

<b>Sunday 12 August 2018 Cathedral, Grahamstown 7.30 &amp; 9.30 a.m.</b>		<b>12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year B</b>
2 Sam 18:5-9, 15, 31-33	Ps 130	Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2
		John 6:35, 41-51
<b>WALK IN LOVE, AS CHRIST LOVED US</b>		

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in loved, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph 5:1f)

## **EPHESIANS**

We continue with our sermon series on Ephesians - the nature and the life of the church. It helps us to engage with two big questions:

The nature and calling of the church, to be the church:

**What is our calling as the people of God at a time like this?**

Can we be a community of life and hope?

In our personal pain and struggles, in our national political and social turmoil, do we as the church, as the body of Christ, have a role to play?

Because it is about the church that we are engaged – not simply individual Christians. The church is God’s instrument, the body of Christ as the living witness to Jesus Christ – “Go into the world and make disciples...I am with you until the end of time” (Matt 28:16-20). This is a time to reflect deeply on our calling to be the church. And perhaps to rediscover, or be reminded, why we are the church....

**What kind of spirituality do we need for living today?** We leave church on Sundays and we go out into the world of Absalom and David and Bathsheba (our OT readings), a world of lament (Ps 130), a world of conflict and violence and adultery and betrayal and grief; a world where there has been a loss of ethical values, cultural values, family conflicts and breakdowns, recent tragic suicides, taxi shooting

victims, #TheTotalShutdown, burning of buses and taxis, anger, SA on fire, rage, violent protests because “violence is the only language that the government understands”.

It is also to embrace and be drawn into a spirituality, a way of praying and being, that will enable us to survive and to keep strong, a way of trusting, a life of faith.

A reminder of where we have come thus far, in our journey through Ephesians:

## **PRAYER AND PRAISE**

Chapters 1 – 3 an extended prayer, adoration, doctrine and teaching, and culminating in prayer – great gospel themes:

### **Praise to God (1:3-14)**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...” (Eph 1:3)

- thanksgiving to God for salvation
- reminding us of what God has done
- adoption as his children
- redemption through his blood
- forgiveness of our trespasses
- he has made known to us the mystery of his will
- marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit

### **How the readers (Ephesians) were saved (2:1-10)**

- once dead in our trespasses and sins
- children of wrath
- by grace you have been saved through faith

“For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” (Eph 2:10)

### **The unity of Gentiles and Jews in the Church (2:11-22)**

- you were at that time without Christ
- you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ
- for he is our peace
- he has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between us (Jews and Gentiles)
- reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross
- peace to those who were far off and peace to those who were near
- a dwelling place for God
- reconciliation of enemies, breaking down the walls that divide broken and divided world. Radical stuff! Divisions of race, gender, tribe, language, social groups and class...

### **Paul’s great prayer (3:14-21)**

For all these reasons...Paul now prays for the church. My prayer for us all. Our prayer for one another. Our parishes, archdeaconry, diocese, other churches...a prayer for spiritual strength and knowledge...a prayer we use at weddings, for a new couple setting out on their journey together... for families

... I bow my knees before the Father – who cares for his children; who we are called to obey...

Three parts to the prayer – three intentions:

- He may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit – not a brute strength but a

glorious inner strength – power to be strong and not lose heart;

- That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in;
- That you may have the power to comprehend and know the depth and wonder of the love of Christ – that you will be able to take in the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love – to experience and savour and taste the breadth and length and depth – to live full lives, full in the fullness of God – God’s love as the firm and secure basis for our lives!

### **Unity, gifts for ministry (4:1-16)**

- Lead lives worthy of the Lord
- One body, one Spirit, one baptism
- Gifts of leadership and ministry
- Speak the truth in love

### **EPHESIANS 4:25 – 5:2 - Walk in love, as Christ loved us**

Live the life worthy of God’s call. Called to be “one” people, we must work for unity. Called to be a “holy” people, we must also strive for purity and holiness as our share in the life of a believing community. We return again and again to our salvation story, we celebrate it here in the sanctuary, we live it out during the week. Conversion leads to transformed relationships

Soldiers, lawyers, prisoners, are known by their uniform, their clothing. As Christians, we are to be known by our clothing, our way of life, our lifestyle, our behaviour. We are to put off the clothing – the behaviour – of the old life; put on the clothing – the behaviour – of the new life.

John Stott: “As a new creation we have put off the old humanity and put on the new, we must also put away the old standards and adopt new ones. Our new life will mean a new ethical lifestyle.”<sup>1</sup>

Six concrete examples: telling the truth, controlling our anger, honesty at work, kindness of speech, forgiveness and love, sexual self-control.

