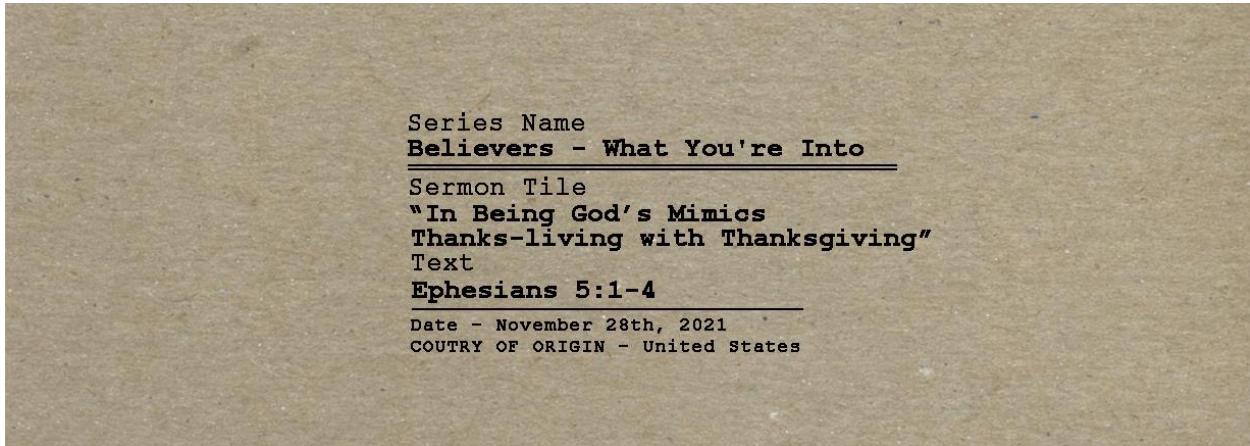


# "In Being God's Mimics: Thanks-living with Thanksgiving"



## **Ephesians 5:1-4**

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.*

Sermon Slides are available [HERE](#).

Video of the sermon is available [HERE](#).

Sermon Transcript:

Pastor Thom Rittichier

I'm gonna ask you to take out your Bible this morning. We're going to turn back to our series. By the way, do you remember what the subtitle on this series is?

Believers/WhatYou're Into. Our passage this morning is a really good description of what God has us being into as saints. And that becomes really clear this morning. Let me talk with you, first of all, about this expression. This expression was said to me in the course of a conversation that was going on. And when this expression was said, I was sitting there thinking, What does that have to do with what we've just been talking about? The expression is this, The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Have you heard that expression? How many have heard that expression? How many haven't heard that expression? Everybody has heard that expression. So what does that expression mean? You're just like your....dad, mom, sibling or family member. I was sitting there thinking, Isaac Newton had the apple fall on his head, but it has nothing to do with that. It has to do with what you hear. For example, my daughter needs to get somewhere and it's getting really close to the time to leave, and she goes through the house in a rush. And

my other daughter says, you know, she's just like her dad. The last time I heard that expression a mom was talking about her daughter and in the midst of that conversation, inserted not by me, was this expression, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. And you know, that is a challenging responsibility, isn't it? Isn't it a challenging responsibility?

Over and over, we see in the scriptures this statement, And he walked in the ways of his father. He walked in the ways of his father. In Ezekiel 23:31, "You have walked in the way of your sister." "He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, 1 Kings 15:26. That's Nadab, concerning being King of Israel under Jeroboam. And then Baasha in 1 Kings 15:34, "He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of Jeroboam." Omri in 1 Kings 16:26, "walked in the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat." Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings 22:43, "He walked in all the way of his father, Asa. He did not turn from them, doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord. It's not all negative. There are positive inputs here. But there is a lot of negative. Here's a positive, "So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and for three years they made Rehoboam the son of Solomon secure, for they walked in the way of David and Solomon", 2 Chronicles 11:17. I got about 25 verses here if you'd like to see them. Over and over it is said about what is termed, the apple not falling far from the tree.

For believers, this thing should be taken as a positive. They can stand on your shoulders, they can be helped with a leg up on managing life God's way, commitments to those things that go God's way. And as believers, even though some of us may have been handed a bad example. I recall going to Florida, in our family Oldsmobile. I was sitting in the backseat. And I remember somehow in Cincinnati, we missed an exit, in the heart of the city. And then I began to repeat before I was interrupted, what my dad said, "Oh, son of..." and that's where I was interrupted. And being interrupted there, in the back seat, I looked up, and I saw my dad look with a sheepish look to my mom who was not happy. As believers, we've all had parents who failed. They did oftentimes what seemed best to them, and handed down to us some things.

