

THE 20TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST AD 2024
 TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
 KURTZVILLE, ONTARIO
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Genesis 2:18-25

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." [19] So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. [21] So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
 and flesh of my flesh;
 she shall be called Woman,
 because she was taken out of Man."

[24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. [25] And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Hebrews 2:1-13

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. [2] For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, [3] how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, [4] while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

[5] Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. [6] It has been testified somewhere,

"What is man, that you are mindful of him,
 or the son of man, that you care for him?
 [7] You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
 you have crowned him with glory and honor,
 [8] putting everything in subjection under his feet."

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. [9] But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

[10] For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. [11] For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, [12] saying,

"I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."
[13] And again,

"I will put my trust in him."

And again,

"Behold, I and the children God has given me."

Mark 10:2-16

And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" [3] He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" [4] They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." [5] And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. [6] But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' [7] 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, [8] and they shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. [9] What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

[10] And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. [11] And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, [12] and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

[13] And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. [14] But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. [15] Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." [16] And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

In a couple of months a groom will be facing his beautiful bride before this altar. His bride will be looking at him with love in her eyes. Their watching guests will be filled with joy for the young couple. And I will ask him, “Do you take this woman to be your wife.” Somehow I don’t think that he will respond with, “Before I answer that, I can get out of this if this doesn’t work, right?”

“I can get out of this, if this doesn’t work?” is not quite what we’re going for here,” says Jesus. Marriage is for life because marriage is all about love. Not the thing we dress up and call love in our society these days - the love that people fall in and out of, the emotions, feelings and attractions, that can come and go, depending on which way the wind might be blowing. No, marriage is about real love - the love that only comes from one source - from God.

God is love, and like it or not, like Him or not, if you want real love, it’s got to come from Him - just like every other good gift that we have in this world. If you want to know what real love is, you have to look at God’s heart, where you will find, that love doesn’t have an “escape” clause. The very fact that God loves and still gives love to the very ones who deny Him and hate Him is proof of that. As is the fact that He still gives such people their daily bread and every breath that they breathe.

God’s love is at the very heart of human life as He creates us in His own image. As He made us male and female, He created us in love and for love. It was not good for the man to be alone and so He made a helper fit for him. He created Eve from Adam that they might live together in His love. From the beginning they were created to be together. Their love flowed from God’s love - the eternal love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Their love, like God’s love, was to be unending.

Of course then sin came along and messed everything up. Sin shattered the image of God in us and so shattered love. This is what Jesus is getting at when He tells the Pharisees that Moses allowed them to divorce because of the hardness of their hearts. Divorce is not from God. He hates it. It is never good, never righteous, never what God wants, it offends love at the highest level. It happens because of hard hearts, sinful hearts and so is always sinful. God, as Jesus says does not bless it. It’s not from Him.

Now of course this is not the most popular thing to say, especially in a world where apparently 4 out of 10 marriages end in divorce (which frankly surprises me I thought the number would be higher), but it is God’s truth whether we like it or not. And as Jesus said it two thousand years ago, He continues to say it to this day, because Jesus didn’t come to be popular. Jesus didn’t serve the false god of public opinion. He served the Father. Truth for Him wasn’t about what “most” people thought, truth wasn’t even about what He thought, truth was what the Father **said**.

Many people in our day worship at the temple of the false god of public opinion. Truth be told we might be tempted to bend our knee to it, or at least stand in silence before it, now and again as well. The false god of public opinion is the god who says truth is whatever most people think it is. If **most** people think that marriage should have an escape clause than its okay if it does. If **most** people think its okay to live together before marriage we just need to get with the times. If

most people think that marriage can be for two men, or two women, or for three or more people at once then that's okay too. Wherever the herd is going that must be the right way to go, even if it's off of a cliff.

We must be on guard against the false god of public opinion, beloved. It's temples are all around us. It's worshiped in our schools. Its word is proclaimed on our TVs and Radios. It's featured in our papers and it's all over the internet. I cannot tell you enough how you need to be armed with the Word of God in these grey and latter days, beloved, so that you might know God's truth and abide in it. The herd these days is stampeding and it's awfully hard to stand against a stampede.

Sin is not, and never is okay. That's Jesus final word for us today. No matter how many people say its okay, no matter how many people do it. Sin is not, and never is okay, even if I know "good" people who have done it, even if I have done it. It is never righteous, no matter how you dress it up, no matter how many reasons or excuses you might have for it, no matter how many people say its okay, no matter how many people do it. Sin is sin and God hates it in everyone, yes, in me and you too, and that's why in mercy the Father sent His Son into the world, not so that he could help us to live in sin, but to set us free from it.

He used no escape clause when it came to His love for us. He loved us to death, even death on a cross. If anyone would have been justified in divorcing His bride it would have been the Lord, she was as unfaithful as she could have been in every way. He had every excuse, every reason to do it, but in love, in real love, He loved her with His whole life, giving Himself up for her, suffering and dying so that she might have His life, that she might have God's forgiveness. Christ is here to live out that love for each and every one of you this day, beloved, as He comes in His body and blood given and shed for the forgiveness of your sins. He comes that you might now that His love is real and that it is unending.

You have sinned, as all have sinned. You have fallen short, as all have fallen short. You are unrighteous, as all are unrighteous. You don't have a leg to stand on. You are as helpless as a little child. But your God is good. He is merciful. He is gracious. And yes, He is love, real love and He is here to forgive you this day. The Lord Jesus says to each and every one of you, "Look on my wounds as I stand before you in my body and blood. See my hands, my feet and my side. See where the nails wounded me. See where the spear pierced me. See how I have suffered for your sins. See how I have died for them. And know that you need no reasons. You need no excuses. There is nothing left to justify. I have covered it all. It is finished. Let it all go and rest in my forgiveness and peace.

The trouble, beloved, when we won't let sin simply be sin, when we try to excuse it, justify it, explain it and give reasons for it, is that we are not resting in Christ and Christ alone. We are trying to stand on our own. When we try to justify ourselves we don't let Christ be our righteousness. Christ loves us, beloved. He really loves us and so He calls out to us, inviting us to simply surrender it all to Him. He calls us to flee to Him in the face of all our sins so that He might take us up in His arms and bless us, laying His wounded hand upon us that in His forgiveness we might know His love and so be set free to live in it.

And so, beloved, let nothing hinder you this day, the Master is calling, inviting poor sinners like you to receive His kingdom, because in Him, it truly does belong to little children like you, all because, like the groom who will stand before this altar in a couple of months from now, on Calvary He said, "I do." and then spread out His arms and did what He promised by suffering and dying to save you. Amen.