**Ephesians 4:25-5:2 (Written in 61/2?)**

**Rules for the New Life**

**25**So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. **26**Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27**and do not make room for the devil. **28**Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. **29**Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A25-5%3A2;&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-29285a)] as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. **30**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. **31**Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, **32**and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A25-5%3A2;&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-29288b)] **5 1**Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, **2**and live in love, as Christ loved us[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A25-5%3A2;&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-29290c)] and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

# **John 6:35, 41-51 (written in 65?)**

**35**Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

**41**Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” **42**They were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” **43**Jesus answered them, “Do not complain among yourselves. **44**No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. **45**It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. **46**Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. **47**Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. **48**I am the bread of life. **49**Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. **50**This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. **51**I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

**What its about?**

Looking how to live in faith

**What I hope they take away?**

Contemporary writings, to different people. Spread of Early Church?

Eph; Robust instruction that isn’t distinctively Christian, but nevertheless is hung on the Spirit; Spirit as a being who can be hurt? Personnification of God; not just a power – person of Jesus in community? Need to be taught how to live this new life. Hurt God – shows what the quality of a new life needs to be. So not so much please God as imitate God and show others how to live. Grieve the Spirit from Isa 63:10

John; shortly before this passage, Jesus has miraculously provided the food; now he says he IS the food. Showing how to live and love; the precepts by which discipleship is tapestried together.

**#30 St John’s 8.8.21 Trinity 10**

**Year B Proper 14**

FTLBWY

Let us pray

We will receive the bread of heaven and will call upon the name of the Lord.

We will call upon his name for he is worthy to be praised.

We will drink from the cup of salvation.

And forever be thankful. Amen.

Please sit

We’ve recently embarked on a whole new life. I was Ordained 5 weeks ago today, Kath and I moved house about 9 weeks ago, I left a job I’d been in for 25 years last February. At my time of life - and you’ll know what I mean when you get there - it’s all been a little bit disconcerting.

**The familiar, and the unfamiliar, together.**

I used to drive past St John’s almost every day, travelling between Kidderminster and Stratford on Avon, where I worked. As the Waitrose roundabout can be pretty slow, I got to know a few streets around St John’s too. And to avoid the Redditch Road, I also drove past St Godwald’s rather a lot. So Bromsgrove was partly familiar, whilst remaining unfamiliar.

I wonder what the people in Ephesus thought about Paul’s letter. There was familiarity there too, but there was also something quite new and unfamiliar.

As we heard, they are being told to be law abiding, to share, to be kind to one another, to be concerned with building up the community. But what makes this a Christian message? This sort of community focus is found in other, non-Christian writers of the time. So where was it in this letter that Paul was going out on a limb? What is unfamiliar?

In verse 30, we hear of Paul cautioning against *grieving* the Spirit; the Spirit seems here to show some *human* characteristics; the Spirit can feel grief. The prophet Isaiah, in 63:10, mentions the possibility of a grieved Spirit, but to these Ephesians Pauls seems to suggest that their behaviour is a much more personal affront, because as we heard, they were all marked with the *seal* of the Spirit; this is about family; we are one, *in the Spirit*.

Their being marked with the seal of the Spirit – as Jesus was, in his Baptism, described in Mark 6 – means that *in* that baptism, the Holy Spirit acts to unite the person to Christ. So that should see the end of the sinful self in the resurrection. But it doesn’t. It’s unfamiliar; they are *trying* to please God, but rather they should try to *imitate* God and thereby show others how to live. The community principles are familiar but living a new life of witness *in the Spirit*, *in Christ*, is relatively unfamiliar.

In their defence, this is all really early on – Ephesians was written in perhaps the year 61 or 62, less than 30 years after Jesus died. It’s a lot to take on and to put into practise communally in that short a space of time. It’s a tough brief for these Ephesisans, and a tough brief for Paul – redefining the familiar through the unfamiliar.

He’s sort of saying ‘don’t carry straight on to the Waitrose roundabout, that’s a bit blocked, and we have a new way to go anyway – how about Church Lane, or Willow Road’?

Meanwhile, in another part of the ancient Near East, John’s Gospel was being heard, at a similar sort of time – some think John was written before the year 70, possibly in 65 – another group of people were bearing witness to a familiar but unfamiliar story, within possibly 5 or so years of the conversation in Ephesus that we overheard.

And John’s Jesus is a little TOO familiar - “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” I remember when I was a kid, being told, “I know your dad,” a conversation that didn’t often lead to a good place…

And again, like the Ephesians – who were familiar with the principles of living together but less so with why and how these principles were Spirit given, the community gravitates towards the familiar – ‘But he’s Josephs’s son!’ - and allows that to get in the way of the unfamiliar. The unfamiliar here is Jesus showing his prophetic character, his vision of how things can be different. And, just as the Spirit is personified in Ephesus, Jesus here tells the listeners that he is personified in the Father.

“The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

What a very strange and challenging thing to hear from the local carpenter’s son.

This particularly unfamiliar claim, coming from a person who’s a local, once again sets in opposition the familiar and the unfamiliar. And there’s a fundamental, common-sense clash of ideas here about the basics – just about how the world works, it’s as fundamental as that, all that we know and are familiar about in our lives being turned upside down.

Perhaps they shouldn’t be surprised - shortly before this passage, Jesus has miraculously *provided* the food – fish and barley loaves - for the 5000; now he says he IS the food. He is showing, as Paul is elsewhere advising the Ephesians, the way to live and love; he is showing the new truths by which discipleship is tapestried together.

So, then and now, life is a tapestry of the familiar and the unfamiliar; it’s a challenge that faces us all every day. And that’s where faith comes in; in Ephesus, we are told to act as we do because we do it in the Spirit and in John, we are told to believe in this lifeforce made flesh. Very unfamiliar! No wonder that the Ephesians and the community in John took a little convincing and reminding.

But *we* have their witness to inform ours; we can look on and see their wondering between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Can we embrace both?

May we move easily and generously between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

May we think about their witness and give thanks for their wonderings, their doubts and their community.

May we give thanks for our conversations and for our questions.

May we give thanks to the Spirit and to Jesus of Nazareth who came amongst them and amongst us and changed lives.

May we give thanks for the love and the friendship that we find, both in the familiar and in the unfamiliar.

In the name of Christ.

Amen