

No Excuses!

1 Kings 19⁴⁻⁸; Psalm 34¹⁻⁸; Ephesians 4²⁵⁻⁵²; John 6^{35,41-51}

*Therefore, be imitators of God.
[Ephesians 5¹]*

How many 'ordinary' Christians get anxious about what they are able to do for God? If we are led to believe that the bar is set too high – that we have to be able to argue theology; that we have to engage enthusiastically in overt evangelism; that we have to change the world on our own – then we are tempted to give up.

Certainly, the Gospel today has the advanced course – of Jesus who is giving a lesson on Kenotic Christology (3rd year degree stuff – or it was in my day).

Jesus is talking about the **bread of life** and how that proves he is sent from God and that he alone has the power to **raise up on the last day**. Jesus also goes out of his way to offend his audience: he uses the phrase **I am**, which would have been interpreted as blasphemy by the listeners (YHWY, 'I am' is the name God revealed to Moses and the Hebrews).

The reference to having to eat **my flesh** because Jesus is **the bread of life** is anathema.

That level of theology – and rudeness – isn't for everyone!

In the Old Testament and in the Epistle there are things that everyone can do!

- ✘ We have picked up the story of Elijah after he has won the battle with the priests of Baal and is running away from the wicked Queen Jezebel. He is depressed, he **asked that he might die**, and is exhausted. We probably all know people who feel like that. What is the response from God? Angels are sent to the sleeping prophet with food and drink so that he finds the strength for the next little bit.

Simple acts of consideration that anyone can do. Being an **imitator of God** doesn't have to mean you recreate the world in 6 days; it can be as simple as allowing someone to rest and to ensure that they have the basics: that any of us can do.

- ✘ Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, is blunt. Here is a list that everyone can understand and can do:

- **put away falsehood** – a choice;
- **speak truth to our neighbours** – NB, it is 'speak' not 'shout';
- **do not let the sun go down on your anger** – some of the best advice for our own mental health and for good relations;
- **thieves must give up stealing – work honestly with their own hands – and share** – clear enough;
- **let no evil talk come out of your mouth** – it wouldn't slip out if we didn't think it, so perhaps we have more work to do. He goes on to make clear the choice we have to make:
- **put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander and malice,**
- **instead, be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.**
- Here is the decisive blow for those who think they can't do it – **forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.**
- In short – **be imitators of God! Why, because Christ loved us and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

You want to do something for God? Here is where you begin! There are no shortcuts, no sidesteps, no excuses!