

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5

“25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

“The Mystery of Marriage” #2

As I mentioned on Mother’s Day, I thought some practical advice on marriage would be in order with my bringing messages on both Mother’s Day & Father’s Day this year. These are not “official” church calendar days, but the Bible does have an awful lot to say about mothers & fathers & marriage, so I think it is appropriate! While I told the moms to relax because we would honor them on their day, now it is the men who can relax while I focus on advice wives and future wives!

But first, I want to lay some of the same groundwork I did by reminding us how in our text, the Apostle Paul says marriage is closely related to the relationship between Christ and His Bride the Church:

- What Paul calls a mystery.

A mystery not in the sense of something hidden that cannot be known or a murder mystery where you find out the truth only at the end. The mystery the Apostle has in mind is one of wonder and awe about something we can know more and more about year after year: And never fully exhaust what can be learnt. *[mention Trinity]*

We noted in Proverbs 30, how the King saw marriage as one of the four things too wonderful for him: “18 There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yes, four, which I do not understand: 19 The way of an eagle in the air, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the midst of the sea, And the way of a man with a maiden.”

Now the King was not saying he knew nothing about how a bird flies, a snake slithers, or how sailors can navigate the oceans: He was just amazed by those events and knows there is always more to learn! And the important point here is how he includes among these wonders the marriage relationship between a man and a woman.

This mystery of marriage can be studied from the first marriage of Adam and Eve in the Garden to the great marriage supper of the Lamb where He delights in His Bride the Church.

- Our marriages are much more than just being about us because marriage is central in God’s grand story of salvation!
- AND this is why these messages are also important for young people looking forward to marriage!
- Now that we are in the month of June, it is almost impossible to avoid the attacks on marriage and the promotion of sexual perversions.

I suggested that the proper response from us should be in part to see these evil attacks and perversions as the Bible often presents them: Darkness, deep darkness!

We looked back at how God described a rebellious nation through the Prophet Zephaniah at a time when the nation of Israel was much like modern America:

**“15 That day is a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness.**

Today we should be like those prophets calling out all the darkness around us, helping everyone see how truly dark our culture has become, but I also suggested that we have another obligation...

- **Shining a light into that darkness.**

In thinking about darkness I asked how many have gone into one of the California caves or caverns...

- **The ones where they will turn off the lights and let you truly experience thick darkness?**

They are a great example for these lessons, because what happens when they again turn on the lights!

Yes, the darkness flees! Even a small candle in one of those caves can cast away much of the darkness.

- **Jesus teaches us that while He is the Light of the World, we are to be like candles that share His light!**

So while it is proper to call out all of the darkness around us, we must never neglect the practical ways we can dispel some of the darkness by shining some light in our lives & marriages... To illustrate this, we considered Israel in exile and the Lord’s instructions to a people in the midst of such darkness.

In Jeremiah: 29 God gives instructions to His people to obey while in that exile, and they are very practical instructions indeed when the Lord tells them to: “Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit. 6 Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons & give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished.”

- **Obviously, those instructions from the Lord should be challenging to all of us here in America today!**

So today, with all of that in mind, I want to turn to our Mothers & future mothers!

As I did with our husbands and young men, I want share some simple suggestions for how we can light some candles in the midst of thick darkness...

- **Remember: A small candle can dispel a lot of darkness in one of those caves.**

Again, the Apostle said that marriage is a great mystery because it relates to Christ and the church, which led to his simple conclusion in verse 33: “Nevertheless let each one of you [husbands] in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

- **My focus today is to consider how the wife can better respect her husband!**

Now these may not seem as simple as some that I suggested for the husbands, but we all know that wives are much more complex than are the men, right?

Let me begin with some wisdom from a passage that had a tremendous impact on my life!

I Peter 3: “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.”

When we took our journey through Ephesians some years ago, I stressed how this entire section of commands for husband & wives, children & parents, along with bosses & employees, began with the command “to be ... submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

Today when we speak about a wife obeying her husband or respecting her husband, or heaven forbid being silent as Peter has suggested, it brings to our minds all sorts of negative images and examples.

When this happens we are forgetting the command to submit one to another with a song on our lips, thankfulness in our hearts, remembering who we all belong to!

- **And yes, all of this must always be in the fear of God!**

So just what does the Apostle Peter have in mind when he tells “Wives, to be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.”

- **At bottom it is a reminder that your husband is not perfect... Which is not shocking to most!**
- **More importantly, it addresses how a husband can be improved!**

When we think of helping another person, we should remember the important illustration Jesus used to teach how easy it is for people to wrongly focus on the other person’s problems without seeing our own?

- **Yep, the old splinter & log analogy that is always convicting!**

We all know how painful it is to get something in your eye and if we see such suffering in another person, we want to quickly come to their aid! The point Jesus drives home with an exaggerated example [it would be pretty hard to fit a log in your eye] is there might well be something the Lord wants to work on in your life before you go about helping others!

- **I believe this is the bottom line point that Peter is making for wives!**

You likely know your husband better than anyone and his problems can irritate you the most, be they large or small. He might even need help from Church leaders or the civil magistrate, but what is hard for the woman is to remember that the Lord is in control AND that He may well want to work on something in your life first.

