

8/12/12 Sermon – Ephesians 4:17–24, 5:1–2
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,

THE SERMON: **Ephesians 4:17–24, 5:1–2 (NKJV)**

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.

...

5:1 Therefore

BE IMITATORS OF GOD AS DEAR CHILDREN.

2 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.

TAUGHT TO MIMIC GOD

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| 1. | The old man
– taught the lie
MIMICS SIN | The new man:
– taught the truth,
MIMICS GOD |
| 2. | You | – taught by Jesus,
Put off ... Be renewed ... Put on |

In Jesus name who is the image of God, the firstborn from the dead, dear fellow redeemed,

So much of the learning process is a matter of imitation. Either we tell our children to “watch mommy” and “do what your brother is doing” OR we say “don’t do what your brother is doing” and “cover your eye” if there is something on TV we don’t want them to see. To some degree we have all grown up learning to mimic. We mimic those we want to emulate, or those we look up to – a teacher, a parent, perhaps a big brother.

As we continue on in our studies of Ephesians, chapter 4 marks a transition. Chapters 1–3 have focused more on doctrinal content – defining the Church Alive in Christ. Now we are moving into the practical application portion of Paul’s letter – living the Church Alive in Christ. Our text today really focuses on what it means for the Church to be alive. Scripture has well defined the Church as the assembly of all believers, the elect, chosen in Christ for eternal life – something not seen with the eye, but united through faith in Christ. As we consider the walk of this body of believers, just how have we been taught to act? (5:1) The Greek word gives us our English: “mimic.” Literally: “Mimic God as dear children.” As those who have been adopted into this household of God, bought at the price of God’s own Son – we have been TAUGHT TO MIMIC GOD.

1. The old man – taught the lie, MIMICS SIN.

The new man – taught the truth, MIMICS GOD.

In contrast to the good influence in a person’s life – whether a loving mom and dad, a caring teacher or coach, or a helpful big brother – there also comes the negative influences. So often this comes from our peers. Maybe you can recall some past years where you were surrounded not with positive Christian influences, but with those who walked contrary to God’s Word. How easy it is to go along with this walk. How easy to mimic their ways, to want to fit in, to be a part of that crowd – after all, they seem to be the ones having so much fun.

Perhaps you are wondering why the pastor has formatted the sermon text differently for today’s study. Well, what would you say are the words which jump out at you most? The Holy Spirit Himself has given us this outline. He makes these two ideas jump out: the OLD MAN and the NEW MAN. Each resides within us. But each was not taught by the same mentor.

What a sharp contrast then culminates in the verses central to our text. Let the words jump out at you – THE OLD MAN ... according to deceitful lusts” is contrasted with THE NEW MAN ... according to God in true righteousness and holiness.” Or an even better translation – “according to God in righteousness and holiness **which are of the truth.**” The OLD MAN who grows corrupt according to the lie, MIMICS SIN. The NEW MAN, taught the truth, MIMICS GOD.

The old man has been taught by those negative peer pressures. He does not want to stand out as different. (**v.22**).

Many people will refer to us being created in the image of God. And indeed we were originally created so – **Genesis 1:27 (NKJV) – 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

Just what does it mean to possess the image of God? Some think this has to do with outward beauty – that the beauty of our form and function is what it means to be created in God’s image. Others think this has to do with an inward good that man possesses. That although we sin, they say we still have, down deep, some desire and ability to do what is good, to right the wrong, and to achieve God’s favor.

As we turn through the Scriptures for an answer we see revealed the image of God, not as having to do with outward beauty, and not a mere twinkle of kindness within, but as we have in our text – **the new man created according to God in righteousness and holiness.** Perfection is the image of God, something Adam and Eve lost when they fell from God’s glory. From Ephesians we see in chapter 2 how “we were once children of wrath.” “We once walked according to the course of this world ... dead in trespasses.” ... “aliens, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” The fall into sin separated us from this image of God’s creation, which severed us from righteousness and holiness. As it says in v.18 – alienated, separated from the life of God. The OLD man is taught according to the LIE – the great LIE – the lie that led Adam and Eve to disobey God thinking they would get something good out of it.

(v.18,19) For three years I worked for Mendards in their distribution center. Here was a job that made me truly appreciate every other job I have had since. Working in what they called the “defect center” one of the jobs was to sort pallets – by hand. They would come around a large loop and one by one we had to lift ours off the track and stack them in a pile. At first my hands just couldn’t take it. They would blister and be sore every day. But after a while my scrawny 18 year old body got used to it and my hands would callous over so I couldn’t feel the 30 lbs pallet dig into my skin.

The word Paul uses in v.19 is as if to say, these have become so injured that one is not bothered by the implications of what one is doing. Left to the futility, the emptiness of the LIE, we can become calloused. As it says of those without Christ, ignorant and blind to the truth, what once made their hands blister, now doesn’t even make them flinch. They are “past feeling.” Thus for all the damage it is causing, to MIMIC sin brings no pain of conscience.

(v.20!) What is contrasted with the OLD MAN and “deceitful lusts” is the NEW MAN and the righteousness and holiness which are of the TRUTH.

