The Gospel Walk: Wisdom & Spirit

Ephesians 5:15-21

###### INTRODUCTION – 5 minutes

1. Greeting & Welcome
   1. Dismissal of Children to TS
   2. Words of Greeting – Good morning – My name is Pastor John Reddy. I’m privileged to serve as one of the Elders here at Redemption Hill Church.
2. Context:
   1. As you may know, except for a short break or two, we have been carefully studying through the wonderful Letter of Paul to the Christians living in and around Ephesus.
   2. The first three chapters were so dense and rich with profound truths about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the nature of our relationship to God as well as each other.
   3. Beginning in Chapter 4, the Apostle Paul shifts from descriptive language to instructive language.
   4. *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called…”* [Ephesians 4:1]
   5. In other words, he begins to tell us how we should live in the light of the eternal truths he has just shared for “Belief” is only True “Belief” when it has moved from the mind and into actual practice.
   6. He uses a lot of Word-Pictures to help us understand what the walk of a follower of Christ should be.
   7. In Ephesians 4, Pastor Chasteen pointed out that we are to put off our old self, renew our minds, and put on the new self for we “*were created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*” [Ephesians 4:24]
      1. SLIDE*: “put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness”* [Ephesians 4:22-24]
   8. We are to do this as we obey the commands of Christ and imitate His life by putting on the actions and attitudes of Christ.
   9. In Chapter 5, Pastor Turley pointed out that in order to be imitators of God, we needed to walk in love as Jesus walked in love, and to walk as children of light where those areas of our lives that were once the domain of darkness are now exposed as new by the light – that which is good and right and true.
      1. SLIDE: *“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.”* [Ephesians 5:1-2]
      2. *“Walk as children of light… and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord”* [Ephesians 5:8-10]
   10. And now we arrive at this morning’s Scripture passage (Ephesians 5:15-21), where we encounter the sixth time the Apostle Paul’s use of the concept of “walk” as an instruction for the Christian life. Again and again, he conveys a deep concern for how our lifestyles as followers of Jesus lineup with our new identity in Christ. Make no mistake, he says, we are called to live in accordance with this new identity.
   11. So with that in mind… let’s read:
       1. *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. [Eph 5:15-21 ESV]*
   12. In this text, Paul introduces two more contrasts to help us understand and live “The Gospel Walk” more fully – Wisdom versus Foolishness; Drunkenness versus Being-Filled-With-The-Spirit.
   13. By the time that we are finished this morning, I’m hoping that we will all agree that “**We should walk in God’s wisdom and by His Spirit as we together glorify Jesus.”** (Main Point)
3. Prayer of Transition:
   1. Let’s bow our heads for a moment before we start.
   2. Would you bow your heads and simply repeat after me while I pray?
      1. *“Heavenly Father…*
      2. *In Your Wisdom…*
      3. *And By Your Spirit…*
      4. *Speak to our hearts…*
      5. *and change our lives”.*
      6. *Amen.”*

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #1: Walk in God’s Wisdom and glorify Jesus (15 minutes):**

My first encouragement is this: We should walk in God’s Wisdom and glorify Jesus.

What does it look like to walk in God’s wisdom? And how should we approach our Christian walk?

In verses 15-17, I think that Paul offers us at least four insights.

