

Community Renewal

JVI, Long Lake Community Church, 07.21.19, 1

Texts, ESV: Ephesians 4.20-24; Matthew 11.20-24

Ephesians 4.20-24

- 1 Paul is contrasting our old life to our old self to our new self in verses 22, 24
- 2 I've decided not to try and dissect each word of verse 24
- 3 Instead, I think it would be good to take a step back and look at the big picture

i. 3 big picture ideas in this verse and in this passage so far, Ephesians 4.24

- a 1st of all, this is a transformation we CAN experience as Christians
 - 1 I said last week that we begin to think God thoughts
 - 2 We begin to see the world through His eyes
 - 3 HS renews our minds to the point that we think like Christ (verse 23)¹
- b 2nd big picture idea: This is no ordinary transformation
 - 1 We're made into a closer representation of God
 - 2 "the likeness of God," this is *imago Dei* language
- c 3rd big picture idea: This whole passage works on one major *assumption*
 - 1 Paul *assumes* that some form of sanctification will in fact take place
 - 2 There is no other plan! If we name the name of Christ . . .
 - 3 We will start a new lifestyle based on "true righteousness and holiness"

ii. I actually have a 4th big picture idea, but I think it's more of a mystery

- a The mystery of this passage is that Paul is NOT speaking to individuals
 - 1 We tend to think of church as a bunch of individuals or maybe families
 - 2 We all carve time out of our busy schedules to come to church
 - 3 We're lucky if we can all get together for 1 hour each week for service
- b If we really want to be fair to Paul, we may need to get back on track
 - 1 The ancient Near East (*aNE*) culture is like ours in a lot of ways
 - 2 However, this is NOT one of the ways we are like the *aNE*
 - 3 The *aNE* is NOT marked by rugged individualism, but by community
 - 4 Decisions are made in community (families, cities, even nation-states)
- c Paul often builds on the *aNE* communal perspective in a lot of ways
 - 1 In this passage, he's NOT speaking to individuals but to the *Gathering*
 - 2 We catch a glimpse of this in the English
 - a) He says, "be renewed in the spirit of your minds" (verse 23)
 - b) That's mind - in the *plural* form
 - 3 We can't see in English that Paul uses *plural pronouns* in the Greek

¹ Wesley Adams, *Ephesians*, in the *Full Life Bible Commentary: An International Commentary for Spirit-Filled Christians*, eds. French L. Arrington and Roger Stronstad (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 1067.

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- a) From verses 20-24, we see “you” in English
- b) In the Greek, it is *you-plural*, or *y'all*, or *all y'all*
- d So what is the 4th big picture idea, what is the mystery of this passage
 - 1 We generally think in terms of individual application
 - 2 Paul, his readers, and the *aNE* are thinking in terms of community
 - 3 We are thinking of individual transformation or renewal
 - 4 The mystery, the awe-inspiring truth, is that this is *Community Renewal*

iii. What are the implications of thinking in terms of “we” instead of “me”?

- a 1st Implication: This is a call for **US** to repent
 - 1 Again, we tend to think about individual repentance
 - 2 Origen: “Paul directed his exhortations to repentance to the whole Christian community.”²
 - 3 Do we think of repentance as primarily an individual matter?
 - 4 Jesus calls whole regions on the carpet, **Matthew 11.20-24**
 - 5 Do we all have some kind of responsibility to repent as a people?
- b 2nd Implication: **We** can link passages like this to **OUR** end times hope
 - 1 Sometimes we want proof that everything will be all right someday
 - 2 We HAVE proof or evidence that there is a brighter day on the other side
 - 3 The evidence is that we can “put on the new self,” the new life, NOW
 - 4 Not only us, but whole Christian communities are being renewed³
 - 5 The proof that there will be a better day is that God is with us today
- c 3rd Implication: Tom Morris wrote the book *If Aristotle Ran General Motors*
 - 1 He shares classic Greek virtues, probably from Paul’s time
 - 2 He applies these ancient virtues in the marketplace
 - 3 He defines *social harmony*, it’s something companies aim for
 - 4 As I read the definition, see if it sounds like Paul’s community renewal

Morris: “Social harmony is not only a state of the absence of conflict but one of positive, vibrant consonance and interpersonal strength, a relationship within which individuals can attain the development of their highest gifts and enjoy the fullness of life together.”⁴

Invitation: If corporations can be transformed on a grand scale, what about us?
Do we have an advantage in the HS for *Community Renewal*, as the people of God?

² Origen, *Epistle to the Romans.xii.1-2*.

³ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 193.

⁴ Tom Morris, *If Aristotle Ran General Motors: The New Soul of Business* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1997), 119.