Only One could restore the lost image. Only One came into this world without a sinful human father. Only One was conceived by the Holy Spirit with ability offer to God a truly acceptable sacrifice, to do right what we have done wrong. **Romans 5:18 (NKJV) – 18 Therefore, as through one man’s (ADAM’s) offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.**

What was lost in the Garden of Eden, was restored in Christ. You who were once separated have been reconciled – brought together – to God. **(5:2b)**

Only by this gift of God would we ever be made aware of the truth. God has given us a new creation, something we were not born with. This is why Jesus refers to baptism as being “born again.” **Galatians 3:27 (NKJV) – 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.** New life, new hope is born, as you discover the truth Jesus having paid for all your sins. You are clothed with Christ, wearing His righteousness and holiness by faith.

The old man has been taught the LIE and therefore mimics sin. The new man has been taught the truth and therefore mimics God. Yet both reside within you. What shall we do?

2. You – taught by Jesus: Put off, Be renewed, Put on

One of the great peer pressures I remember in my high school years was how to dress. Even back in 8th grade there were those students who, if they found out you bought your jeans at K-Mart they would not let you hear the end of it. Unless you wore something from GAP you were not really cool.

So often at that age I was inclined to want to dress like everyone else. I did not want to stand out or be different. My mother had to remind me that whether I had a swoosh on my jacket or not, it would still keep me warm.

Just how do we dress for our Christian walk of life? The verbs we find in v.22 and 24 mean literally, “to unclothe and clothe yourself.” De-robe the old man, and clothe yourself with the new man – wear his righteousness and holiness as we walk no longer with the crowd. Dressed with the NEW man, we begin to stand out as different.

Notice how the three layer sandwich as the Spirit describes the daily walk of the Christian’s life – put off, be renewed and put on. The truth is in Jesus. He has taught us to distinguish between these lies of our old man and the righteousness of the new man.

Our whole life is one of this ongoing struggle. As Galatians describes: **Galatians 5:17 (NKJV) – 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.**

Our weaknesses never excuse sin. In fact to be taught by Jesus is to give no excuses. But there is a difference in the sins of weakness and sins of willful choice. Those who are foreigners to God’s life have ignored the accusations of their conscience. They work ALL UNCLEANNESS, ongoing, without any concern for the punishment due for such sin. They are characterized by the OLD man, mimicking sin.

On the other hand, the child of God has known the gift of the truth: that sin is deserving of death ... that I am deserving of death ... but also that God has given Himself in Christ, an offering, a sweet smelling aroma. Notice the symbolism of the Old Testament sacrifice. It is as if the smoke would rise from the Temple to heaven. It is as

if God would smell that aroma of the sacrifices and remember His promise to send a Savior, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Well, God has smelled the aroma. Jesus was the sacrifice of atonement that no lamb or bull or work that man could propose would ever provide. **Hebrews 10:12 (NKJV) — 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.**

Thus verses 22-24 describe repentance and faith. As Luther explained "... that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance and die with all sins and evil desires. ... that a new man should daily appear and arise, who lives eternally before God in righteousness and purity." (Luther's Small Catechism, Sydow ed., Baptism, p.9)

Daily. Put off, be renewed, and put on. What Christ offered once for all, comes to us again and again. It is not as if the payment for sin needs to grow, no the payment was full and complete before the world began. Rather what we need is the daily assurance, the daily turning away from sin to drown the old man in repentance.

Jesus has taught you – Put off, be renewed, put on. PUT OFF the works of the old man. Drown him daily that he be dead to you. This is the sensitivity of being dear children who has disobeyed their loving parents. BE RENEWED in the spirit of your mind – breath in the sweet aroma of gospel: **Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV) — 2 Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.** Be renewed in the fact that your are forgiven. There is no work left for you to do, no more atonement needed. PUT ON the new man, the fruit of God's creation – now dress yourself according to the image that is within you, by walking not as the others walk, but by being different, by striving against sin, by living a life of thanksgiving for the gift of eternal life.

(5:1,2) This is what it means to MIMIC GOD, to walk in love. Not love like the world loves only as much as it thinks is deserved, but love a Christ love – as He has given Himself a sweet smelling sacrifice to God.

This is our love – to give ourselves as a sacrifice. Notice how the unbelievers way of thinking is described in v.19 "all uncleanness with greediness. ... But you have not so learned Christ." We have learned a life centered in ourselves. We have learned the love of Christ which chose hell over heaven to save us. It is such sacrifice in our life that smells so sweet to God. We MIMIC God when we give up our desire to watch TV in order to help our spouse or parents with chores. We MIMIC God when someone stabs us in the back and we turn around and offer to help them take the knife out. We MIMIC God when we work together, helping one another – family and fellow believers alike, let us offer a sweet smelling sacrifice to God. **Romans 12:1 (NKJV) — 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

A child will often look up to his parents as a role models. Yet it is true that as parents we don't always set that good example. We have a sinful flesh that we often fail to put off when we should. That is why parents and children alike are not called to simply mimic

our earthly role models, but rather to look up to our holy Father. There we see a real role model. There we see one who gave up that which was most precious to Him – His only begotten Son – that He might adopt you to be His own – to rescue you from death and give you a new life, a new man. **5:1, MIMIC God as dear children.** Amen.