1. Give careful attention
   1. Paul clearly exhorts us to “*Look c-a-r-e-f-u-l-l-y then how you walk” (5:15a)*
   2. How we conduct our day-to-day lives should reflect the transformation that God has been working in us and reflect our new natures in Christ.
   3. We should be vigilant – awake – aware – not apathetic – or asleep – or ignorant.
   4. As our minds give assent to the Lordship of Christ, our actions and attitudes should be frequently checked for signs of being lulled into moral complacency by the culture and society that surrounds us as well as our own proclivity for self-deception.
   5. Building checkpoints or rhythms of intentional and focused assessment of our spiritual walk are important part of a growing life of Christian maturity.
   6. Simply put, we need to think about how we are walking and what we are doing rather than just “sleepwalk” through our spiritual journey.
   7. A great opportunity to exercise this kind of reflection is whenever we celebrate the “Lord’s Supper” like we will later this morning.
   8. Many times, we will encourage all of us, as Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians, to take a moment to soberly consider our spiritual condition and the possibility of fractured relationships through careless, sinful living.
   9. I encourage you to take advantage of that opportunity today as well as other opportunities on a daily basis.
2. Choose the right wisdom
   1. Published in 1916, Bostonian Poet Robert Frost finished his famous poem “The Road Not Taken” as he explored the choice that was before him like this:
      1. *Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —  
         I took the one less traveled by,  
         And that has made all the difference*
   2. In our culture, that is helpful imagery illustrating the potential of choice. Many of us had to read this poem in our American Literature classes in High School.
   3. But we should remember that this type of imagery around choice is not unique to Frost. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah beat him to the punch when he recorded this in Jeremiah 6:16:
      1. *Thus says the LORD: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, “We will not walk in it*”. [Jeremiah 6:16]
   4. As God is speaking to the nation Israel through the prophet Jeremiah, He makes it clear that there is a good way – an ancient way – that leads to rest. The wise person asks for this pathway – considers this pathway – and then travels this pathway for this will be the way of wisdom.
   5. It is important to understand how the Bible defines “wisdom” because there is a stark difference between the way that many of our cultures define wisdom and the way that the revealed Word of God defines it.
   6. Wisdom, simply put, originates and flows FROM God. It is one of His attributes. It is not generated from the collective insights of any man.
   7. We humans sometimes act unwisely simply because we do not have all the facts. God, however, has access to all information. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. His judgments are made wisely. He sees all things in His perfect perspective. He is not constrained like we are; He has no limits or distortion on His vision.
   8. That means that as followers of Christ, we can go to Him in prayer with great confidence that if He does not grant something that we pray it might very likely be that our view of the matter is an optical illusion.
   9. Wisdom is ultimately found in Him. And, therefore, the wise look to God for our ultimate answers. The wise listen to the Word that He has revealed to us. The wise submit themselves to Lordship of Jesus whom the Father sent that we might be rescued from foolishness- even the most extreme foolishness of all – rebelling against and rejecting the One who made us and loves us. Rather, the wise would orient themselves towards Him and His ways. And, then the wise would take the next step – the wise step – to know Him and love Him and obey Him according to what He has chosen to reveal.
   10. Paul tells us that we are to walk *“not as unwise but as wise, (5:15b-c).*
   11. Finding our way around the roadways of Boston can be confusing, can’t it? (Slide – Boston roads)
   12. We should travel carefully in wisdom to the see the dangers that confuse us and threaten us – temptation to sin, the weakness of the flesh in a world that is fallen, and opposition from spiritually dark forces at war against God and His kingdom.
   13. And, we should also walk carefully in wisdom to know how to respond in a godly and biblically instructed way in the midst of those dangers. We need to be able to follow clear directions from God.
   14. Here’s one suggestion if you hope to grow wiser.
       1. Consider setting aside some time in order to read and reflect upon the book of Proverbs.
       2. In its opening, this book makes it clear that its intended audience is the wise, the one who understands, and the youth who require training in the skill of choosing the right course of action for a desired result. It is full of insights on how to rightfully view God, His general principles for living, and the different results for the wise who choice properly and, in contrast, the fool who chooses poorly. It has 31 chapters so most months you could decide to read one chapter a day and immerse yourself in its wisdom for living.
3. Consider “time”
   1. The Apostle Paul goes on to exhort us that wise walking is also about “*making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.(5:16)*
   2. On the simplest level, I think we can all agree that time is one of the most precious commodities available to us. We live in Boston where when I ask someone how they are doing, I most often hear back, “I’m wicked busy”. The pace is tough, isn’t it?
   3. As followers of Christ, however, Paul tells us that we are to weigh our use of it.
   4. Let’s do the math. 24 hours per day times 7 days per week means that we have 168 hours per week to spend. You have 168 hours this week. I have 168 hours per week. Governor Baker, Big Papi, and Dzhorkar Tsarnaev all have 168 hours per week. The only question to be answered is: “How will that time be spent?”
   5. Here at Redemption Hill Church, we take meaningful active church membership quite seriously. When someone decides that they’d like to become a member, we ask them to voluntarily enter into a set of commitments that we have with each other – what we call a Member Covenant.
   6. One of the pledges that we make to each other is *“Because the gospel also calls us to be a part of God’s mission of redemption: We will steward our time, ~~talents, finances, and spiritual gifts~~ to further the mission of God through the church.”*
   7. In other words, one of the characteristics of our Christian walk will be that we will manage our time so that it can be used by God to further His agenda. In order to manage our time, it is likely that we will need to develop a stronger sense of self-discipline. And, as a community of faith, we will help each other to that end.
   8. Now, it’s interesting that Paul puts a qualifier on his encouragement to us about time. He says, *“because the days are evil.”*
   9. Now you might ask, “John, what does Paul mean by that?” Might I suggest the following:
