

## SERMON for Pentecost 12 - August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Readings: 1 Kings 19: 4-8; Psalm 34: 1-8; Ephesians 4: 25 - 5: 2; John 6: 35, 41-51

I think that the only marital advice I was ever given came from my aunt and godmother. Chris and I had gone to England, so he could meet my family who were still living over there. We visited my aunt in Lancashire. She was also my Godmother, and she said to me:

“Never let the sun go down on your anger, never sleep on an argument, and always get up and make him breakfast before he leaves for work, no matter what the time is!”<sup>1</sup>

It is something I have always tried to do, to sort out any bad feeling before I go to bed, because I tell you what, you sleep a lot better if you are not going to bed full of anger!

I have been reasonably good at the breakfast bit. Early on, especially when he used to get up at a ridiculous hour to take clients from Esperance to the Katanning livestock sales, then later, through the various jobs he has had, the majority of times, I have got up to get him breakfast before he has left home for the day or for the week!

The bit of advice about never going to bed angry, I discovered later, comes from today's Epistle reading from Ephesians.

In fact, that reading is full of good advice for how to live our lives, not the least the final part:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us .... [Ephesians 5: 1-2a]

Live in love - so simple:

- don't lie
- don't steal
- don't go to bed angry
- forgive each other
- be kind
- be tenderhearted
- imitate God

It's so simple and yet, seemingly so hard to do.

People know us by our outward behaviour, they can't see what is inside us. But what is inside us does affect how we react to things on the outside, and sometimes that outside behaviour doesn't come across as we intended or how we really want to be seen. I know that I am quite a shy person, I often feel awkward in crowds of people I don't know. Sometimes when we are like that, we can come across as a snob, someone who is aloof or arrogant, and that is far from what is intended. Sometimes when we are worried about something, we can be snappy or come across as someone who is a complainer and has a negative attitude, which is often the last thing we want, when we are often just seeking some reassurance. And when we are angry, we can hit out with our words and say things which can be very hurtful, words which can never be taken back.

Our first reading could be a bit of a mystery if you look at it from how it comes across from the few verses that we are given! Who and what is it about?

The “he” is Elijah. If you remember your Old Testament, you may remember that Elijah, great prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel, was constantly in conflict with King Ahab and his Queen, Jezebel.

Elijah had just had a confrontation with Ahab and the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel and the false prophets were all killed. Jezebel, Ahab's wife and the real power in the northern kingdom, swears to kill Elijah. Elijah exhausted and frightened for his life goes into the wilderness and asks God that he might die.

I got a whole new appreciation of this reading a several years ago. One of the LLMs in my previous parish, a very experienced preacher, preached on this passage. He had just read a book on Elijah, and it totally put a new slant on it for me. He talked about how God cares for us, even

when we are exhausted and disheartened and ready to give up. Even at our lowest ebb, God cares and provides for us. At the time I heard it, I had just been diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue and I had much sympathy for the low place that Elijah was in – exhausted and perhaps a little broken from his constant battles against evil.

So, if our first reading tells us about God's care and provision for us. The second reading teaches us about how to live our lives and treat each other. Our Gospel show us the way - Jesus. Jesus is the bread of life - our nourishment, mentally and spiritually, and through him we have eternal life.

We are called to be imitators of God, with Jesus as our example.

An e-friend puts it like this:

“Imitate God.

Forgive as you have been forgiven.

Love as you have been loved.

Love to give, not to get.

Act in ways that build up the body of Christ.

Speak in words that bring peace, not conflict

Use your hands to heal and not to hurt

What are these words THERE for?

They are there

So that our motive is love

Love like God's love

Love like Christ's love

And you might ask ....

And just exactly how am I supposed to do that?

And you might say ....

It all sounds good,

But you don't know what she SAID about me!

You don't know what that so-and-so DID to me!

You don't know what those people are REALLY like!

True ...

But God does know.

God does know what those people are really like.

God knows what we are really like

And loves us and forgives us anyway.

The only thing a person can say to that kind of love is “Thank you.”

Thank you.

We make our lives a prayer of gratitude and through the Holy Spirit, we begin to imitate God.”<sup>2</sup>

God calls us to be everything we can be, in other words, to live to our full potential. This is the same God who in his wasteful generosity surrounded us with so much beauty, which caught up in our often petty lives we forget to say thank you for.

God is love and calls us to the same mission which Jesus had: to preach the Message of good news to the poor, announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the burdened and battered free.<sup>3</sup>

We are children of a generous God, and we need to remember that and freely give as we have freely received.

Jesus said: “I am the Bread of Life”. He is our staple diet, our sustainer, our enabler to live the Christian life. So look to him and may you find nourishment and life. Amen.

Revd Sally Buckley  
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1. words of wisdom from Laila Joy (Bishop Aunty Joy) circa 1980.
2. Christina Berry from her sermon *As if*, posted on *Midrash*.
3. Luke 4:18; abridged from *The Message*