But as believers, we do have this, which Paul tells us in Ephesians. Turn with me to chapter 5, verses 1-4. Paul says this in verses 1 and 2, "Therefore be imitators", mimics, "of God, as beloved children", children of his love. "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." From there, in verse 3 and 4, he goes on and talks about some things that need to definitely not show up. And then what does need to show up? The apples are falling, many apples. All believers, we're all called to this, to be mimics of God. So here's what we're going to cover. Our main focus, as per Paul here, is to mimic God. That's the main focus. In point #1, Our walk now, he says, is one of thanks-living, verses 1-4a. As a matter of fact, repeatedly in this whole section, when he talks about mimicking God, he talks about our way of walking, how this is an appropriate gratitude to God. He talks about it repeatedly. It's there in verse 2, "walk in love, as children who are beloved." We're to walk in love. Look down at verse 8 in this section, where he says we're to "walk as children of light". Because we have the light and we're in the light. We are to "walk as children of light". Now, we're not going to go that far this week. But there is this thing that I'm talking about, of our living. This is thanks-living. Look down to verse 15 where he says, "Look

carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise", because we are children of God, who is wise, so we are to walk wisely. The idea here, in this whole section, is to be mimicking God in how we walk, with a thanks kind of living. Then in point #2, Our talk now, he says, is to convey thanksgiving, verse 4b. As a matter of fact, the title this morning is, In Being God's Mimic, Thanks-living with Thanksgiving. That's what we're going to be taking a look at here. And you know, we have the advantage. We have the advantage because whatever examples that we've have had in life, ones that we could stand on the shoulders of, or ones that we need to kind of replace. Some concerning how things were managed, how we practiced life when we were disappointed, on how we handled anger, on how we handled problems in relationships, on how we dealt with forgiveness, on how we dealt with bitterness, we have the advantage. Because as children of God, we have a Father to mimic here.

We're going to start by talking about this, our main focus, as per Paul, is to mimic God. It's an imperative. It's the first part, here in this passage, of the imperative, meaning it's to be a practice direction. You know, the thing about Ephesians is that it is so practicable. People call it being practical. It's practical, because it's practicable. It's kind of what Hebrews talks about when it says, solid food belongs to those who are mature, who by reason of use have trained their senses, their thinking, their ability to see and understand, to talk about and act in accord with, they've trained their senses to discern what's beneficial and helpful, what's good. And then what's detrimental and harmful. That's what Ephesians says, it gives us solid food, to practice. This is good and beneficial. This is harmful and it tears down. That's here. And I want you to know this is relevant. It is as relevant today as when Paul spoke this, when God inspired this. Society has come a long way in regards to physical comforts, and economic distribution and provision. Society has come a long way from Paul's day. It's come a long way. But it hasn't departed much from what he talks about in this section that's practicable. We'll see this.

First of all, he says, "Therefore", reference to God's forgiveness, the promise, he says, the reference to God's forgiveness. He says, "Therefore", based on what was just said in chapter 4, verse 32, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Then chapter 5, verse 1, "Therefore", because God did this, reference to God's forgiveness, we're to be a mimic of God. To be a mimic of God is hugely to recognize how God forgave us and to imitate that. Do you remember the parable that Jesus told us about forgiveness? There two servants of the same master, servant A and servant B. Servant A was forgiven a huge amount, servant B forgiven a small amount. But the huge amount that servant A owed was owed to his master. And the small amount that was forgiven was from servant B to servant A. Servant A, who had been forgiven a huge amount, wouldn't forgive servant B, wouldn't forgive, wouldn't release, wouldn't give up, would keep carrying in his heart the bitterness towards servant B, who had just a little amount to be forgiven. And do you remember what the master of both those servants did with servant A? Do you remember? What did he do? Yeah, he delivered him over to the torturers. It's in Matthew 18:23-35, you can read this parable, it's really clear. The tortures was a debtors prison, where someone who had the capability to pay this debt but just would not do it, would go through experiences where, quoting Jesus here, he would learn to "forgive your brother from your heart". What do

you think the tortures are? It's the things God allows us to go through until we learn to forgive.