### **Three features of these examples:**

- **They all concern our relationships.** Holiness is not some mystical condition in isolation from other people. You cannot be good in a vacuum, but only in the real everyday world of people. The evils to be avoided are all destroyers of human harmony.
- **In each example, a negative prohibition is balanced by a positive command.** We must put off the old rags and put on the new clothes.
- **There is a theological reason for each command.** What we believe and how we behave are always linked. ... Our behaviour stems from our calling, our salvation, God’s work of redemption. We are not simply an NGO with a code of conduct.

#### **a) Don’t tell lies, but rather tell the truth (v 25)**

*Then have done with falsehood and speak the truth to each other, for we belong to one another as parts of one body.*

Be people who can be relied upon to do the right thing not only when we are being watched by the boss, but at all times. Be people whose word can be trusted.

#### **b) Don’t lose your temper, but rather ensure that your anger is righteous (v 26-27)**

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<sup>1</sup> Stott, J. *The Message of Ephesians*, pg 183

*Be angry but do not sin; do not let sunset find you nursing your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*

Anger over wrongdoing; angry in the face of blatant evil, abuse, oppression, injustice, dishonesty, corruption. Don't simply lie down and accept it all.

But there are limits to our anger – do not nurse it; watch out if our anger is full of injured pride, spite, revenge.

**c) Don't steal, but rather work and give (v 28)**

*The thief must give up stealing, and work hard with his hands to earn an honest living, so that he may have something to share with the needy.*

How do people steal? Shoplifting, burglaries, car hijacking; tax evasions; employers who underpay their workers; employees who give poor service or work short time; the current great land issue, taken or stolen by conquest, land grabs and farm invasions, the spike in crime...

Let the thief start working to support his family and to give to others. Instead of sponging on the community, let him contribute to it and build it up.

**d) Don't use your mouth for evil, but rather for good (v 29-30)**

*Let no offensive talk pass your lips, only what is good and helpful to the occasion, so that it brings a blessing to those who hear it. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...*

How we use our mouths? Do our words heal or hurt? Do we build up or destroy? Do our words harm and break down, cruel words, are our tongues sharp, bitter and sarcastic, or our words ones that help and encourage and strengthen? How often have you or I said something

that we deeply regretted, because we realise the damage it has done?  
Be careful what we say, even in jest.

**e) Don't be unkind or bitter, but rather kind and loving (4:31-5:2)**

*Have done with all spite and bad temper, with rage, insults, and slander, with evil of any kind. Be generous to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.*

A whole series of unpleasant attitudes and actions which we are to put away from us entirely:

Bitterness – avoid become g negative and cynical

Wrath and anger – rage and hostility

Clamour – people who get excited, quarrel, start shouting and screaming at others

Slander – speaking evil of others behind their backs

Malice – ill will, wishing evil against others

Instead...

Be kind to one another, be compassionate, forgiving one another, be imitators of God as beloved children.

**f) Don't misuse sex, but rather give thanks for it (5:3-4)**

*Fornication and indecency of any kind, or ruthless greed, must not be so much as mentioned among you, as befits the people of God...*

The warning against fornication and impurity touch on the whole matter of Christian sexual ethics, the need for appropriate boundaries. God's gift of sex and sexuality is to be used and not misused.

We are called to integrate Christian experience (what we are), with Christian theology (what we believe) and Christian ethics (how we

behave). We are people who have put off the old life and put on the new; that is what he has made us.

## **RAPE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

We weep at the suicide of a Rhodes student, Khensani Maseko, last Friday (3<sup>rd</sup> August). Many of us have been deeply saddened, and shaken, by her tragic death, following her report of an incident of alleged rape that took place earlier this year. Our hearts go out to all who knew her, or who have in any way been impacted by her death and the events that surrounded it. There was also the suicide in Cape Town of Prof Bongani Mayosi of UCT.

We as the church, as the Cathedral, as the people of God, say a very clear no to gender based violence, to sexual assault, to abuse and violence against women and children. We salute those who were part of the Silent Protest and #TheTotalShutdown.

“We as a society have failed Khensani, and many other young women like her.” Rhodes VC

“To the brothers here, you need to do better. We need to do better. It cannot be that she died in vain.” Dingaani Booie, RU IEB and former SRC member.

“Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...” (Eph 5:2) – our answer to the scourge of rape, abuse, gender-based violence.

## **A WORD OF HEALING...**

A word of healing, for all whose lives have been shattered through circumstances beyond bearing, for those who find themselves utterly alone, in the depths of despair.

We turn to the psalms, which reflect the heights and depths of human experience:

“though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me...” (Psalm 23);

“Oh Lord my God, I cry out for help by day, and by night also I cry out before you... for my soul is filled with trouble, and my life has come even to the brink of the grave...” (Psalm 88);

“nothing in all creation can be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39).

These are not trite, empty words. Instead, they reflect and call us to faith and trust in God. Without God there is indeed only darkness.

## **CONCLUSION**

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...” (Eph 5:1f)

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