Ephesians4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

So let me just spend a few minutes talking about what is found right at the beginning of this Epistle reading. Verses 17-24 say, **“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality, so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”**

Those are not, even for Biblical times, politically correct words. Those words come right out and point blank tell us that the world and those of the world are in deep trouble. If you can honestly look around at our society today and tell me that you don’t think these words especially apply today, then I think you and I see two totally different worlds.

Let’s just take a few of the phrases here and make application to what is going on. **“The futility of their thinking.”** That is the Holy Spirit’s way of saying that the world cannot think correctly. For most of my life I have heard the saying, “The definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.” That’s our world. We have been waging a war on poverty since the days of LBJ and the only thing that has been accomplished is more poverty. People have been hoping for more peace in the world and yet they will get in your face and scream for your head if you don’t agree with them on what they want. We keep coming up with new and inventive ways to teach and our nation keeps itself at the bottom of the world’s education lists. I could go on and on with how the world is basically worthless in its thinking. BUT, understand this. They think they are just fine!

Our text says, **“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”** What that means is that people have become so opposed to God that they will do and believe anything except what is of and from God. This past week I read through a whole lot of posts on creation, Jesus, and spiritual things. People would rather believe in magic, fairies, ghosts, time travel and any other wild idea out there than simply believe and trust in God. And they are adamant about it. Time and time again as you read these posts you find that people are rude, crude, vicious and confrontational. They will call you names, dismiss anything you say just because you are a Christian and they will do anything, say anything to try and make the Bible and what it says to appear stupid and idiotic to believe. In a recent creation debate dialogue one person threw in a long diatribe on how Science with computer models has proven that DNA as it is today is shown to have evolved. The computer says so! I can’t begin to tell you the names that one person was called because they simply asked, “Um, don’t the Scientist program the models and if they believe evolution don’t you think they will program them to prove that?” And should it surprise us that DNA has one common core…God! The world is adamant about not believing in God!

Our text says, **“Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality…”** As a people we keep saying we want to be more sensitive, more understanding and more tolerant but have you noticed that we as a society keep promoting things that are totally destructive to society and the good life. In the name of sensitivity we have given ourselves over to sensuality. This word is not just pointing at sexual sins but rather is stating that the world does everything based on an excessive indulgence of the senses. In other words the world is driven by what feels good, looks good, smells good, tastes great, and on and on. Just tune into any commercial and you will see it. It has even gotten to the point that if we are miserable, we feel it is our duty to go out and make everyone around us miserable too. In our misery lately, the world seems to gyrate to mass shootings and murder as the answer. You know what I am talking about. Every one of you here has heard people engaged in bad behavior declare, “But I feel it is the right thing to do!!”

I know, it is futile to speak of such things when the world doesn’t care to listen, but then, I am not talking to the world. I am talking to God’s children. I am talking to you so that you might hear and heed the words that are written here because what these words say still apply. Because although the first part of this verse is clearly a warning, a dire warning concerning the world and its ways we need to grasp just how we are going to be different and just how we are going to avoid the pitfalls of what this dire warning says. Our theme will be: **BE MADE NEW!!**

Did you hear what the highlighted words of our text said. In direct contrast to what we just discussed we are being told, encouraged, and directed to be different. Listen again to what was said. **“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”**

Here is our goal. We are not to be like the world or to have the world’s darkened way of thinking. We are not to be moved and motivated by senses or emotionalism or to let the corruption that is the world and our sinful nature get the upper hand. We are to work at putting on the new self, that self that is motivated, directed, and helped by the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our goal as God’s children is to, listen clearly, **“be made like God in true righteousness and holiness.”**

I don’t know why we tend to forget this wonderful truth of God. Please note that God is not going to encourage us in something unless it is something that we can be involved in. But you need to understand it in the right way. In this regard, I think having a garden is exactly the way we need to view what our lives as Christians is to be like.