   10. Much of Judaism had a deep conviction that God’s people lived in an age characterized by an abundance of evil. It was dominated by powerful supernatural powers recognized to be at war with God and His people. Until the Messiah came and subdued this widespread lawlessness against the God’s reign an authority, every day had the potential for evil that was, as we say on the basketball court, “in your face”.
   11. Well, we know that Jesus was the Messiah that they had been looking for. And, that on the cross at Calvary – a cross that He willing took upon himself – Satan was defeated; sin was conquered, and death was overcome by the resurrection of Jesus.
   12. And yet, despite this apparent victory, we still live in a world that is still characterized by evil and brokenness. Even as devout followers of Jesus, we experience trial and tribulation; sickness and death; grief and loss. How do we make sense of that pain and struggle?
   13. I’d like you to consider the story of my two grandfathers. Like most able-bodied men of their day, they had enlisted in the armed forces as part of the struggle during World War II. Coincidentally, June 6, 1944, both landed on the beaches of Normandy as part of the invasion of Normandy – commonly called D-Day. My “Grampy Percy” was wounded on the beach at Juno and was shipped home to Canada soon afterwards; My “Grampy Reddy” successfully landed at Omaha beach and was part of the invasion force that ultimately made it to Germany.
   14. Historians who look back identify that occasion as the turning point of the war in Europe – essentially, once that foothold was made in Northern France – the war in Europe was over. But while the Allied forces had gained the upper hand that the conclusion of the war was understood, there was still a period of time where the final stages of that war played out. There were still a number of major battles still to be conducted. My “Grampy Reddy” still slugged through the infamous “Battle of the Bulge” on the way to Berlin and a final surrender. And, thousands of men lost their lives in the days that followed.
   15. This example might help some of us to understand the tension that we sometimes feel as Christians. We live in a time where the kingdom of God has been ushered in by Jesus’ earthly ministry. However, until the final Day of Judgment when all of creation is fully restored and made right, we live in a world where the “days of evil” can still be experienced by those struggling against the Kingdom of God and those desiring to advance the Kingdom of God.
   16. It’s like a snake that has been mortally wounded and yet still writhes with enough life to be dangerous and bite its venom into another victim.
   17. Another way of looking at it is this. God’s original design was damaged in the Fall (Genesis 3) with the resultant brokenness echoing throughout our relationship to Him, to each other, and to the world that we live in.
   18. The “good news” – the gospel - is that Jesus Christ has ushered in the beginning of the restoration of all that is broken and the world is heading towards a day when all things will be rightfully restored to God’s original design. It’s the kingdom is here and yet not fully realized.
   19. And, in the meantime, we will witness and sometimes experience the harsh reality of living in that ambiguous time. Just like my “Grampy Reddy” had to duck his head into a frozen foxhole – even as final victory was assured and would occur in a number of months.
   20. This week, Jonathan Mitchell wrote our Sunday PREP for this worship service. He shared a prayer from a devotional called “Valley of Vision”.It read:
       1. “Teach me the happy art of attending to things temporal with a mind intent on things eternal”.
   21. That’s the perspective that Paul was trying to get us to see.
   22. As followers of Jesus, let’s walk wisely.
   23. Let’s live with purity and integrity before God - even with our time.
   24. Let’s do this with an appreciation for the scope of redemptive history.
   25. Let’s notice the real nature of the time that we live in.
   26. Let’s do good with wisdom.
   27. Let’s share this gospel with others.
   28. And, may we manage our time well while understanding the times that we live in are both dangerous AND full of opportunity.
4. Understand God’s will
   1. *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (5:17)*
   2. In this verse, the Apostle Paul gives us another angle on the comparison between unwise and wise.
   3. “*A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom*” [Proverbs 10:23]
   4. Reading more from the Book of Proverbs would reveal that fools can be:
      1. lazy,
      2. have uncontrolled tongues,
      3. lie, slander, quarrel,
      4. have quick tempers,
      5. are proud,
      6. hate knowledge,
      7. despise advice
      8. resist correction, and are reckless.
      9. They have no regard for natural and predictable consequences of their attitudes, choices, and actions.
   5. It’s not a pretty picture.
   6. Rather than live like this, Paul urges us to discern the Lord’s will; to understand it.
   7. In this case, understanding is more than simple cognitive awareness.
   8. No, understanding involves applied knowledge; taking what you know to be true, arriving at real insight, and then acting upon that insight is real understanding.
   9. There is a connection between our head and our hands.
   10. You may ask, “John, how is this connection made?”
   11. Proverbs 2:1-9 gives us that insight.
       1. *“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you… applying your heart to understanding… then you will understand the fear of the Lord… For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding… Then you will understand what is right and just and fair… every good path.”* [Proverbs 2:1-9 excerpts]
   12. There is a connection between our head-and-knowledge and to our hands-and-feet-for-action.
   13. It is made through when our hearts are energized by “who God is” and the discernment that God gives us through His Spirit.
   14. Paul prays that this would be the experience of the Ephesians when he prayed at the beginning of the letter: *“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him*” [Ephesians 1:17]. God wants us to understand His will. He is not in the business of playing a game of “keep-away” from us.
   15. As a Pastor, one of the most common questions that I get asked is: “*How can I know God’s will*?”. Usually, this question is in reference to some specific, urgent decision that needs to be made.
   16. Understanding God’s will comes from applying God’s Word to our circumstances. It is done over time. It done while recognizing that the Lord may not yet have providentially unfolded all of the circumstances that will enable us to move forward with confidence. But being confident that when we know “who He is”, and foster relationship with Him, and know His heart’s desire, then we will grow in confidence in our decision making – even more so, when we do this in the midst of like-minded believers committed to a life of godly wisdom and encouragement.
   17. This is one of the benefits of developing the rhythm of Word & Prayer that you hear us talk about so much at RHC. Consider the investment of your time there well spent as an investment in learning about God’s overall will for your life as you fine tune your understanding of His specific will in your decision making.
5. Transition:
   1. This brings us to our second encouragement.

