

# ***Imprints, Images and Imitation***

(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – Matthew 22:15-22 & 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)

A few years ago I brought a new camera. I had just returned from my first trip to Western Australia and was going back again to see the wildflowers, and wanted a camera that was going to enable me to get the best images of them.

Currently I am knitting all the items that the hungry caterpillar eats his way through as a present for Christmas. Let me tell you that trying to create images of these is a more complicated task than I first thought.

Images are all around us. I understand a zoo has just made a robotic image of an animal instead of caging up the real thing. Our computers have changed the way we can create images. No longer do we just have painting, photography.

Our bible readings from today are all about images, imprints and imitating.

We find Jesus in a situation where others are trying to entrap him based on an image. The Jewish people were required to pay taxes to the Romans, to the oppressors and they questioned Jesus about this, hoping I guess to get him to say that they didn't have to pay taxes to the Romans and get him into hot water. Cleverly he turns the tables on them and asks to see a coin which had of course the image of Caesar on it, Caesar considered himself a god. To have them show him a coin with Caesar on it in the midst of the temple was going to get them into religious trouble – blasphemy! He then asks whose image it on it – they reply Caesar and he then simply tells them to give back to Caesar what is his. Argument in shreds. Now, I don't think this story is actually about taxes. It is what Jesus says next that is most important – and give to God what is God's.

So, what is God's? Well everything! Genesis tells us everything is made in God's image and bears the imprint of God. The creation and us!

Paul in what we believe is the first letter written says to those in Thessalonica, that the people of God there, would do well to imitate him and Jesus. The theme of imprints, images and imitations continues.

Now Paul is not wanting to set himself up as one model of faith and Jesus another, rather he is saying that he and those around him should be imitated in as much as they imitate Jesus. Imitate them in as much as they conform to the biblical examples of faithful followers. Let Jesus and the bible be the yardstick by which one's discipleship is measured. In a couple of Sunday's time we will celebrate All Saints day – a day when we think about others gone before us in the faith who are good examples, examples that we should be imitating. It is in the imitating of Jesus and these other faithful disciples that we too will become examples for others to imitate.

Now imitating is not about sameness. It is doing our best to follow in our own unique way.

Discipleship is following Jesus, it is imitation in a positive sense.

So, as we go about imitating Jesus, let us:

- Stay cool, calm and collected (and maybe a little bit clever) when we are questioned by others or feel backed into a corner

- Practice justice, stand up for others, be their voice
- Break down barriers that cause division
- Offer hospitality and welcome to others and receive it when offered by others
- Courageously speak the truth to those in power or those who exploit or use others
- Befriend others, especially those who are looked down on or excluded by others
- Teach others as much by our actions as by our words
- Speak words of comfort and peace to those who are discouraged and disillusioned
- Be compassionate with those who are hurting
- Communicate with others in ways they understand
- Live out our faith in our own way, in our own uniqueness, in our particular context
- Be creative, using all that God has given us to show God's love for all
- Generously share what we have – money, skills, gifts, love
- Enjoy the life we have been given, celebrate the moments of joy God has given us

So, go out this week and think about in whose image and likeness you have been made. You are made in God's image and unlike a perfectly minted coin that is exactly the same, you bring your own uniqueness to all that you do. Give back to God that which is God's – ourselves, our worship, our service. Go out to live into being in the image of God by imitating Jesus. God's image is imprinted in our very lives. Amen.