

Message: The Difference in *Our Lives*

Series: Relationships: *The Difference Jesus Makes!*

Text: Ephesians 5:1-21

Introduction: If *Jesus* is who He says He is, and if we have Jesus in our lives like we say we do, *then something should be different about us that stands out in and to this world. **Before Jesus makes a difference through our lives, He desires to make a difference in our lives!***

I. Being like our Father (Vv.1-2)

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

Paul, the author, reminds us that we have an incredible calling over our lives- **to be like God. Let that sink in for a moment.** The idea behind the Greek for *imitators* implies *being transformed as we walk with or follow*. Or, in other words, because we are God’s children through Jesus, we are invited close to Him. This closeness allows us to grow and mature in our identity we have with Him now.

Jesus used this method when He called His disciples,

“And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. -Matthew 4:19-20

Growing up is a process. There are times it feels like it is going very slowly; other times too quickly. There are times we cannot get to our goals fast enough and then times we look back and realize we missed so much of what was right around us.

What is imitating God? Walk with Jesus enough and you will start acting like Jesus. Jesus will live through your life- your uniqueness, gifting, relationships- He will bring God’s Kingdom into you and overflow it through you into the world around you.

But it begins by walking with Jesus.

In the Christian and Missionary Alliance, we recognize a fourfold aspect to Jesus that helps us understand the Gospel fully. *Jesus is our Savior, Healer, Sanctifier, and King.* This series is a focus on the **sanctifying** work Jesus is doing in us through His Spirit. We are not talking about salvation. We are not talking about doing and acting a certain way to earn God’s love. We are talking about becoming who God calls us to be as His children because we are loved by Him.

This is ours when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. -2 Thessalonians 2:13

In this sweeping act of love, The Father gave us His Son, who became the first of many who would become God's family- His Kingdom. Jesus gave Himself to be a fragrant offering which means:

- As a *Burnt Offering* Jesus is perfect, without sin.
- As a *Grain Offering* Jesus was total in His Righteousness (Devotion and love to the Father).
- As a *Peace Offering*, Jesus brings us to the Father, and declares us His family.
- As both the *Guilt and Trespass Offering*, Jesus removed our sin and the offense it brought to God. The past no longer defines us and is gone.

In this, as the fragrance rises to the presence of God, *so too let our gaze rise to our higher calling in life.*

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." -Colossians 3:1

II. Protecting Our Hearts (Vv.3-4)

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

There is a difference on this side of eternity between being declared new in Christ and the process of being transformed into Christ. From God's perspective, they are one and the same. We need to draw our reality from that; not the up and down journey of following Jesus.

Let me reinforce this. Regardless of where you are at in the process of sanctification (transformation), your identity is in who you are in Christ by faith. You are His son. You are His daughter.

These struggles Paul lists here, for some of us may haunt us from our past with temptation or guilt. And while we do life in this world, these things will try to become a part of our life again.

"And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." -Mark 7:14-23

I never thought there was much more to this than the surface of what Jesus was saying. Focusing on the form of tradition rather than the heart of the issue doesn't draw us closer to God. In fact, it distances us from Him even further. But that's not what I'm bringing this up now for. And that's not what Jesus is saying to us today with this.

We don't follow food laws anymore. It's not about washing our hands before we eat. It's not about anything we do. It is a heart issue. It has always been a heart issue. And that is why Jesus has given us a new heart. His heart- one that beats to the rhythm of His Fathers!

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. -Ezekiel 36:26

That stuff does not come out from us anymore, because it is not who we are anymore. We are forgiven. We are new. We are His and He is ours. All because of faith in Jesus Christ.

And the more we walk with Him, keeping our hand in His the more we will be transformed into all that God has declared over us as His children! In this reality, this Kingdom declaration, in our hearts that were formerly dead in sin are now living with Thanksgiving!

We need to guard our hearts; the treasure they now are in Christ is different than those outside of Jesus.

III. Wisdom & Discernment (Vv.5-10)

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. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. -Ephesians 5:5-10

This is how Paul can say that those who commit such things, or rather practice such things do not have a place in the Kingdom of Christ and God. Look, sin is serious. We must always remember what we have been saved from; we did not defeat sin nor the eternal consequence of it in death for us. That was Jesus. Jesus did that.

It is His victory He invites us in to sharing. God's Wrath is His Righteous anger and indignation is poured out over sin and sinners; Christ covered us by becoming the fragrant offering on our behalf.

Outside of the love of God through His Son Jesus, there is no *salvation*. There is no *Grace*. There is no *freedom*. There is no *life*. Only death.

In this we need to be soberminded as we do life with our spouse, our families, our coworkers. This must be central to us. The is ground zero on which our relationship with God builds and everything else upon that.

