

Ephesians 5:15-20**Be careful how you live**

Written for the confirmation service at St John's Eudunda

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we will witness five young men confirm their faith. We do so in the midst of a pandemic that's still hanging around, and with restrictions on how we go about our daily lives. With governments trying to balance the needs of public health and the economy, it's not always easy to know what's right and what's wrong. And as the situation changes, the right thing to do might need to change also.

If we think about our whole lives for a moment, there are always times when right and wrong are not clear. There are changes that happen that mean we need to reassess, we need to figure out once again what would be the right thing to do. The second bible reading this morning tells us to be careful how we live. Not to live like fools, but like those who are wise. And it gives us a few examples of what this wise living looks like. It's making the most of every opportunity. It's not acting thoughtlessly. It's not getting drunk with wine, but being filled with the Holy Spirit. It's singing God's praises amongst yourselves and giving thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of Jesus.

The bible doesn't go into fine detail about the wise way to handle every situation. This living wisely is not a matter of obeying a given set of laws. But it requires paying attention. Actually thinking about what we do and why we do it. And this is because we understand that every moment of our life on earth is a gift from God. And we honour God's gift of life by paying attention. We honour God's gift of life by acknowledging that God's creation and our own lives within it actually matter.

If we spend our days oblivious to God's gifts and God's provision, we miss out on living wisely. One way we could be literally oblivious to what's happening around us is given in the text – being drunk with wine. But don't think that as long as you stay away from that you'll be fine. It's really not just about drinking wine. There are plenty of other ways to become oblivious, including being consumed with greed or power, or having no consideration or empathy for anyone but yourself. All these things can stop us seeing life for what it truly is. And all of them are very self-focused. But truly wise living is never private. If we going to make the most of every opportunity, we have to know what's going on in the lives of people around us. We do not live in isolation. And wise Christian living is not relegated to either the privacy of your church attendance on Sunday morning or your devotional life at home.

Living wisely means the Holy Spirit is at work in all aspects of our life so that our identity as Christians, as forgiven children of God, is integral to everything we do. And so, we do need to pay attention. We do need to make the most of every opportunity. And this means we need to deal with time honestly. We live in a culture that pushes us to act as though there is never enough time. We are constantly rushing, with every moment of time absorbed in the apparent requirement for us to always be productive. And somehow the complete opposite is also simultaneously true. We tell ourselves that we have all the time in the world, and that mortality, the limitations of human life, don't apply to us.

Either way is a path of foolishness. The bible calls us to acknowledge that neither of these things is a true understanding of the time we have been given in this world. To live as wise children of God means that opportunities to do justice are not missed. To live as wise children of God means that opportunities to love and serve our neighbour in need are not missed. To live as wise children of God means that opportunities to thank and praise God for his goodness to us are not missed.

I'm not going to say that any of this is easy. Paying attention to how you live and making the right choice, the wise choice, in every single moment is bordering on the impossible. Sometimes we miss the obvious. Sometimes the choices given are both terrible. But still, our text says, "Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do." This is not meant to send us off on an endless quest to discover which car God wants us to buy or which career path to pursue. Something far bigger and far more important is meant here. It requires questioning the prevailing culture around us and discarding that which does not fit God's will. It requires knowing God's word, which means using some of our time to receive from God. It requires trusting in our baptism, where God promised us the Holy Spirit who leads us into all wisdom.

Aside from the presence of Christ in our life, it's not possible to know the will of the Lord, or to make the most of our time, or even to be careful. And when we do get these things wrong, when we do waste our time on things not pleasing to God, it's the presence of Christ that lets us keep going. Because in Christ we have forgiveness. Jesus died on the cross to reconcile you to God, so that all your wrong decisions, all your moments of not living according to God's will, are forgiven. You are redeemed and restored and called once more to live wisely. We can't change our past or guarantee for ourselves a certain number of days in our future, but God knows our days, and can and does forgive our past wrongs. God is willing and able to guide your steps as your days on earth continue to unfold.

So, my prayer for all of you today is that you do seek God's wisdom for your life. I pray that God would lead you to make the most of the opportunities that come your way. And may you thank and praise God for his gifts and provision, especially his gift of grace, mercy and forgiveness given through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.