

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5

“17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 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.”

“Importance of Men & Women”

Last week I laid out two important principles that we would keep in mind today and Lord willing in the coming weeks... First as we move through men & women, marriage & the Church, parents & children as well as slaves & masters we will keep in mind the Apostle’s command that we are to always be “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

We are not looking to establish pecking orders or power structures, but rather to see the glory of these relationships as they relate to Jesus, and yes, that is the only way we can be the light we are called to be in a dark world.

And second we are to remember and understand where all of these relationships originate:

- All made very good in the beginning and all tainted by the curse of sin brought on by our first father Adam.**
- There can be no real discussion of men & women if we do not know, understand and believe what God reveals to us about their origin:**

Consider again those familiar words from Genesis 1: “26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; ... 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

And the further details in chapter 2: Genesis 2:18 “And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

The Lord did this because none of the other animals were made in God’s image and able to have relationship that could reflect the eternal love present in the Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Thus we read at verse 21: “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” [discuss rib v. side and the unique character of the rib]

➤ **So, we have man and woman, male and female!**

BOTH made in the image of God, so we begin to understand the importance of submitting one to another no matter what are various stations or duties might be in life!

In Genesis 3, we know that Adam’s rebellion brought a curse on God’s good creation and this includes the very nature of men & women: This is why we need ALL these instructions in the first place! [In other words, we do not in a perfect world where no Bible would be needed.]

In Genesis 5 we are given an important bit of information...

Genesis 5:1 “This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. 2 He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created. 3 And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.”

All born as ones made in the image of God, able to reflect His glory and in Christ be light to the world.

And also born in the image of Adam!

As an aside, this is why we stress the importance of the virgin birth in the Advent & Christmas season as a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith: Jesus as the New Adam is born as one made only in the image of God and not in the image of his fallen father Joseph, from the line of Adam!

So no matter what today’s experts try to tell us, we are ALL born as male or female...

➤ **All bearing the image of God and ALL in need of God’s saving Grace.**

This is why we stand so strongly against abortion here in our nation: It is not just a blob of tissue being removed, like someone’s appendix, but rather a tiny person who was made in God’s image!

It is why the founders of our nation insisted on saying we were endowed by our Creator with certainly inalienable rights that must be protected by the civil magistrate!

I shared a post by Pastor Bill Smith this past week who had some important things to say about names & wisdom, but he also touched on some thoughts that I had for this message, so let me borrow some of his insights and commend his entire post for your later study: And please keep what we have learned about being light as those who follow Jesus in mind as I share what he wrote...

“Your name defines your mission, your calling in God’s world to bring order to disorder, arranging the world under the lordship of Jesus. From the beginning of your existence, you are given a general name: male or female. These are not interchangeable, superficial tags. They define you through and through, defining for you how you will relate to God, others, and the non-human world around you. You are to submit to this calling—your name—and fulfill the responsibilities God has given you.”

It is those responsibilities that we are now studying here in Ephesians 5&6, as we consider callings as husbands & wives, parents & children along with servants and masters. AND I wanted us to all see how it applies to ALL of us, from the youngest to the oldest among us, from the single to the married from the employed to the employer!

As we consider these various roles it is often too easy to say, that does not apply to me because I am not a parent or married or employer.

Our fallen world complicates this further when we have someone who is divorced or unemployed living with tragic results from our fallen world.

So just as I stressed last week, the Christian life is not just automatic. There is a natural progression of life as we move from infancy to old age and there are always struggles against the world the flesh and the devil.

- To help sort all of this out, we can think of three major divisions or portion of our lives.
- We all begin as baby boys or girls and we are called upon to grow and mature into men & women.

When we are older we are then called to live as good examples of men and woman abiding by the wisdom & commands the Scriptures give us.

And when we grow older we are then tasked with providing wisdom and experience to those other boys & girls, and younger men & women in whatever roles they find themselves.

Pastor Smith put it this way: “As you mature and your glory grows, new names are given to you: husband, father, wife, mother, electrician, plumber, doctor, lawyer [homemaker]. Your mission becomes broader yet more focused. These names define how you are engaging the world around you to fulfill your part of the mission of Christ’s kingdom. Having your name characterized by wisdom [or light as Paul expresses it] doesn’t just happen because you exist. To have a name of wisdom requires focused, diligent effort that learns and walks in the way of wisdom, fearing the Lord & walking in his commandments. As you progress in wisdom, you are building your name. This building begins when you are young. Proverbs 20.11 tells us that “Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right”.

