

Memorize & Ponder

**Brentwood Presbyterian Church
November 3, 2013
Celebration of the Lord's Supper**

Imitating God

**Ephesians 4:31 – 5:2 & Ps 32:1-7
(644, 774, 530, 556)**

It's a pretty brash instruction.
It's based on some pretty bold assumptions.
Yet here it is, in black and white,
on the page, read from the pulpit,
in our face –
“Be imitators of God!”

I don't know about you, but my initial response
as I began to ponder this passage this week
was a lot like Moses at the burning bush –
“Who, me? You've got to be kidding!”

But let's set our initial reactions aside for a moment
and take a closer look at the assumptions
underlying this brash and bold instruction
about being “imitators of God.”

This circular letter,
summarizing many of Paul's common themes,
focuses on Christ in his church.
It draws our attention to the quality of life
gifted to us by our connection with and involvement in the church,
that body of disciples of which Jesus, the Christ, is the lord and head.

The idea of Christ as lord of the church,
head of the body,
is powerful.
It's been a core conviction of Presbyterians for generations.
It reminds us that God, in Christ and through the Spirit,
is the guiding energy for good in our lives,
connected to every fibre of our being,
just as the head is connected to every nerve in our bodies.
Just as the head energizes and guides our whole body,
so Christ energizes and guides our whole lives.

If that is the case, then, we have the potential to imitate God.
We realize that potential, with the help of the Holy Spirit,
by consenting to God's energizing and guiding
and by contributing to God's loving design for the world.
We often call that design the Reign or Commonwealth of God.

And the first part of our memory passage this week
makes clear what it means to imitate God.
Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.
Do for others what God has done for you.
Live fragrant lives of blessing.

People being like that are every bit as needed now
as they were when these words were first penned.
This letter was circulated in a world dominated
by conflict, violence, oppression, inequity, and injustice.
God was ignored or manipulated.
Human life was cheap.
Fear was rampant.

When people became part of the body of Christ,
then as now,
they became attached to a head that saw things differently.
They consented to follow a lord who acted differently.
They were transformed so profoundly
that they could be bold enough to imitate God.

That promise, that potential,
is still ours today.
It is for lives of kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness
that we are nurtured at this table.

To shift from the metaphor of the body
to the metaphor of the family dinner,
Jesus, the Christ, has prepared the feast
and sits at the head of the table,
welcoming all those who love him to be nourished by him
to flourish in his grace.

This passage and this meal
are all about God with us
so we can be blessings.

God, in Jesus, the Christ,
and through the energizing of the Holy Spirit,
enables us to imitate him as he was embodied in Jesus.

God has endowed us with noble lives to live
by bringing us back into companionship and friendship in Christ.

God empowers us to consent to live those lives
through the work of the Holy Spirit.

God feeds us to sustain that energy
at this dinner party.

So, my beloved friends in Christ,
beloved children of God, all of us,
come with joy.

The table is spread.
The host welcomes us to the banquet.
The music begins.
The guests gather to be fed.

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