

“Imitators of God” - Ephesians 4:25-5:2 – Pastor Jeff Childs

In this portion of the Letter to the Ephesians, the writer gives us readers three specific ways we might help others see God by the way we live and act. Today I focus on how it says in chapter 5 verse 1 that we are to be *“Imitators of God.”*

1. We can be imitators of God by: **What we do.** I watched last Sunday’s service and appreciated what Jerome had to say about this letter and the style of writing to this early church...“not to do this, but to do that.” It is here as well in chapter 4 verse 28: *Thieves should no longer steal* it says, and that *they should go to work, using their hands to do good so that they will have something to share with whoever is in need.* (Ephesians 4:28) There is work to be done. I asked that these words be put on the cover of the bulletin. They are attributed to John Wesley though he never put them together this way. However, he did write a lot of letters, sermons, and journal entries about what we as “Methodists” were to do. Read them with me:

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

So, what can you do to imitate God? I want to start by thinking of God as Creator we first learn about in Genesis 1. We are made in the image of God to imitate God as co-creators with God. Last week I asked you to discern what Spiritual Gifts God has given you. Today let me ask, What Creative gifts has God given you? How are you using those creative gifts and abilities God has given you. Imitate God – Be creative. Some of you are great cooks. Some of you are creative in the kitchen and have blessed many through those culinary gifts! Some of you are artists. I would say most all of us are – or were. As young children aren’t we all gifted artists with things on display perhaps on the refrigerator door or even up on the walls at home? But somehow most of us grow out of that and stop.

I give thanks that there are artists among us who share their gifts. My mother was an artist. Each of her grandchildren and my sister and I are blessed to have one or more of her pictures on our walls. For over forty years as a preacher, I have used my God given “gift of gab!” Some of us have that gift! I have shared weekly sermons, and I am blessed to be here to share this one with you. But when I retired five years ago, I thought of doing something I never had the time to do - writing hymns. Each Sunday now I close my messages with a hymn. What are your gifts? Let me encourage you to put them to good use. Be creative in the name of the Creator! The old saying is true, *“Your gift is a gift of God, what you do with it is your gift to God.”*

2. We can be imitators of God by: **What we say.** The writer of this letter has already spoken about the tongue and the harm it can do. But here the focus is what good it can do. The simple admonition is to, *tell the truth.* To tell you the truth, we are to tell the truth. Let me be brutally honest, we do not need to be brutal. These words speak loudly from my

reading of today's text: *Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say.* (Ephesians 4:29) This ties into what we talked about last week from chapter 3! Our words should not bring out the worst in us but should bring out the best in us. Our words should bring out the God in us.

One of the things we experience about God in the Bible is that God speaks. We call the book – The Word of God. We can imitate this God who speaks by speaking the Word of God. Put in a good word for God. Do you ever quote scripture? Do you ever say, “God bless you!”? I mean other than when someone sneezes!!! Or how about, “God be with you?”

3. We can be imitators of God by simply being: **Who we are.** In the creation story in the book of Genesis we learn that we are made in God's image. The writer affirms here in chapter 5 verse 1 that we are, *beloved children of God* - not just children but beloved children. Do you know you are a beloved child of God? Then act that way! May people see God in the way you live your life! You might be the only Gospel someone reads today! As you are beloved – share God's love with others.

When we baptize beloved children, and we pray that they might know a loving and benevolent God. We pledge our support to them and their parents that we will do all we can to help show God's love and provide safe and loving environments where they might encounter the love of Jesus in Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, summer camp or youth groups.

Have you ever looked at babies and then at the parents or grandparents trying to find that biological link, is it in the eyes, chin, ears or hair? Look deeper at the child. Can you see the image of the Creator? Isn't there something lovable about a God who creates us all in immature bundles of love? Can you see the image of the Creator in all of God's children? Do you see a “family of God” resemblance? Know that you are loved by such a lovable God. If we are made in the image of love, then we ought to joyfully express that love to God and to others by the way we live, the words we say, and the things we do each day. Alleluia and Amen.

We Are Imitators of God

Jeffrey B. Childs 8/6/2024

We are imitators of God,
When we follow God's plan.
With God we are co-creators.
Do all the good you can.

We are imitators of God,
When we share what we've heard.
We can be prophetic, when we,
Offer others the word.

We are imitators of God,
By being who we are.
We are beloved children of God.
Share God's love near and far.