*

Learning by example - how do we do this as children of God? It has been stated that the example people see of God - i.e. what they see Christians doing

- is often quite negative. So often the only thing others hear about the church is when it is opposed to something - it's against abortion, against **sexual immorality**, against euthanasia. And it is right that this is so! But we can't show an image of God only by what he is opposed to - and if we are honest, some of the things we show up as being 'wrong' have more to do with us, than with him. We can't seriously claim that God is against any form of music in church apart from organ music; or - as it was the case not too long ago - that God is opposed to dancing!

Learning by following - who God is, is so much more than what he is against. Above all, Paul points us to our brother when he says here: **Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.** This is not just a theory to learn from books - the Gospel stories we heard as children, the passages we read as we grow older, are not just stories. They are the story of how God came to live in our midst. What is amazing is that it is a story of a **life filled with love.**

That is quite different to just hearing what is not allowed. The life of love Christ lived fills the pages of the Gospel reports. We read and hear of his love for all different kinds of people - and what comes across is his love for people who in our eyes do not deserve his time or the attention he gives them.

People like the woman who washed his feet with her tears, and then poured perfume on them. Those who saw her knew her reputation - and it was not great (she was known as a prostitute). Yet, Jesus permitted her to touch him, and to express her love for him, in spite of - or because of - the reaction this would cause in his host, a Pharisee (Luke 7:39).

Or think of the short tax-collector in the town of Jericho - a man hated by all those who lived there. Yet, when Jesus saw him up in the tree waiting to get a look at him, he did not laugh at him, but he chose to have lunch at his home, rather than anywhere else. (Luke 19:1-9)

Jesus is to be our example - he of whom Paul writes here: **He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us.** How different he is to the leaders of our world. For a short while they claim to show an interest in us - until they have our vote, but then they 'go their own way', and forget about the promises they have made.

Just imagine if our politicians were to follow the example of Christ, and sacrifice their lives on behalf of those who are in great need.

Jesus is the 'leader' - the king - who sacrificed himself for his rebellious subjects, so that they would not have to die. As we follow Jesus on the Lenten path once again, it is about following his footsteps - his example. It's about learning that life is not about getting all we can for ourselves. Leading a fulfilled life is not about getting more, but about learning to give up things so that others may share in the love of God.

Our lives without God, had been filled with darkness. The life Christ has showed us is one filled with his light - we now **have light from the Lord**. The obvious conclusion is: **So live as people of light!** Our life as followers of Christ does not involve difficult theories or obscure practices. It is a life to be lived in the light of God, and one which reflects his light onto the world around us.

This light is visible in a darkness of selfishness and indifference - the light of Christians who have received people in need, and have cared for them. I have mentioned it before, but it is well worth remembering that institutions such as hospitals and the care for those who are ill are a product of following the example of Christ. Something the church has not been well-known for, is the fact that women received a new worth through Christ - and this was reflected in the early church, only to be buried under an avalanche of male dominance carried over from the prevailing - non-Christian - culture.

Living in the light, and letting this light shine. God's light is here to shine on you whenever you come to church or gather to hear and read his Word. This light is visible in God's love and forgiveness which shines into even the deepest darkness you may encounter - and will reach you wherever you are. This light changes us, because it shows us God's love, because by it we receive what Christ did when he sacrificed himself for us.

Following the example of the Father - Whom do people see when they look at you and me? Is there something of the Father in us? - of our brother?