[At Luke 2:52 we learn that] when Jesus was young, he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor—reputation—with God and man. Jesus “built” his name. We begin developing our names when we are children. In our youngest days, parents have a great amount of influence over our reputations. If they refuse to discipline us so that we are terrors to those around us, we gain a bad reputation. As we grow older, more and more the responsibility of our name falls upon us. As adolescents and young adults, we are making names for ourselves that will go with us for the rest of our lives.”

So, thinking about each of us being male or female and the various roles and responsibilities we will have, it brings up two obvious questions:

- What do real men look like?
- What do real women look like?

Each could require an entire series of sermons and there have been thousands of books written to help us answer those important questions. What I want us to remember this morning is how male and female are to be naturally seen in both the creational order and the covenantal order which is also necessary in our fallen world.

- When we think of discipling men we should focus on strength, leadership, protection and being a good & loving provider.
- When we think of discipling women we should focus on beauty, nurturing, mothering and being a maker of loving homes.

These contrasts can be seen in the creational order, and certainly in the covenantal language of the Apostle Paul here in Ephesians, but they must also be understood as marred by the Fall.

- In the coming weeks we will see how they are central to understanding our roles under the covenant headship of Jesus as we grow up into the perfect Bride of Jesus.

None of these qualities are exclusive to males or females: Women can be strong and men can be nurturing.

Often they can be combined as we saw when the hospitable home-maker Jael provided warm milk & a blanket for the tired warrior, but also took out the hammer and tent peg to demonstrate her strength & leadership! And of course as we have stressed each week, our ultimate example is Jesus.

BUT Jesus is a man so how can that help young girls or women, some might ask? Is the Bible truly a misogynistic Book?

- **Misogyny is just a fancy word for hating women and that is a common charge brought against Christians and the Bible.**

And that drives us back to the foundations: Did we learn in Genesis that God created **ONLY** the men in His image? Are women some sort of lesser species?

NO, the Book of Beginnings clearly states, “27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Jesus reminded us that it has been so from the beginning! However, since, and because of, the Fall, women have been oppressed and abused down through man’s history.

It was the coming of Jesus and Christendom which brought real efforts & progress to restore women to their proper place. We need look no further than the glorious statements about the Bride [not the husband] when we get to marriage next week, with Jesus loving the Church so “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.”

- **So the bottom line is that we should not be afraid, especially in our modern age, to let men be men and women be women!**

It is not a crisis if boys want to play with sticks and guns while girls prefer dolls and tea sets.

- **In very simple terms, these actions help boys to grow into men who have strength & leadership, who can provide protection and care for their family & community.**
- **Those other actions help girls to grow up with a focus on beauty, nurturing, mothering and being a maker of homes.**

Going back to Pastor Smith’s theme we can think of this as learning to make a name for themselves...

“A good name [he writes], like the pursuit of wisdom itself, is a life-long project. Building your name will go on until your body rests in the grave. Your name, while it can grow to be quite strong throughout your life, is also fragile in many respects, so it can never be neglected.

One sin, if it is serious enough and well-known, can do damage to your name from which it may take a long time to recover if you are ever able to recover. So, guard your name.”

Or as the Psalmist reminds us, “Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.” That is from Psalm 141, and any of you Jamie Soles fans may have his tune in your minds as I read it!

In closing let me remind us again that this is all done as we are, “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

- **Sadly, far too often we play the role of the very disciples of Jesus, who when they approached Jerusalem for Jesus to finish His work, thought only about themselves and what roles they wanted to play.**

Mark 10: “32 Then Jesus took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: 33 “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles;

34 and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.” [that was pretty clear, but listen to what was on their minds...]

35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” 36 And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” 37 They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.” 38 But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” 39 They said to Him, “We are able.”

So Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; 40 but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.” 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. 42 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

So in whatever role God has chosen us to play in His Grand story, may we also be those do NOT look to be served, thinking only of ourselves and how important our role should be...

- **But to be those who desire to serve and give our lives as living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service!**

Communion Meditation: Romans 12

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”