

“A new nature, a new life”: Ephesians 4:7-16

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – June 20, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

Scripture reading – Eph 4:17-24

Introduction

- It has never been more important that we learn to live distinctly Christian lives. Paul says: This is important! **“I insist in the Lord...”**

Old nature, old life: Don’t walk this path!

- Includes all those who are “outside of Christ” (“Gentiles”). Eight distinguishing features.
 1. **“futility of their thinking”** - futility is *mataiotes*, “meaningless”, used 39x in LXX of Ecclesiastes (cf. Rom 1:21, cognate term). It is thinking that yields nothing of value.
 2. **“darkened in their understanding”** – *skotoo*, “to obscure or blind.” Unable to see reality for what it is. Paul combines these two ideas also in Rom 1:23.
 3. **“separated from the life of God”** – God is life (Jn 14:6; Acts 17:28). To be in relationship with the Father and Son through the Spirit is to experience “eternal life” (Jn 17:3). Humans were not created to be autonomous.
 4. **“ignorance”** – *agnoia*, “lack of knowledge.” Yet spiritual ignorance is inexcusable because it is intentional (cf. Rom 1:18ff).
 5. **“hardness of heart”** – *porosis*, “calloused”. No longer able to feel, dead to feeling.
 6. **“sensuality”** – *aselgeia*, “self-indulgence, unbridled lust, shamelessness” (cf. Gal 5:19; 2 Cor 12:21; 1 Ptr 4:3). A general word that includes magic, spells, astrology and idolatry but especially refers to sexual sin.
 7. **“impurity”** – *akatharsia*, “uncleanness, lustfulness” (cf. Gal 5:19).
 8. **“full of greed”** – greediness is *pleonexia*, “avarice, the state of never having enough.” Cf. Lk 12:15.

New nature, new life: Walk this path!

- In vv. 22-24, Paul describes this shift in our nature and its resulting lifestyle:
 1. **“You were taught to put off your old self” – old self** (*palaios anthropos*) is the person you were, left to your own resources, prior to being joined to Christ. **Put off** (*apothesthemi*), is to “lay aside, store, put away.” Paul is saying, permanently store away every bad habit from your former life (vv. 25-32: lying, stealing, filthy language, etc).
 2. **“You were taught... to be made new in the attitude of your mind” – made new** is *ananeoo*. Contrasts with “meaningless” thinking of Gentiles. Klyne Snodgrass: “Conversion is the restructuring of a person’s thinking by the Holy Spirit as the result of a direct encounter with the love of God in the person of Jesus Christ.”
 3. **“You were taught... to put on your new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”** – cf. Gen 1:26-27. The new self is who you are after having been joined to Jesus with the Spirit in control. You are new in a whole new way; you are a “new creation” (cf: See 2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:10; cf.: Eph 2:10).

Righteousness (*dikaioyne* – rightness, justness) and **holiness** (*hosiotes* – piety, reverence for God; NB: this is not the same as being “holy”, *hagios*). These two words are used together to describe God himself in the LXX Ps 145:17 and Dt 32:4.

The contrast between these two natures/lifestyles is dramatic:

“Put off” (v.22)

- Old self
- According to your former life
- Corrupted by deceitful desires

“Put on” (v.24)

- New self
- According to God
- Created in true righteousness and holiness

Paul makes the same point in Col 3:9-10. In Romans 6:2-7 he uses the language of baptism.

“Go and live out your baptism”

Take away

- Ask yourself this week: how distinctive is my life? In which areas does my lifestyle stand out from the rest of the world? In which areas is it indistinguishable from the world? Ask the Lord to point out to you what is going on “under the hood” that might be keeping you from living a more distinctively Christian life.