- **My lovely bride learned this lesson back when I was unconverted & causing her a whole lot of grief!**

Obviously, a focus on my eternal state was of utmost importance to her and she did all she could to win me for the Lord. However, it was not until she came under some good instruction in a women’s study that she realized there were things not right in her life.

- **She came to understand that I was God’s problem and her priority was to deal with the areas of her life that the Lord wanted to change.**
- **And do you know what happened?**

I was won without a word because while I could resist her pleadings and challenges, my pride was no match for the Almighty.

This principle continues on when the Apostle Peter then says, “ 3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”

When Jesus spoke about the logs, He did not say we were to never help with those splinters, but rather keep the right priorities. Here it is the same with outward adornment and apparel.

- **They are important, but they should be a reflection of the beauty in the hidden person of the heart, not a show that draws attention to the outward trappings.**

As Jesus said, the Lord adorns the lilies of the field in ways that rival the glory of Solomon, but what is precious in His sight for a wife is her gentle and quiet spirit.”

Back on Mother’s Day I told your husbands that they must then be a men of the Word and regularly worshipping with the Saints! The same applies for wives and those who desire to one day be wives!

The gentle & quiet spirit that Peter is encouraging here will not only help you grow closer to Jesus but you will also naturally lead your husband to also be closer to Him, and as you both draw near to Jesus, what happens?

- **That should be obvious: You draw closer to each other!**

And this leads me into the second passage I want to leave for our wives to meditate on this afternoon: It comes as the Apostle Paul is giving instructions to Titus about ruling well in the Church...

Titus 2: “2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; 3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— 4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

There are two candles shining brightly in that passage that our modern world fears and wants extinguished:

- **The first is older women teaching younger women.**
- **AND second the things which Paul suggests they should teach!**

Now for those candles to burn brightly, we first need older women willing to teach AND younger women willing to be taught. [mention chat groups] The Apostle does not give an age because being older can be more than how many years you have been alive, but rather a woman’s maturity:

A women in her thirties who was raised in a Christian home, is married with children attending a good church would be “older” in maturity than a women recently converted in her fifties.

- **The larger problem today seems to be having a willingness among the young women to be instructed.**

Lord willing there are faithful women in your life to seek out, but even if they are not obvious, we have a wealth of opportunities in our modern world.

- **My lovely bride will tell you that Edith Schaeffer filled that role in a major way in her life when we were younger and in much need of godly teaching and examples for our then growing family.**

And for the second candle to burn brightly, there must be a willingness to be instructed in the areas the Apostle Paul mentions in that short passage...

- **How to love your husband**
- **How to love your children**
- **How to be discreet & chaste**
- **How to be homemakers**
- **How to be good**
- **How to be obedient to your husband**

Now Pastor Liberati or I could give a sermon on each of those points, and more likely an entire series of sermons! What I want to leave our ladies with this afternoon is a challenge to meditate on why the Apostle says such instruction important...

- **He says to learn those things so that the word of God may not be blasphemed.**
- **That should be quite a challenge to any Christian woman of any age!**

It relates back to those instructions that God sent His people when they were exiled in Babylon: “Build houses; plant gardens...Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons & give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished.”

Those instruction topics from Peter and the Commands from God are the opposite of we hear from the world and sadly even from within many churches trying to deal with our ever more secular times:

“This is not a good time to raise children” some will say. Others will say the world is over-populated and no one should have children. And of course the focus is almost always on me and what I need. How can a woman be fulfilled without a career or lots of time for herself! Yes, following God can be hard and it can seem very lonely.

- But we must remember that Jesus said to seek first the Kingdom of God and He will provide what we need, both materially & spiritually.

God wants your marriage to be a light shining on a hill, and you should join with your husband in the prayers I suggested for them. God would be pleased to see BOTH of you on your knees, asking God for the help you need. Desiring that His Kingdom come only generally on the earth as it is in heaven, but specifically that it come in your marriage and family!

- That is a bold prayer that the Lord delights to answer.

Such prayers will draw both of you closer to God! And of course, just as we see a need for confession when we approach God in worship each week, closeness to God in your marriage will also involve confession and forgiveness, as two forgiven sinners draw closer to Jesus. The Apostle John tells us that IF we confess our sins, Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. IF we believe that amazing truth, we will keep short accounts and avoid all those roots of bitterness and division the enemy wants in our lives and marriages.

As our hymn of response this afternoon we will be the singing Psalms 127 & 128, which speak of all these things and remind us right up front that unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor, to build it labor in vain. What I have given both our wives and husbands are not a list of how-to's that we stive to figure out in our own strength of will power.

- They must all be covered with much prayer and trust in the One Who has saved us.

I will leave you with where the Lord parked me for several years as I learned to walk in the life that Linda had prayed I would have... “6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

Communion Meditation:

We often just sing our hymns or even Psalms without paying attention, so in light of today's message please do not miss verse four of our communion hymn...

Ah, how hungers all my spirit for the love I do not merit.

Oft have I, with sighs fast thronging, thought upon this food with longing.

In the battle well-nigh worsted, for this cup of life have thirsted,
for the Friend who here invites us, and to God Himself unites us.