

Ephesians week 5

17/07/22 09:30 St Peter

We're thinking at the moment how St Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, teaches us to become more like Jesus. Today we're going to think about two difficult subjects – being untruthful and getting angry. Now untruthfulness and anger are two things that get in the way of us being good people.

St Paul says this to the Ephesian church: "Putting away falsehood let us all speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another". Who has been told by mum & dad to tell the truth? Examples of not being truthful:

- Not admitting to something that we've done or said
- Cheating
- Returning something belonging to someone else
- Being honest with ourselves

We've all perhaps had our fingers crossed behind our backs that we don't get found out. Yet being truthful is not only good for us, but it is something that is good for everyone. The way our world works relies on people telling the truth. Even when people accused of doing something wrong end up in court, we rely on people telling the truth to a judge and jury.

But the adults here will know that, despite that need to be truthful, there is quite a lot of not being truthful in our society. Think of adverts. Or even the spectacle of Friday night's Conservative leadership hustings on Channel 4, where the candidates were at pains to distance themselves from Boris Johnson because of his untruthfulness. St Paul asks the church to be truthful with our neighbours because we belong to one another. When we are truthful our relationships work better, and our community is safer. Being truthful is good for us. It can be really hard to be truthful – especially when telling a little lie is a lot easier. We don't want to hurt someone's feelings – so we don't say the truth. But we look at Jesus, and he was always someone who spoke the truth to those around him – even when it got him into trouble.

St Paul then says this "Put away all bitterness and wrath and anger ... be kind to one another". Who has been angry? Examples: shouting; sulking; stomping around; hitting. We all know what it's like when someone is not kind to us. Most of us really don't like it. Especially when we're young, and possibly can't understand people as well as we will later on in life, we find someone being angry or mean to us difficult. Adults will know that we need a lot more being kind in the world, and less anger. We know there are too many people who are angry, or who want to hurt other people. That is what is going on in Ukraine at the moment. St Paul's tells people to stop being angry and to be kind to one another". A search of Amazon shows there are 40,000 religious books on the subject of anger. That's a lot. Lots of people seem to want to learn not to be angry.

Yet how might we learn to be more truthful and less angry? St Paul says "be imitators of God ... and live in love". 'Imitator' means to copy or be like. If we want to learn how not to be angry and to be kind, then we need to look for an example to Jesus – who is God shown to us.

In many things in life we learn things from other people. My mum taught me how to iron a shirt. When I was younger I used to follow my dad around when he was cutting the grass, learning how he did it. We can learn to not be angry and be kind from other people too. And God gave us Jesus to show us how to do this. When we look at Jesus we see someone who always had time for people. Who wanted the best for people and always worked in their interest.

As Christians, we are people who try to follow Jesus Christ – to be like him, to imitate him. We can love other people because Jesus shows us that we are loved. We need to learn to try and be like Jesus was – to be truthful, and to follow the path of kindness and love. And when we do learn that, our world becomes a better place. We show other people a better way to live. Our goodness can rub off on other people. And we call that, building the Kingdom of God.