

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, August 8, 2021

Good Imitation

By Daniel H. Wilcox

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

4:25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

4:26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

4:27 and do not make room for the devil.

4:28 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.

4:29 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.

4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

4:31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice,

4:32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,

5:2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Charles Colton and Oscar Wilde, 19th century writers, employed the proverb, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," signifying that admiration can be shown through emulation. It is more

than mimicking behavior of the adored. It is intentionally patterning one's attitude and conduct in a manner honoring the ideal of the mentor. Thus, imitation fashions sincere representation of the admired.

Apostle Paul challenges the Ephesian church to imitate God, the object of devoted adoration. He suggests that believers should avoid evil and do good, two of the Simple Rules of Methodism. Avoiding evil involves no falsehoods, no sinning, no stealing, no evil talking, and no grieving of the Holy Ghost. This necessitates suppression of particular emotions that can lead to evil practices. Doing good involves speaking truth, being angry without sinning, working honestly, encouraging graciously others, and heeding the Holy Ghost. This necessitates obedience to godly admonitions that lead to holiness of head, heart, and hand. Ultimately, imitation aims to follow the example of God in that Christ so loved the world that he offered himself for us. This love in Christ must become modeled behavior in believers that our lives serve God's will and others' needs. Imitating God minimizes evil purposes and maximizes good intentions.

Let us lead godly lives imitating God, offering ourselves to divine purpose and will.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)— Reflecting on the scripture, share a time/instance when you knowingly imitated God as a guiding principle? How did this experience make you feel or direct you?

PRAY: Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live in according to your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Adaption from The Book of Common Prayer

ACT:

1. During the Kingdomtide season, share acts of kindness to others at least twice a day for the next week. Journal your experience and reflect on your spiritual journey. Do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and prayerfully considering getting the vaccine when it is available—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

Song:

Be Thou My Vision
AMEC Hymnal, #281

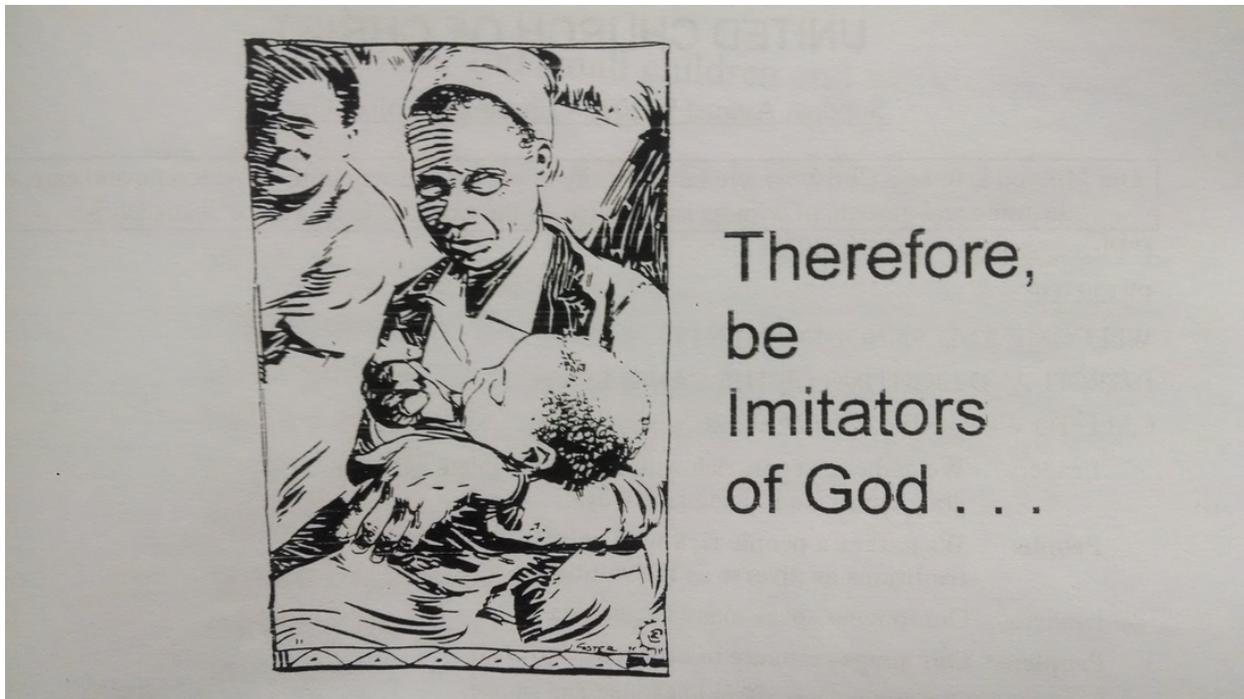
1. Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.
2. Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;

Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

3. Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.
4. High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.