

David Meiklejohn

23 January 2021

Be Yourself

Ephesians 4v25-32

Introduction

I'm going to do something I don't often do. I normally have a background image on my zoom calls, but today I'm going to remove that to reveal the room I'm in. It's not a great background to have. I don't have a bookcase of impressive books behind me, just some CDs with some dodgy albums from the 80s, the cupboard where I keep my chocolate, and the clothes horse where our underwear gets dried.

But it's real. Since we've started meeting together on Zoom we've seen a lot of living rooms. We're seeing a bit more of each other's lives. On a work call last week we saw a colleague's wife come into the room. She realised she was on camera and tried to sneak out unseen by bending over double. It just made it more obvious.

Facades

We like to hide things, cover them up. We like to hide our untidy lives, our real, imperfect selves.

- We wear makeup to hide our blemishes
- We wear a smile to hide our sadness
- We wear a "good" persona on a Sunday.

Why?

- We're worried about being judged.
- We're worried that the real us won't live up to the standard.
- We're worried about not being loved if people know what we're really like.

We're scared of being hurt.

And that's a danger, when we are open and honest with others, they can hurt us.

Get Real

But how does God want us to be as a church. Look at v25.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. [Ephesians 4:25]

The church isn't to be a place where we hide behind a facade. It's a place where we are truthful, where we are honest about ourselves. Because we are members of one body. And none of us are in perfect working shape.

I've been in this body for 52 years, and I can find fault with just about every bit of it. The eyes don't work too well. The ears don't hear as well as they should. The left shoulder hurts if I lift my arm. The belly is bigger than it should be. The teeth are crumbling away at an alarming rate. I can find fault with just about every part, but it's the only one I have. So I care about it.

How do you think Christ looks on his church? He sees every flaw in every member. He knows all the failings. He isn't fooled by our facades, he sees deep into our souls. But he loves us. He is our head and we are his body. And even better than the physical bodies we have, he will one day present us perfect:

so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [Ephesians 5:27]

But it isn't our job to make ourselves perfect. Oh, we're to strive to live well - the whole middle section of our reading urges us to live clean lives, to put away all the bitterness, selfishness, anger and dishonesty that wells up within us from our old nature. But we know that we will fail. No matter how hard we try to be holy and without blemish we cannot make ourselves clean. Which is why the preceding verse is such comfort:

that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word [Ephesians 5:26]

We don't make ourselves holy, Christ does. He cleanses his church so that he can then present it holy and without blemish.

Warts and All

So let me encourage you to be yourselves with one another. Dare to be transparent. Because we're all in the same boat. We're all part of the same body. And it's only as we get to know each other that we can help one another. The last verse in our reading is:

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. [Ephesians 4:32]

How can we forgive one another if we pretend that we're perfect? It's only when we show our flaws that we can be forgiven for them. As we share our lives we allow our brothers and sisters to understand us, sympathise with us, forgive us, lift us up in prayer, encourage us and guide us. That's how a living, vibrant church works.