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”*

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” -1 Corinthians 1:18-31

In this we are called, through the humility of sinner to saint, to see sin. To call sin out for what it is. And to seek to live our lives pleasing to our Father.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. -Romans 12:1-2

IV. Be a Kingdom Influence (Vv.11-14)

“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

*“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.” -Ephesians 5:11-14*

My children have friends who are not followers of Jesus. Yet 😊 We raise our children to understand that as they do life with other people, their attitudes and behaviors may be different than ours. We strive to explain that following Jesus causes us to be different in this world. But, we do not flaunt this, we live it out invitationally.

However, there are times they come home from school or a few hours at a friend's house saying things, joking about things, or doing things they know better regarding. It's the influence that is persuasive, tempting. We will talk more about this in week 3 about family life, but for this moment the pressure and temptation to be like the world is real. Nowhere in Scripture is that denied.

This world is our mission field. We cannot give all of Jesus to all the world if Jesus is not all our Savior and Sanctifier. I personally pursue finding the redemptive value in things as much as possible to connect with as many as possible about Jesus. Rather than retreat into fishbowls we must continue to draw closer to Jesus, learn and adapt the way we engage the world for His Glory.

Unfortunately, too many get stuck in the way things were, and are of little impact for the Kingdom today. I'm talking to believers here. I'm talking about the church. Last week one of the elders sent a devotional for us to chew on talking about the constant new wine of His Spirit Jesus wants to pour into us for revival, yet we struggle or refuse to become new wineskins to receive it!

We are not called to hide and blast sin through social media. **Nor do we participate in sinning with sinners to convince them of the dangers of sin!** We are called to be in the world; just not of it. Living out the Gospel in ways that call sin for what it is and shine as lights for others to see and know God's love.

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. -[Matthew 5:13-16](#)

Be salt and light. ***Be a Kingdom Influence!***

V. Allow Jesus to grow you into all that He has in store for you! (Vv.15-21)

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

Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. [-Ephesians 5:15-21](#)

We just finished a series looking at the final hour- moments leading up to the Return of Jesus Christ and the removal of sin. A new Heaven and a new earth where we and God are together forever in a Kingdom as family. That is our coming reality.

We also know that evil is always going to be in this world until then, and we are walking targets. The world hates us just as it hated Jesus. This is where we live. This is where we will get married. This is where we will raise children. This is where we will work. This is most likely where we will die.

Here. A world broken by sin, awaiting the wrath of God to pour out upon it.

Here is how Paul closes this section- and we need to hear this.

This week is about you and Jesus. Before we are anything else- before we are spouses, parents, profession defined, we are God's son. We are God's daughter.

Our joy must be anchored in Jesus. We must not look to marriage for this joy; although a piece of it can be experienced there. We must not look to families for joy, although a piece of it can be experienced there. Nor must we look to our jobs for this joy. It must be sourced deeply, richly, and fully in Jesus.

Who you are in Jesus.

We turn from the temptation of sin, because it's not who we are anymore. Jesus makes the difference in our lives.

When that is not the case, the example of what Paul uses is wine leading into a state of **debauchery**. What this word means in the Greek is "watered down to the point of feeling disconnected. Unsaved- not that we lost our salvation but we feel that we've been abandoned."

We face a restlessness of this world, of our old natures when we lose sight of Jesus. When we fall back into sin, the more we give in and surrender to it we feel a different kind of guilt. **We are not sinners sinning. We are saints sinning.**

Whatever we turn away from Jesus to dilutes His Promises in and over our lives.

To this, Jesus told a parable about a prodigal son who ran away and ended up just like this.

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before

you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate." **-Luke 15:17-24**

When we are not where we belong, living contrary to who we are, we will experience nothing but an emptiness watering down the truth of who we are in Christ. (Use Christian and Faithful / Christian and Hopeful)

Divine Restlessness. I use this term opposite to worldly restlessness to describe what the Spirit is speaking into us that causes us to sense God moving and working- *almost preparing us for*. This is the restlessness that touches us when we are in His Word, prayer, and active in the community of saints. When we live for Him, find our joy in Him, the Kingdom of Heaven is working to break through our lives into the world around us.

When Jesus is the center of it all for us individually, when Jesus is making the Kingdom Difference in our lives, world watch out- because God's Kingdom is coming in ways the gates of Hell cannot push back against!

God's Kingdom continues to come one heart at a time. All of Jesus for all the world. Beginning with you.

Me.

Us.

Let us stir each other to keep our focus on Him, submitting to one another as unto our Lord. *In this Jesus will grow us into everything that the Father has in store for us!*