

A Serious Consideration

Ephesians 5:3-6 Sunday AM, December 17, 2023

Prelude – Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-6 (NASB95) Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. 3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an 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.

Life and change mark true believers, direct results of the gracious work of God to use individuals to display His love to the unlovely and His power to change the unchangeable. Christians under the Headship of Christ are not unstable and distracted, tossed . . . by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming, following different voices with different goals. They are not dependent on the futility of their own minds and therefore darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the hardness of their hearts. Instead, they are purposeful in their work among the people of God, speaking into each other's souls with the goal of each growing in ALL aspects into Christ. While the growth WILL be noticed, the saving difference of this change will be internal as God works through the personal work of the Holy Spirit showing us the greatness of God's love on our behalf. This leads to treasuring God's commands as we see not only His care, but provision for us to change. Remember the command from last week? **Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us.** Loving others THIS way demands a change of focus—not at them, look not to yourself, not at them, but look to God and imitate Him as you love. God has given many examples of His love for His wayward creation, but during this season, we look at God's final work of redemption as we celebrate the first Noel. This familiar carol tells the story of His birthday! Church, sing with joy as personal recipients of His coming!

***Hymn #136: The First Noel**

This coming and giving Himself up for us was **an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.** God was pleased with what Christ came and did. What did Christ do? He loved you. Do you see this as personal? You must, or you have no part in Him. Those who have a part in Him will also willingly seek to do what is pleasing to God. What are we to do? **Be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us.** Contemplate carefully what this means and doesn't mean. Imitating will cost. To continue imitating will seem impossible. You won't continue unless you see priceless value in His love for you. Ponder once again God's love for you in Christ.

***Hymn (Powerpoint): When Love Came Down to Earth *Pastoral Prayer: Pastor Jahn Choir: Joy Has Dawned Scripture: John**

3:16–36 (NASB95) "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." 22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized— 24 for John had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him." 27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. 28 "You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' 29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. 30 "He must increase, but I must decrease. 31 "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 "What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. 33 "He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true. 34 "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. 35 "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. 36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Offering: *Doxology:

Love costs. God graciously paid that cost. And what did He purchase? **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; Are you a recipient of this love? Do you believe in Christ to bring you to God? Sing it again.**

***Hymn (Powerpoint): What Child is This?**

You may Be seated. Are you a recipient of this love? If so, you WILL seek to imitate His love, and our passage today shows us what that love must include. **3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an 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.** To take this seriously cuts against our attempts to define love for God on our own. You don't determine morality or value—He does. Your desires don't determine life's purpose, His do. This is so non-negotiable that those who continue in these patterns will not have an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. This makes us uncomfortable, and it should, and yet, how can we profess belief in God and not obey Him. He is God. When you feel caught in the web of, "I should feel grateful but I'm not. I know He loves me, but I want to be loved differently. What if my dreams are crushed under His plans for me and I never desire to do His will," you start to see why you can't get to right relationship with God on your own—why this love relationship is originated by God even while you must accept it individually. As Pastor Jahn tackles this passage, remember that wrestling with all these pieces is part of the process, but you aren't to wrestle alone. Fix your eyes on Jesus and He will give rest to your soul.

***Hymn (Powerpoint): Come to Jesus (Rest in Him)**

Message: A Serious Consideration Eph. 5:3-6

***Hymn #224 (Red): I Know Whom I Have Believed**

***Prayer**