

Scripture Reading Ephesians 4: 25 – 5:2

Sermon

There's a fisherman's joke when you have a bad day at the river or on the lake and someone would ask: got anything? Your reply: Nope, just drowning worms.

Ever had life experiences where you try your best, but feel you can't seem to accomplish anything?

In times like these, we wonder why we even bother trying in the first place – a typical human response.

Follow God's example in everything you do says Paul in 5:1.

But maybe this is also one of those experiences where I tried my best to follow God's example, but I feel I don't accomplish anything.

I mean who can imitate God? Isn't trying sheer folly? Shouldn't it be considered cruel – like expecting a two-year-old to act like a 25year old.

If feelings of trying our best but feeling we don't accomplish anything continues for too long in our lives it can bring some people to a point where they become cynical and soon you sense constant anger towards others and the world around them, which might lead to a life where *anger* gains control over their lives and gives a mighty foothold to the devil; as mentioned in (26,27) of our reading today.

There are so many things in life that can cause cynicism, anger, bitterness and resentment but the question is: Who is our role model as Christians? Paul writes: Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. (5:1,2)

These verses are to be understood against the background of what Paul has already written earlier about our conversion and re-creation and only against this background does Paul's call to imitate God makes sense.

In Christ, God has saved and forgiven us. Because of this reality we should understand the call to follow God's example in everything, is a bit like writing a thank you note to someone who has given a generous birthday or wedding gift. God's people thank Him with their lives because of what He has done for us. God has also to stretch the imperfect analogy, both bought and given us the thank you cards as well. God equips His children for living a loving life.

The best way to rid ourselves of bitterness, anger and resentment is to make a conscious commitment to pattern our lives after Jesus.

And what was Jesus' life like?

He lived for others. He never looked down on anyone, he welcomed all to enter into a relationship with him, and then enter into a relationship with one another as his earthly family the church. To be in Jesus' presence was to be in the presence of love, healing and hope.

The community of faith that came into being after Calvary is not based upon animal sacrifices but on Jesus' ultimate sacrifice, which made all animal sacrifices unnecessary because his sacrifice was pleasing to God as Paul puts it: Jesus' sacrifice was like sweet perfume to God.

In our relationship with Christ, we become the aroma of Christ in the world. In our reading Paul describes what a community of faith, a true Aroma of Christ Church, should look like. (Mistake at SN with Old Spice Body spray when I just came to Canada – aroma had effect)

A true Aroma of Christ Church harbours no bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, slander, and malicious behavior. Instead, they are kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving.

An Aroma of Christ Church reflects Jesus. Those who embrace and embody these actions and attributes release a special aroma - the "fragrance" of Christ, — the beautiful, life-affirming, God-forgiving essential essence of

divine love and forgiveness that floated its way onto the world stage from the hill called Calvary.

The Christ aroma also goes by another name: good behavior - where we put away all falsehood and speak the truth; people stop stealing, and do an honest day's work, and share generously with those in need. Our words serve as an encouragement to those who hear them because our words and actions encourage others and make God's love and works of salvation heard and felt within the community.

Paul in our reading today describes what everyday Christian living is all about. This kind of a life is not cynical and negative but a life that is attractive and liberating.

How can we possibly live like this?

By centering our lives on the work of God in our lives - We do all these things because we are his dear children (5:1) We can do all these things because of the work of the Spirit in us.

I pray that people will complement our church family by saying: we smell Jesus on you. Will there be any higher complement to our congregation than this one: the aroma of Jesus is all over your church and we sense that it just gets stronger and stronger.