Do this, mimic God, mimic God in forgiveness, not carrying it around. As a matter of fact, forgiveness is a promise not to dwell on, tell of or smell up the relationship down the road, I want you to know that this is huge. God says this in Jeremiah 31:34, "...For I will forgive their iniquity, their lawless deeds, and I will remember their sin no more." Can God forget anything? Can God forget? He can choose to. But does he still know it? Of course he does. Because He is omniscient. He knows it all. And for him to forget something is that he wouldn't know what he forgot. So that's impossible. But he chooses to not remember, not dwell on, or to tell of or bring this up to smell up the relationship down the road. I want you to know, folks, this is huge as being a mimic of God. This is where he starts this whole section on being a mimic of God with thanks-living, it's to mimic him in forgiveness. I really can't think of anything bigger in resolving and keeping good relationships than the practice of forgiveness, be mimics of God as beloved children of our heavenly Father, the apple not falling too far from the tree. But like Isaac Newton, you know what that story is about? Isaac Newton was sitting under the tree and the apple fell on his head. And he began to discover the laws of motion. I don't know if it's true or not. But let this fall on your head, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, in being mimics of God, we're a beloved child, we have his nature, we have his Spirit. This is a possibility, this is real, we can mimic him as beloved children.

Well, that is the main focus of this whole section that he goes through. And then he talks about walking here in verse 2. Our walk now is to be one of thanks-living. And he states it here, the practice direction, again an imperative, as the mimic of God. This is a "to be" thing. Our practice is to walk/to live, notice what he says, "in love". "And walk in love". This is the connection to mimic God. Christ loved us and gave himself for us. That was our forgiveness. This love is the love of decision. Have you ever heard that there are different kinds of love in the Greek language? Have you heard that? There's agape love, the one that the New Testament coins, God coins this, it is the love of decision. There's phileo, that's brotherly love. There's eros, which is the physical desire. But the term that he uses here is the word agape, for the love of decision. God so loved the world that he decided to give his only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him doesn't perish but have everlasting life. That is the basis of God's forgiveness. God's so loved, out of a decision. Often we feel a heart tug. And that is kind of calling us to love. It's a heart tug that I have. And sometimes that heart tug has to be first before we express lovingly.

I'm going to give you a quote, tell me when this happened. "And that every intention of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continuously." That's Genesis 6:5, before the flood. And because it grieved God that He made man on the earth, therefore, God makes a decision. Man's years are this many, God is grieved. And the flood is the act from being grieved. But God is love, and in love, he makes a plan to rescue. God so loved, this is a decision that God makes contrary to the way he feels, because he was grieved in his heart that He made man but he's still provided this way of escape for man. As a matter of fact, Noah and the ark becomes the New Testament picture of how we are saved through Christ. And God through Noah, for years and years and years and years, presented a way of escape for those people. This is a love of decision, to do what's best,

to do what is helpful, fitting to another person, regardless of how we feel and regardless of the outcome. And that is the practice that we now have in thanks-living. A gratitude-living with God, that we like God, walk/live in love, we live in making decisions for other people that are beneficial, regardless of the way we feel and regardless of the outcome. Thanks-living is walking in love, the love of decision. And as an example here, just to clarify, he says as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. The clarity for us is that this is the pattern, husbands with wives are told to do this specifically, very practicably, in the home. But on a broad scale, this is thanks-living to the folks that we occupy the planet with. How different is that? How different is that then much of the communication that goes on in social media? How different is that? That some would say, what is it with you, a distinctive characteristic of love? Now really, is this possible for us? Can we really bring this into the practice of life? Remember, this is an imperative. And what God directs, He empowers to make possible, this is a possibility. This is a possibility.

Okay, I admit, I admit I am not a consistent good pattern on this. Let me give you an example of this. Do you remember when I told you about this root canal that I had to have? Well, I was referred from my dentist, here in town, to this endodontist, a specialist for the internal part of a tooth. So I called them and they were to call me back with an estimate on this because insurance will only pay part of the bill. So then it's about three weeks down the road, I waited day after day after day after day, and finally on the day before I was to go in for the procedure, I called them. And, you know, I was so loving and kind when I talked to them... (congregation laughs) You know, it's been three weeks and I was to get an estimate and I haven't heard anything back yet. So, this is pumping, this is being circulated through my mind. So I call the office first thing that morning before I was to go in. And the receptionist, totally unaware of who was calling says, This is such and such office, can I help you? So I started to explain and she said, Can you hold? So I was put on hold. And as I was sitting there, this all calmed down me, this tranquil me...you know I was exactly the opposite, right?...as I was on hold there, suddenly the phone switches to their automated reply...You have called such and such and our office hours are such and such, so please leave a message and we will call you back when we're open. Well I left a message alright! Yeah. I explained it all. And never heard back from them the rest of the day. The next day, my appointment was that afternoon, I called again. And I began to explain again...nicely, lovinly (congregation laughs) what went on and about that delay. And that I still haven't heard anything. And the lady apologized and said, It says here that we left you a message several days ago. I went back and checked my phone messages and they had left me a message! Sometimes we're not good patterns of this. Thank God for the forgiveness that we can experience, over and over and over. And then we can express this love, over and over and over. We can move in this direction of loving, like Christ loves.

