

## MIMIC TILL ITS RHYTHMIC

### John 6:35-51

#### Intro

We are literally going to take the chapter and verse baton that finished up our passage for last week and move it forward as we continue to hear from Jesus as he speaks to those who followed him after the feeding of the 5000. What we will hear is important because it reminds us of who God is and how God works.

The first thing that we pick up is that God is the One who initiates the motion of the believer...to believe. Sin, that which separates us from God and neighbor, is so strong that if God did not nudge, knock, remind in ways that are anything but quiet, that He is real, that we would never follow Him. That's how strong sin is. This doesn't mean that a person who is sinful is unable to do 'good' things, they are, but the intention behind those motivations ends up becoming self-serving, even if what they are trying to do is make themselves better (haven't we heard and lived that one out?).

But God keeps at us, reminding us who we were created to be so that we are ultimately able to profess, 'I believe'.

The other piece that we hear is that the work that Jesus is doing is powerful enough to satisfy the sinful judgement that we have appropriately received. He is the bread of life, and partaking of that bread (aka: acknowledging faith in the one who came on our behalf) empowers us to be welcomed into eternal presence of God. Does this mean that anyone who professes their belief in Jesus will be sin free?

Absolutely not.

But much like how God is persistent at imploring us to profess our belief, Jesus is equally adept at cleansing us from our sin when we follow the leading of God's Spirit to confess our screw-ups. The scripture reads this way.

#### **John 6:35-51**

35 Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>36</sup>But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup>Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; <sup>38</sup>for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup>And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup>This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

41 Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' <sup>42</sup>They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' <sup>43</sup>Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. <sup>44</sup>No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. <sup>45</sup>It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. <sup>46</sup>Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup>Very truly, I tell you, whoever

believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup>I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup>Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup>This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup>I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

## **Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

### **Intro**

Now there are certain branches of the Christian faith that seem content to dwell upon the two steps that we just talked about. But Jesus, who is then followed up by his disciples, makes it abundantly clear that eternal life, while it may be the 'finish line' is anything but the last thing that we should be concerned with in regard to how we live. Our passage from Ephesians puts that reality before us in spades.

My question for us to consider as we hear these words is this, who are you imitating? The scripture reads this way.

### **Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup>Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and do not make room for the devil. <sup>28</sup>Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. <sup>29</sup>Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, <sup>32</sup>and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. <sup>5</sup><sup>1</sup>Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, <sup>2</sup>and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

### **'Mimic till its Rhythmic'**

The baseball team that Austin is a part of headed down to Florida for a tournament at the beginning of July. You can rest assured that the players and families who travelled made sure that they had all of the equipment that they needed for the games that were going to be played and the time that was going to be spent.

But there was one other thing that became a talking point of incredible importance...and mind you, I say this about boys who are playing on a 13u team. The point of consideration? Hair. That's right, hair. Or more importantly, how the hair flowed out the back of the ball cap. There were several players who began growing their hair out in April in preparation for this tournament (much to several of their parents chagrin).

The reason that they wanted to grow their hair out?

Because of how one particular player on the Boston Red Sox had his phenomenally fabulous locks flow down to his shoulders. One guy! On the Red Sox!

Obviously, we all have stories of when we copied a look or began to use a turn of phrase because of someone that we admired...or at the very least thought was awesome had that look, or spoke that way. I have a very distinct memory of sitting in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade class when the teacher said to me, 'Are you okay? Why are you squinting? You look like your falling asleep.' I let my teacher know that everything was okay, but from then on, I realized that my impersonation of the guy who flew the helicopter in the incredibly popular show called 'Air Wolf' (Anyone? Anyone?) would need to be kept out of the classroom (that's right, you just heard an 'Air Wolf' reference from the pulpit...mark it down!).

We copy. We mimic. We imitate. Sometimes it ends up being for our betterment. Other times,...yeah, not so much.

What we hear in Ephesians is that as individuals who have been led to partake of the Bread of Life, that we need to be incredible intentional in whom we imitate, because those inclinations to fall back into a place of sinfulness and separation are strong, to the point of being ever present.

Think about it, how does the passage start out? Once you have the statement of speaking truth to our neighbors there is the line that feels like it has spotlights shining all over it: 'Be angry but do not sin'.

My hunch is that most of us hear that line and think, 'and how is that supposed to work?' We get being frustrated, we get being sad, we get being angry. We get that...but the latter half we struggle with.

