

Are you a mirror of someone else, or your own person? Everyone has role models and dreams, and yet each is told to be his or her own person. All have someone or something they want to live up to. Yet, each wants to make his or her own way in life. We are a product of our environment – the key is to make choices about who patterns and guides the choices we make.

Paul's letter to Ephesus seems disturbing in its description of the way some people were living. He was speaking to people in a society that had no moral base. Stealing, lying, slander, bitterness, anger, and greed were all considered acceptable behaviors as each set his own moral code. (But don't we hear and see many of those same traits today?) Paul was, and is, seeking to help explain that following Jesus meant, and means, adopting a brand new lifestyle.

Genesis says God created us to be "in his image" -- to reflect his love, to be copies of his true Light. And yet we know that doesn't always happen. Paul reminds us that even today, we often mirror the world around us rather than the God who made us. Just look at how disagreements get handled in our culture, whether by politicians, nations, or even neighbors. Do they adopt loving tones and servant roles or utilize force, power, and demeaning attacks? Paul encourages disciples of Jesus to choose a better way.

One of the problems with today's copiers is that you sometimes can't tell if you have an original document or a copy. Computer files and photos can be moved from one location to another, and the copy is exactly like the original. In the same way, each of us have become copies of someone. Our parents, our role models, our moods or environment. What do others see when they see us? What does God see? Do we want to try to mirror God's love or simply be another example of a broken world? How we live is a reflection of our intent. What do we want our lives to reflect or taste or smell like to others? How CAN we become what God has called us to be?

Elijah went into the desert, physically moving away from what was distracting and harmful to his faith. And an angel brought food and drink for his 40 day stay in the wilderness. In the same way, when we withdraw from what is routine and expected, and instead are fed through scripture, Holy Communion, and prayer, we are given new

sustenance for returning into what surrounds us each day. And we are reminded of what sets us apart from the world, even as we live in the world.

Paul reminds that left alone, we would have only the world as our example to copy and would be no different from those who allow the brokenness of sin to lead and guide ever thought, word, and action. God's love is so great He came in a shape and form we could recognize and said, "Copy Me!" Become the new creation that God has made you to be. Let his love be the sweet scent of your living!

This is true discipleship, to become a copy of the original. Christ was sinless and yet accepted our punishment – who on this planet would willingly suffer and die in that way for someone else's crime? Christ removed himself from the glory and perfection of heaven to live without any of the privilege or power that came from his throne. Which of us would surrender glory, wealth, power and health, to live as the least of the street people in this world? We are as different from God as night is from Day!

Where God is positive we are negative, where He is infinite we are finite, where he is complete we are broken. Yet the good news is that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are like a sweet fragrance that get our attention and draw us to a new kind of living. (And will impact those around us as well.) He lowered himself to cover stench of sin, even though such grace wasn't deserved. We now have an opportunity to decide what that means in our lives. What will our living proclaim to others?

How we live doesn't determine whether or not God loves us, but how we live shows whether or not His love has any meaning for each of us. In Elijah's miracle meal from heaven, Jesus' angelic snack in desert, Israel's daily gift of manna, or a taste of heavenly banquet in Communion we are reminded that God acts FIRST. My actions can't motivate God. His love is not from any good works, but if his love means anything at all, to follow means to allow his example of servant love to become the reflection that others might begin to see in me.

That will happen as we quit becoming so engrossed with the world around us, and begin each day by focusing on the love of Jesus. Then we are ready to face "the world." Each life adopts patterns, routines, and rituals. Will they be shaped by a broken

world that cannot heal itself, or the broken and healed body of Christ?

This is what Paul meant as he said, "become a fragrant offering; a loving sacrifice!" In tradition of God's "I AM WHO I AM" we are called to become what God has made us to be!" With God's help we can begin to learn! And through faithful efforts, we can learn to copy that same servant love. (What a contrast to the world that seeks and deflects its brokenness through power, anger, distraction, and attack.)

Everyone has expectations of us – but only God's is the one our response should consider. Will we play out the role the world expects or surprise even ourselves with the sweet fragrance of trying to imitate CHRIST?" And even when we fail, God is there to pick us up and give us strength and guidance to try again. And again.

*Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 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. [Eph 4:31- 5:2]*

THIS is true discipleship! THIS is who you are created to be. Go in peace. Serve the Lord. Not as cheap imitations but as the fragrant offerings of love that you have been created to be. AMEN