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #2: Walk by His Spirit and glorify Jesus (15 minutes):**

We should walk by His Spirit and glorify Jesus.

1. In order to help us understand this Paul uses another Word-Picture – the comparison of being “drunk with wine” or “filled-with-the-Spirit”.
   1. He writes this first as a negative or warning: “*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery..”*
   2. My guess is that we all have some sense of what being drunk with wine looks like - whether we’ve struggled with this issue, lived with those that struggle with this issue, or simply observed it in the movies or TV.
   3. One of the most obvious signs of being “filled” with alcohol is an inability to walk properly in a straight line. We all recognize that this indicates that the individual has experienced a “loss of control”. And often, this gives way to what Paul calls “debauchery” – a complete surrender to uncontrolled, unbridled passions – the type that a normally sober person would probably keep in check.
   4. It is also possible that Paul had aspects of pagan worship in the back of his mind while he penned this warning. Ephesus was a major cultic center in the ancient world. For some rituals, drunkenness would have been part of religious worship at the pagan altar. It’s likely that many of the hearers of Paul’s writing would have been familiar with this from before their conversion experience.
   5. What is clear is that we are to “put off” that way of living, renew our minds, and “put on” our new life in Christ. We “displace” so we can “replace”.
   6. This process, sanctification, is a life-long process that starts at our conversion.
   7. To borrow our D-Day analogy, while the turning point in this battle has been decided, and the outcome is sure, there are still skirmishes and “mopping up operations”.
   8. So Paul follows his warning by a positive affirmation: *“but be filled with the Spirit,” [Ephesians 5:18]*
   9. This is the only instance in all of Paul’s writings where he uses this particular phraseology. And, truthfully, this usage has caused some debate within Christian circles about what exactly is Paul trying to tell us. I’d like to share a few thoughts.
   10. I believe that Paul is drawing upon a common image that he used earlier in Ephesians and that would have been familiar to the readers of the Old Testament.
   11. In some instances in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is said to “come upon” or “fill” a chosen person by God’s initiative and for the fulfillment of a specific task as a divine instrument – issuing a prophecy or leading the people into battle or even building the temple as a place of worship.
   12. In fact, the Israelites had been told that once the temple was constructed, God himself would fill that temple with His glory. Furthermore, God’s reach would go beyond mere walls as He promised the giving of a “New Spirit” – His Spirit – that would one day transcend all boundaries.
   13. And the promise of the giving of this new spirit – once limited to individual’s commissioned to take on God-ordained tasks – would be corporate in nature. In other words, He was going to raise up a covenant community that would worship him in spirit and in truth. (See Ezekiel 36 or Isaiah 63).
   14. And, we, the church, (Paul would tell us) are that covenant community!
   15. We know that upon confession and repentance from sin and faith placed in the sufficient sacrifice of Jesus, we are instantly adopted by God into His family; this new community. And, we know that He places His Spirit within us individually as a deposit or a seal on that adoption. If you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord, the Holy Spirit now indwells you.
   16. And, collectively, as followers of Christ, we make up that living temple where God’s Spirit dwells.
   17. And, what God now desires is for that Christian community, and for individual believers that make up that community of faith, to manifest or show the Spirit’s presence in ever-increasing fullness.
   18. Listen to how the Apostle Paul described it to the Christians in Galatia:
       1. *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*
       2. *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*
       3. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires* [Galatians 5:16-24]
   19. In today’s passage, “drunkenness” is linked to “foolishness”; Likewise, “Being-filled-with-the-Spirit” is linked to “wisdom” – it is a function of increasing Christian maturity.
   20. The Church is to be God’s new temple, his “new creation”. The Church is to be the new people of God who do not grieve the Holy Spirit – whom God has placed in our midst.
   21. The Body of Christ is to be a place where our efforts should be directed towards manifesting the presence of the Spirit in ever-increasing measure – as individuals but also together as we strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
   22. Now I’m going to get a little “grammatical” on you. But bear with me… I think that this will bear fruit.
   23. Remember how I told you that this usage of “Be filled with the Spirit” was a unique usage by Paul?
   24. Well, the verb that Paul uses has three aspect that, if we consider them briefly, will help us to grab hold of his intent.
       1. First, this verb “Be filled” is in the imperative mood. It is a command which we are to obey.
       2. Second, this verb “Be filled” is in the present tense. It is an ongoing or continuous reality, not just a once-for-all event. It might be helpful to think of it as “Keep on being filled”.
       3. Third, this verb “Be filled” is in the passive voice. That means that we do not fill ourselves, rather we receive the Spirit’s fullness, we are filled by Him - for we, the church, are His temple and He desires to manifest His glory in the midst of His people.
   25. This is kind of a strange combination of ideas – a command that involves us being passive. But Paul is trying to help us see two things: First, we are to be active in the experience of filling; we are not just robots or automatons. But this activity us being receptive to what He is accomplishing.
   26. The way in which we obey this command to be filled with the Spirit is by responding to the Word of Christ:
       1. We actively make room for the influence of the Word.
       2. We actively give our minds to truth of the Word.
