

Ephesians 5:1–21 *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Announcements:

1. Redemption Story: Sign up in the app Calendar.
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Ephesians 5:1-20 | Kingdom Culture

There is not really a break from last week's sermon into this week's sermon it is simply a continuation of Paul's instruction on how to live in this new Christian community. Today we're looking at what the culture of Christ's kingdom is, and how it interacts at its boundaries. That is, how does Christ's kingdom defend its own culture, and how does it interact with the opposing culture, the kingdoms of this world. The Culture, defense, and offense.

First Paul gives us this transitional verse, to help us understand how this culture is learned.

Ephesians 5:1–2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

We learn the culture of the kingdom the same way you learned your own culture. You watched your parents. Therefore it becomes embodied. Christian goodness is not merely a list of rights and wrongs, but a person. Therefore it is shown to us in personality. It isn't just that you know the principle rather, you are shown goodness in the person of Christ. Therefore Paul calls us to imitate God just like a child learns how to greet someone by watching their parents. We look to our Lord who in love, gave himself up for us, and we see that we too are called to imitate this person. That means to truly understand the culture of Christ's kingdom we must look at Christ.

1. Culture of the Kingdom

Ephesians 5:3-4 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

Paul lays out this imitation of Christ, beginning with prohibitions against actions and patterns of speech. What is a personality, a culture, other than actions and patterns of speech? And he uses two expressions to demonstrate these prohibitions, they should not be "named among you" and "are out of place." These are statements that would be made by a character witness in court. *Murder wouldn't even be named among them, it is so obviously out of place.* You see it is a personality, a mode of being.

Sexual immorality(gk. *Porneia*) is a catch all word which Paul uses to describe all sex outside of the covenant of marriage. It is used in Jude to describe the homosexual relationships of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is used in 1 Corinthians to describe prostitution. It is the root of our word for pornography. This term is linked up with the terms impurity, and finally covetousness

Impurity, a pure substance is one that is not mixed. But a an impure substance has some goodness in it, but is mixed with something else. Paul speaks of our sexuality in 1 Cor 6 in terms of joining our own selves up with things outside of us. And since Christ is in us, it is as though we are joining up Christ himself with a prostitute. It is an impossible mixture.

Covetousness. A word that is clarified later as idolatry. Desiring something that doesn't belong to you. Seeking your ultimate satisfaction in something that isn't yours.

In our society just as then, he is presenting a nearly unimaginable counterculture. In fact beginning with these prohibitions would have felt offensive, and in our language oppressive. Artemis is the goddess of the Ephesians. She is a goddess of fertility, worshipped through sex. Since the enlightenment we don't represent values as personalities but as abstract ideas. But the outcome is the same. In our culture just as the Ephesians, sexual liberty is nearly synonymous with a meaningful life. Sexual restraint is

captivity and the source of untold ills. In fact calls to restrain your sexuality would have been thought of as immoral and counter to the positive movement of the culture.

But Sex is something that is grounded in speech. Why jokes? Is Paul just a prude. Jokes are all about boundaries, and establishing places of absurdity. To borrow an example from Carl Trueman's book *Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*. We don't need to be told that a movie titled the *40 Year-Old Virgin* is a comedy. We are drawing a boundary around acceptability, and what is really unacceptable is the idea of chastity. This type of crudeness, is an adoption of a view of the order of the world as we have received it from the Lord as inherently oppressive.

But what is the opposite of covetousness. Gratitude! That is why the replacement that Paul gives us is Thanksgiving. Gratitude for the abundance to be discovered within the boundaries which Christ has given us. As C.S. Lewis describes it, the inside is bigger than the outside. Finally notice this is a boundary.

Ephesians 5:5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

2. Defense

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Now the kingdom of course interacts with the world around it, therefore Paul describes the necessity of defense against the intuitions of the world. We must not be deceived with empty arguments, which have no real correlate in the mind of God. This is an important thing to grasp about the revealing of the wrath of God. We often think of it as pent up and waiting to gush forth. There is an ultimate truth to this, but the wrath of God isn't only shown in response to sin, but *in* the sin itself. God's wrath against pornography, is shown in being given over to pornography. God's wrath against our cultures inverted sex ethic is our culture's inverted sex ethic. So how do we defend?

Ephesians 5:7-9 Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),

Paul draws a therefore here, saying we need to not become partners with the covetous ethics of our world. These are idolatrous ethics which teach us to worship as God things which are not God like sexual fulfillment as the height of meaning. And it is to be done in humility remembering the darkness that we too, outside of Christ, once stumbled around

in. Instead we are to walk as children of light. Which seeks the fruit of the spirit, which is good and right and true. Leading to true flourishing not a mutual degradation.

Ephesians 5:10-12 *and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.*

Now we're lead into this strange position where as children of light we are called to expose that which is in the darkness, while Paul says it is shameful to speak of it. How do we expose what we can't talk about? It is not a shouting forth others shame from the rooftops, but a demonstrating the intrinsic goodness of God's commands.

Ephesians 5:13-14 *But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

This way of being, shines a light on the darkness, and then the darkness in this miraculous way becomes light! Consider walking on the edge of a cliff in the dark. When you shine a light down the edge of the cliff, all of a sudden the dark edge of the cliff becomes lit up, and in the light we are able to see it's danger truthfully. Therefore the cliff, now in the light, becomes a feature of our walking safely. We walk in a world full of ethical darkness, but when the light of Christ's kingdom shines on that darkness it is exposed and demonstrates more completely the light of Christ.

3. Offense

Ephesians 5:15-17 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

So look at what our offensive posture for the kingdom of Christ looks like. It is being careful how we walk, and making sure to walk in wisdom amidst evil days. Because it is not intuitive to discern what is right and wrong, instead we must walk in the light of scripture. This moves us into a place of desiring to make the best and highest use of the time that we have. So receive this invitation into a cynicism regarding the patterns of the world. Just because someone says it is liberation, doesn't mean it isn't slavery. Just because someone says it is oppression doesn't mean it isn't liberty. Taking the world at face value is foolishness.

Ephesians 5:18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,*

Paul makes the distinction in a practical way. Look out into the world, it is full of drunkenness. This is the opposite of self control, and is a sort of manufactured darkness. In

Plato's symposium, when the men of Athens gather together to drink and give speeches, it is noted that whether or not they drink won't matter to Socrates, "he can drink or not drink, so it'll suit him no matter what we do," says Erixymachus. And at the end of all their drunken speeches Socrates speaks soberly. And the reason is because he is "drunk on philosophy!" Been there done that.

But Paul here is saying, not philosophy, but the Spirit. I perhaps am in dangerous territory here but Paul is saying, you ought to be drunk on the Spirit. That is thrilled by the Holy Spirit, set free by the Holy Spirit, joyfully desirous of all the Spirit has to enlighten you with. And here is the ultimate offense of the Christian life. The place in which true ground is taken for the kingdom of Christ and God.

*Ephesians 5:19-20 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,
²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

We sing to one another and to the Lord. We sing. Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. This is the offense of the Christian life. It is a reveling in the goodness of God towards us. This is how the Christian takes new ground. Look at the gladness of the Christian life. Show the world and one another the satisfaction which you receive in Christ.

The power of transcendent fullness and connection that you desire in sex is really here in the love of Christ. The emptiness that you seek to fill with your covetousness is only filled in Christ. The hope that you desire is given to you in the news of resurrection.

Why do we sing? Because the God whom we have abandoned for the darkness, entered our darkness so that we might bask in his light. Because although our sin is great and keeps us from him, his mercy is more and draws us to him. So we sing. We sing.