And here's why this is so important. It's so important because as this comes up to God, this thanks-living, as this comes up to God, it is a fragrant offering and a sacrifice. This is a fragrant offering. I've been reading, as I'm going through the Bible, in Leviticus, and Numbers. Let me tell you, as I was going through this, my anticipation of reading Leviticus and Numbers was like...ugh, ho hum. But I want you to know, I have found this to be extremely helpful, because there's a bunch of background to what God has

done for us in Christ. Leviticus chapter one talks about this offering called the burnt offering, where there is a complete devotion of the very best to God and totally consuming. Leviticus chapter two talks about this meal or grain offering where this thing is totally, totally consumed. So you have perfection, you have an offering being totally consumed. And then there is this peace offering in Leviticus chapter three that talks about the work of establishing peace. And all of those things, those three offerings, are called savory, soothing, sweet smelling offerings to God, all of these depict Christ, with his perfection, his totally being consumed, and his establishing of peace. All of that is the sweet smell to God. And then exactly after that, Leviticus chapter four, there is this thing called the sin offering, where God is just totally, totally repulsed by this, and this thing is obliterated by what repulses him, and then it's attached, the good work is attached to this one that goes through, it's the sin offering, and then there is this trespass offering where it's the same thing. And what he is telling us here is, by this thanks-living, it has this sweet, savoring smell of what Christ has done, and it has the sacrificial, bloody reverberations where God, it says, was pleased to crush him for the sacrifice of our sin. This, this is why, this thanks-living is this sweet fragrance before him that well bears up the sacrifice of Christ. It is to be practiced, to be practice, an imperative.

Then notice starting in verse 3. This is not even to be named. This Book of Ephesians is so much practicable, he says, this isn't even to be named. Sexual immorality. This is the word...what word do you think we get from the Greek word porneia, what word do you think comes from that? It's pornography. And that's the term that he uses here, which means indulgent lust of either sex. This is not even to be named. It's not even to be named. Now, it doesn't mean you don't talk about it. Because Paul's would be violating that here when he talks about it. But it's not even to be named as registering with believers. Impurity, term is a term that Jesus used when he spoke about the decaying bodies in the tomb. The rest of the New Testament talks about it in regards to fantasies, in regards to imaginations, it talks about that kind of thing in the sexual realm. And then notice this, what he attaches here, greed or covetousness. These statements are not only sexually but also about covetousness. The last commandment of the 10 commandments is this, You shall not covet. You shall not have this greed, for anything that is your neighbor's, not your neighbor's wife, that sexual, not for his house, not for his ox, not for his things. That's the wanting of more and more and he connects that with all of this. It's not even to be named, not even to be named, not even to be named. This is the kind of thing that thanks-living puts off because you see folks, we are bent. We're bent, we are bent this direction. So, it's an imperative, to be practice to such an extent that it's not even to be thought is conceivable among believers.

Interesting reports, though, concerning the internet and these very things, even amongst believers. Not even to be named. I remember a situation where guy was having trouble in his marriage, he definitely wanted to get counseling, we were in the midst of this. And as we were talking about this, which happens frequently in marriage counseling, the issue comes up of these things via the internet. And his response was, It's just so amazing. I was just totally taken back how all this is so available, and it's free! You don't even have to pay for it, it's free. But is this free? Do you think this is free? Is this free? I know that this was one of the driving forces that brought the Internet into

existence, this stuff was the money behind it. This is what brought it into existence, but is it free? Is this free? Let me say this, spiritually, this is not free. He who commits this becomes the slave of this. And the marriage problems have to do with the spiritual issue of the heart that gets expressed, it's not free. It's not free. And neither is it a victimless crime or sin. Not even to be named, this isn't even to be named. And yet the percentage that's reported concerning the exposure to this. I want you to know that it's so available, sometimes when I'm working on the internet, you come across this stuff and it kind of catches you by surprise. But it's not even to be named. Not even to be named, because we're bent, we're bent.