       3. We actively surrender our hearts to the teaching of the Word
       4. We actively commit our wills to the obedience of what the Word instructs
       5. And as we do this, when we actively choose to expose ourselves to what God has revealed about Himself and His ways, we wisely place ourselves under the Lordship of Jesus and empowerment by the filling of the Holy Spirit.- all to the glory of the Father.
2. It is here that Paul then describes for us several important means by which “Being filled with the Spirit” will be accomplished. These means are all ways in which the living temple of God – individuals who collectively make up the Church– can actually be filled with His glory for the nations to see. This list is not exhaustive. It doesn’t capture all of the ways that this is done. But it does capture some really important ones. I’d like to finish this morning to offering a few observations about these examples.
3. First, Paul says that we will be filled with the Spirit as we continually are “*addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,* [Ephesians 5:19a]
   1. “Psalms” is a largely Jewish term that is familiar in the temple.
   2. “Hymns” is a largely Gentile term commonly used in Greek poetry to ascribe praise to various ancient Gods and Goddesses. In fact, in Ephesus, there was a guild of hymn writers specifically writing in honor of the “most holy goddess Artemis”.
   3. “Songs” is a more general term that would have been familiar in both Jewish and Gentile circles.
4. Paul probably used the combination of these three terms to commend a variety of forms and musical styles in his multicultural churches, which were comprised of both Jews and Greeks. The one common denominator that they would share is that they would be “spiritual” – inspired by the Holy Spirit to point towards the risen Christ and what He has accomplished in the lives of His followers.
5. Therefore, Paul says that the regular act of gathering together with other believers to worship God and sing praise to his name is one of the most important means. We recognize that God desires to meet His people and strengthens them by His Spirit as they corporately worship Him and praise His name.
6. This echoes many examples from the Old Testament, such as 2 Chronicles 5:13-14, *“The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: ‘He is good; his love endures forever’. Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.”*
7. Did you catch that? The glory of God was so intense that the priests couldn’t even perform their service!
8. Furthermore, Paul lets us know that while the singing of praise is always directed towards God as the primary audience – the primary recipient – there is also a horizontal effect. For as the people of God hear one another sing praises to God, our hearts are encouraged and strengthened – “to know Him more clearly, to love Him more dearly, and to follow Him more nearly – day-by-day”
9. This is a major reason why we need to resist the temptation to worship God alone at the beach on a Sunday morning. **You cannot corporate worship God alone or by yourself.** By definition, you must do it together. And, you cannot receive and – more importantly – you cannot give encouragement to someone else if you are not here. We need each other. As much as I enjoy Facebook posts of Scripture and text messages of encouragements throughout the week, I personally need each and every one of you in the flesh. So, let’s commit ourselves regular gathering.
10. Second, Paul says that we will be filled with the Spirit as we continually are “*singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,* [Ephesians 5:19b]
11. He essentially repeats what he has already declared but he adds two important emphases.
    1. Our singing of praise must point to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate recipient of our praise.
    2. It is why here at RHC we so often select music that is “Christological” or Christ-centered.
    3. And, our singing of praise must flow as a heartfelt expression. The term for “heart” here is “Kardia” – it is where we get our term “Cardiac” or “Cardiology”. As modern hearers, we here this term heart and immediately equate it with the emotions. But this would be too limiting. For Paul and his hearers, the “heart” is bigger than just our emotions. Rather it is the center of our personhood. It is more equivalent to the idea of our “inner self” and would include our intellect and our ability to reason and choose.
12. Third, Paul says that we will be filled with the Spirit as we continually are “*giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* [Ephesians 5:20]
13. Our singing above should be a response of our total being to who God is and what He has done. And therefore, to recognize what He has accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ should result in a state of constant gratitude. This should be a defining characteristic in the life of all believers. Not just now, but always. Not just here on earth but for eternity.
14. Consider the 24 Elders in heaven spoken of in the Book of Revelation as they sing praises to God, *“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign”* [Revelation 11:17]
15. And this thankfulness should be “for everything” – recognizing all that God has done – great and small – and even if the difficulties of life.
    1. Ex: Walt Pomerleau
16. Finally, Paul says that we will be filled with the Spirit as we continually are “*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”* [Ephesians 5:21]
17. Next week, our Ephesians text is going to move into a lengthy discussion of all kinds of relationships that we can find ourselves in. But for today’s purposes, we should simply acknowledge that a mark of a Christian is an attitude of self-denial and concern for the needs of others. It is essential within the Christian community. And when the basic practice of considering others and rightfully placing their needs above your own is absent, the work of the Spirit of God is hindered.
18. If our attitudes and behaviors with each other are the characteristics of the fool in Proverbs: arrogance, harshness, impatience, and intolerance, then we will not manifest the characteristics of the wise: humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance. [Ephesians 4:2]
19. Our motivation? “The reverence for Christ”…. Just as we were challenged to *“walk in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us”* [Ephesians 5:2]