Everyone likes a garden but do recognize that gardens are hard work. The soil is to be tilled and prepared. The crop is to be planned and planted. But do you know what the biggest battle is? It is the weeds. Weeds have to be worked at constantly. They invade, pervade and insist in growing where you do not want them. And here is a simple truth. If you take a few days off of weeding, we know what happens. Weeds seem to multiply and explode in the garden. Now, unless you are working at cultivating weeds then the truth of the matter is that we need to keep working at weeding! Well, weeds are the attitudes and problems of the world. Weeds are the things that will choke our crops and hinder the good fruit from growing. Yet understand this, your enemy the Devil will never tire of planting weeds in your garden! The Lord has given you all the tools, all the information, all the wisdom to keep the weeds at bay, but you must work at doing the weeding!! You cannot let the tools of God lay idle. You cannot decide that this week I will not do anything to cultivate my faith because in so doing I can tell you that the weeds are going to grow and be a problem. And one last thing on this application. I have never, ever in my lifetime seen or experienced a garden that is completely weed free. In this world we will always have the battle of our sinful nature and putting on the new self. Always!!

So there is our job. To work at and against the weeds of the world. To keep our focus on the Godly and good. To measure and weigh our lives in accordance with God’s Word and truth. To stand firmly on the wonder and marvel that is our Lord and Savior rather than to play in the devil’s shop. Be careful! Remember that we have that old self, that old Adam, our sinful nature as a part of us. It is so easy to get fooled. It is so easy to yield to the world’s ways and ideas without realizing the danger to your immortal soul.

Now at this point, I want to back up a moment or two and make sure you grasp WHY we should want to do this or be this in our lives. In our verses, the reason is given to us, that is, it is given to us in our translations but is not really in the Greek text. In our verse you heard the words, **“You were taught”** but understand those words are not in verse 22. Those words are put into our translation that we might understand the continuity of thought that is found in this section. So in order to understand why we want to be engaged in this putting off we need to go back to verses 20 and 21.

**“You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.”** Please, do not overlook these important and vital words to this section. These words are much deeper than you might think and deserve a lot of thought from us.

Notice the verse starts by speaking of “Christ?” The reference here is to all that our faith entails. The Christ, is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The Christ is the promised One, the Anointed One of God who came and gave his life for us on the cross that He might atone for our sins. The Christ is a reference to the Old Testament promises and the fulfillment of those promises concerning our eternal life and salvation. Everything connected to the Christ is the reason, the motivation, and the focus of what we are.

Of course, the most noticeable thing about this sentence is that part that says, **“You did not come to know Christ that way!”** What way? The world’s way. The knowledge of Christ is not about darkness and futility and being separated from God. The knowledge of Christ is not about ignorance because of hardened hearts. The knowledge of Christ does not come with sensuality, indulgence in impurity and lust! So if you find those things in your life, then right now is the time to sit back and ask if your faith is healthy and well or maybe is starting to have lots of trouble. Because Christ is not brought to us in those ways!!

And then notice that if you want to grasp the Christ, to know him and be taught of Him then you need to turn to the truth that is Jesus! In other words, to hear and follow Scripture because that, Dear people, is the only way to know Jesus. He is revealed in God’s Word. He is the power and majesty behind God’s Word. He is the Living Word, the Way, the Truth and the Life. You cannot diss God’s Word and have Jesus. You cannot pick and choose what to hear and believe, or what you determine is good and right and then still claim to know Christ by throwing out Jesus! In other words, this verse makes it entirely clear that the Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world is none other than Jesus!

Our reason for putting off the old self and putting on the new is because of Jesus! To just grasp that He came into this world to live perfect for us and then be our atoning sacrifice for sin is the whole point of Jesus. And then, and only then, once you have grasped who and what He is and what He has done for you, then and only then, do you begin to find that Jesus moves and motivates you to put off the old self and put on the new. Then you will find that you are walking His path and seeking to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

The real kicker is that true righteousness and holiness can only be found in Jesus. It is not found in your life and heart. It is not found in your actions or your desires…righteousness and holiness comes only in and through Jesus. He is the one who provides the forgiveness of sins. He is the one who clothes us in His righteousness and holiness. He is the one who through faith, grants us all of these things. Jesus is always the key. Come to think of it, Jesus is the key, the door, the gate, the path…none of this can be true without Jesus.

So, because of Jesus we work at the weeds of this life. Because of Jesus and His gift of eternal life and salvation we recognize the weeds, we avoid the weeds, we pull the weeds and we realize that the weeds will always be there in this life. Thank you Lord for making us your children, lousy gardeners that we are. Thank you for your motivating salvation for it is our help, our comfort and our strength. Amen.