Trust me on this: it was no less different for the people who heard these words back when they were written now going on 2000 years ago. The whole idea of loving your neighbor was one thing, but the fact that Jesus has expanded that to also love and pray for those who persecute you, all of a sudden, the fact that Jesus sacrifice is powerful enough to overcome all our sins becomes that much more poignant.

'Be angry but do not sin'. How? How do we start to move in that direction?

I believe that the answer shows up when we hear Paul state right at the beginning of chapter 5, 'be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'. Be imitators of the Bread of life, of the one who came down from heaven.

I totally get that folks can hear that and turn it into a fake it till you make it mantra.

But God doesn't want fake. God doesn't want us to pretend that we don't get angry. I actually think that God totally gets that we get angry (in addition to all the other emotions that we experience on a daily basis). Remember, Jesus experienced and lived out all the emotions of life. He experienced them all...and he was able to do so in such a way that he was sinless.

God wants us to live our life and as we partake of the Bread of Life take active steps to imitate the love of Jesus, to mimic his passion for the Almighty and the world until it becomes a rhythmic response that is naturally how we are to move, how to speak, how to live in love. God wants us to mimic till it's rhythmic.

This can be done regardless of the gifts and talents that you have been blessed with, regardless of the financial resources that you have (or don't have), regardless of background or where you live. God wants us to follow the leading of His Spirit, the Spirit that has led us to profess the faith that Jesus died

for us and faithfully partake of the Bread of Life. God wants us to follow that Spirit and live lives that carry the hallmarks of the one whom we were led to profess faith in.

Be angry but do not sin...by being an imitator of God. Mimic till it's rhythmic. How that manifests itself for you will be different than how it manifests itself for me (you know...because we're unique!), but it needs to manifest itself. This will take place as we partake of the Bread of Life on a day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute basis.

So how does that show up in our daily lives?

As we started talking about over the last few weeks: what are we consuming, both in terms of actually caloric sustenance (for our bodies are the Temple of God) and also in regard to our news and entertainment (let alone how often we actual get it the Word of God in some manner or form). What we take in affects us. Be intentional about finding ways to let God in. He's there! Let him in.

And God is not able to be ingested in just religious ways. O my goodness, no! Remember, where there is love, God is there. Take him in. Don't allow any one thing to become the only thing because anything, even a good thing, will become a bad thing, when it becomes the only thing. But when we allow that something to lead us ever closer to God, then we're doing just fine.

The other part is being intentional about showing and sharing the love that was first shown to us through the One whom we have come to know as the Bread of Life. 'Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.' Be intentional as you move through your day to mimic the love shown to you so that it becomes ever more rhythmic in its ability to be felt in your life...even when you are angry, even when you are sad, even when you are frustrated. Those feelings will continue to be there (that's life, after all), but how we respond to it, that, that is where the intentionality needs to be felt, that is where we need to lean ever more on the Spirit that leads us to the Bread of Life.

I am going to read a quote that I saw in an Instagram post that was embedded in a news article that I read. "I promise to lead our family with honor and integrity letting Jesus through his Holy Spirit guide us in everything we do and every decision we make.' Any guesses on who wrote that and then put that out there for anyone and everyone to see?

Justin Bieber (that's right, Air Wolf and Justin Bieber...in the same sermon!).

Now anyone who has followed pop culture at all over the last 10 years knows the presence and influence he has had on his contemporaries, not to mention pop culture in general.

We have also been privy to his many...missteps, and there have been more than a few.

And yet, here he is, making that statement to his fiancée (and everyone who follows him). He knows what it means to screw up. But he has been led to recognize that the Spirit of God is leading him to something that is different, something that is better.

Be angry but do not sin. Be imitators of God.

Mimic till it's rhythmic.

It's a call that was placed before all of Christendom...and it is a call that still rings out to each of us because we know what a struggle life can be. Be imitators of God. Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. Don't fake it. Become it, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. Mimic till it's rhythmic.

**After Sermon Prayer**

Holy and gracious God, as we gather into Your Word we are reminded how partaking of Your son leads us to a life that is ever transforming to one that imitates You, where even when we are angry, we do not sin. Lord, lead us to mimic this love in our lives to the point that it not only becomes second nature...it becomes our nature! Lord, You love us. That we know full well. Lead us with that love so that we too might love ever more fully. It is in Jesus' name that we do pray. Amen.