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS (5 minutes):**

1. Final Exhortation:
   1. Chapter 5 begins with an exhortation to “Be imitators of God”
      1. To love as Jesus loved.
      2. To be children of light in a world that is dark.
      3. To be wise, not foolish.
      4. To be under the control of your Spirit, not anything else.
   2. Walking in wisdom means learning and knowing God’s master plan and, especially, his kingdom purposes in and through Christ. But understanding the will of the Lord also extends to the smaller and more personal matters. As we become more acquainted with God’s wisdom revealed in the Bible and as we grow in our sensitivity to the leading of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will increasingly know God’s will.
   3. God wants His people to be completely under the influence of His Spirit. A significant means towards that end is a commitment to coming together regularly for corporate worship. Our faith should not be a private faith. As believers engage submitting to each other and in worshipping Jesus Christ, we are continuously filled with the Spirit’s presence to the glory of the Father.
   4. So let’s all commit ourselves to “walk in God’s wisdom and by His Spirit as we together glorify Jesus.”
2. Invitation to Respond:
   1. As I invite our “Worship Team” to rejoin me on the platform to lead us in “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”, I point out that we’ll soon be moving towards the celebration of “The Lord’s Supper”.
   2. May I remind each of us that this will be an excellent time to soberly reflect upon our teaching this morning.
   3. Together, as the family of God, let’s allow His Spirit to move freely among us:
      1. To rightfully convict us of our sin and lead to our confession
      2. To sing praises for His salvation as we remember the sacrifice of the cross
      3. To surrender our minds, wills, and emotions to the Lordship of Christ
      4. To give thanks with joyful gratitude – even in the face of difficult circumstance.
      5. To humbly reconcile with one another in denial and submission.
3. Transition – Through the “Closing Prayer”:
   1. Let us Pray:
      1. *Heavenly Father, …*