Thanks-living overcomes this bent, this not to be practiced thought and action. And he says this, this is totally out of place for saints. Look at what he says here, verse 4a. This is the stuff that's not, the sexual immorality, impurity, not even to be named, as is proper among saints. Then he says, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking", coarse jesting, "which are out of place". Filthiness is shameful obscenity. This is stuff that was in the past, first first century, the second century, it is still going on in the 21st century. Filthiness, it's shameful, obscenity, foolish talk, the lexicon calls it being dull or stupid, just buffoonery. And no, it doesn't mean you can't talk humorously, light hearted, joking, small talk. No, this is just buffoonery. Here's an example, this one..."Go Brandon. Go, Brandon. Go Brandon". What's that about? What is that about? This term, buffoonery, means to take a good thing, and wittingly turn it into something that is crude and cruel and off, but it's kind of humorous. That's what the term is. That's the compound word. You take something good. "Go Brandon. Go Brandon", and you turn it to mean something cruel. This is a whole group of people doing this. But wait, what did the other group say to us? What did they say about our position? They were more blatant than this. So when does what other people do, sinfully, become the standard to judge what we do?! When does it? I think there's something better to mimic here. Something better, being mimics of God as beloved children who walk in love, as thanks-living to him. You know, that "Go Brandon" thing fully qualifies here and it sows discord. And you know what God thinks about discord being sown amongst his people. Proverbs is clear. He hates this. He hates this. This seemed relevant in the past and still, that's the nature of this verb tense. It's out of place, it was in the past, and it's still out of place for believers. Still is.

Finally this, verse 4b. Our talk now is to convey thanksgiving. Paul says it this way, "but rather let there be thanksgiving". Did you ever have somebody say, What's your rather's. My rather's would be... I'd rather have this, I'd rather have that. This is the "rather" that God has for us. And when we invest in this, it becomes so, so desirable. This "rather" is actually an expression of worship to God. And it's so displaces the other things, it just takes them out. It just removes them, in thanksgiving to God. Now, there's an interesting booklet that I'd like to recommend to you, highly. Matter of fact, I go through this booklet, because I need to, repeatedly. It's called "Thankfulness". And there's something that's odd about thanksgiving. And I know we just come through the holiday. But have you ever noticed how you can go through Thanksgiving and just kind of not be? Have you ever noticed that? Where are some times when I'm going through Thanksgiving, I have so many things that I want to get done on this day, and it kind of gets away. And I totally am focused on what I didn't get compared to what there is given.

This booklet is written by Susan Lutz. She says, "There's something odd about thankfulness. It seldom seems to fit the situation. In our society of high expectations and instant gratification, people who are thankful for good things in the life seem rather quaint, naive, sweet, and sentimental. Thankfulness seems like a mindset for people whose lives revolve around politeness and thank you notes. And it's even a tougher sell when we think about being thankful in the midst of painful circumstances." Life is difficult, but there's this expression of worship in thankfulness to God.

Have you ever noticed how often the Bible directs us to be thankful? In everything, give thanks. And here's why, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "because this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus". It's being thankful. I want you to know that this changes things because it puts you in connection with trusting God, it puts you in connection with seeing it from God's perspective, it puts you in connection of God being real in life. It actually begins to work from the inside out to change us. And what he is saying here is, this now is our talk, it's to color and characterize, in increasing measure, our talk. And there's something odd about it. You know, there's even occasions where we'll ask here in the chapel, What do we have this week to be thankful for, to give glory to God for? And it takes me a while to think about it. But if we ask, What irritated you this week? I'm on it. Yeah. I can quickly come up with that. The problem is we're out of sync with the rest of creation, all of creation. When Jesus walked into Jerusalem, going through that hard time, he said that if people wouldn't thank God, the stones themselves would cry out. Because the stones get it. They don't think, they are just there by God's design. And they would cry out, Jesus said, they would cry out in Hallelujah, Hosanna in the highest, to God. Yeah!!

Lord, you're more than enough! This passage of Scripture is so encouraging, because we can mimic you on this and actually have success. But it is so challenging because it deals with our being out of sync at times. God, you are more than enough. In Jesus name, Amen.