

“Walking as children of light”: Ephesians 5:3-14

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost – July 18, 2021

Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

Scripture reading – Eph 5:3-14

Introduction

- In today’s text, Paul lays out other ways to imitate God, listing a number of proscribed behaviors and attitudes that we should avoid with God’s help so as to live a good life.

Avoid these two sets of vices: vv. 3-7

First triad of vices (concerning our attitudes/actions)

1. **“sexual immorality”** – *porneia*, all types of destructive sex: premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, pornography. God is not a prude. He created to be enjoyed within the same confines of a committed, monogamous covenantal relationship to protect us.
 2. **“impurity”** – *akatharsia*, any kind of impure or unclean thought, word or action.
 3. **“greed”** – *pleonexia*, “the insatiable desire to have more.”
- **Warning: “these are improper for God’s holy people”** – *hagioi*, “saints”, holy ones.

Second triad of vices (concerning our speech):

1. **“obscenity”** – *aischrotes*, filthiness in speech or action.
 2. **“foolish talk”** – *morologia*, from *logia*, “talk” and *moros*, “moron”; lit. “moron talk.”
 3. **“coarse joking”** – *eutrapelia*, from *trope*, “a turning”, i.e., to turn a phrase in a witty way; double entendre, lewd humor. God is not a killjoy but loves “good” humor.
- **Warning:** These are **“out of place”** – In their place should be **“thanksgiving”**, *eucharistia*. Expressing gratitude to God for all his good gifts in this life and our inheritance of his kingdom in the life to come keeps boredom at bay. Those who indulge

in these have **“no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”** People whose lives are characterized by these vices will not share in God’s kingdom. This is not intended to throw them into doubt about their own salvation but to reaffirm that, though they used to walk in these ways, God has transformed them, giving them a new nature. **“Let no one deceive you”** – beware of people who call themselves Christians and claim there is no harm in these behaviors (cf. 1 Cor 6:9-11). EX: “Affirming” Churches. Because of them, **“God’s wrath comes”** – *orge*, not an irrational rage but God’s settled disapprobation; his emphatic “No!” to everything that seeks to distort and destroy his good creation. **“Do not be partners with them”** – partner is *summetichos*, “sharer, participant.” Be careful whom you spend lots of time with: you become like the people you hang out with (Pr 13:20).

Live as “children of light”: vv. 8-14

- **“you were once darkness... now you are light in the Lord”** – your nature has changed from darkness (ruled by the powers of darkness) to light (ruled by God, who is light, in whom there is no darkness, 1 Jn 1:5); **“in the Lord”** is code for “united with Christ.”
- **“the fruit of the light consists in all.... goodness, righteousness and truth”** – Transcendentals that are distinguishing attributes of God himself: goodness – *agathosune* (Ps 118:1,29); righteousness – *dikaiosune* (Isa 45:21); truth – *aletheia*, (Jn 14:6). Cf. Eph 4:24.
- **“find out what pleases the Lord”** – through his written word and leading of the Spirit.
- **“have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them ... it is shameful even to mention....”** – expose is *elegcho*: rebuke, convict. In society: whistleblowers/prophets (e.g., Elijah); in the Church: all of us (Mt 18:15ff.).
- **“Wake up, sleeper...”** – an ancient Christological hymn based on the LXX of Isa 26:19; 60:1-2. It’s an invitation to a non-believer to come into and live in the light!

Take away

- Are there certain of these behaviors that have been difficult for you to overcome? Which one/s? Is there a spiritually mature person that you can be accountable to in this area, so you can grow into the person you desire and do “what pleases the Lord” (v.10)? Ask the Lord to reveal to you what unmet need is in your life that leads you to engage in this behavior and invite him, through his Spirit, to meet that need.