

“Respect”

Ephesians 5:21-33

October 10, 2010
Pastor John Bronson

Order of Worship for October 10, 2010
Pre-service Song
Welcome and Announcements

Ministry Moment:

Call to Worship: Proverbs 3:1-12 and Prayer

Songs of Worship:

“All Heaven Declares”

Overhead

“Blessed Be Your Name”

Overhead

“You Are My Hiding Place”

Song # 700

“More Precious than Silver”

Song # 88

“Children of the Heavenly Father”

Song # 719

Offering and Offertory

Special Music

Message: “Respect”, (Ephesians 5:21-33)
By Pastor Bronson

Closing Song

“I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord”

Song # 405

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evening: Issues in Faith and Life
“Silencing the Christians”
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm in the Music Building

“The Prayer Closet”

October 10, 2010

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **National and District EFCA:** that the financial downturn will not result in ministry difficulties for home and foreign missions; that Christ centered harmony will prevail amongst all staff and departments; that love for Christ and for the lost will prevail over all other considerations; that truth will not be compromised
2. **President Obama and his family:** that the Spirit will bring them to love the truth; that they will understand the dignity of being made in the image of God; that they will be protected from all evil
3. **Men’s and Women’s ministries:** that the Women’s Ministry Retreat at Mt. Hope will bring a true revival of faith and joy to the women; that many more women will be drawn into the ministry; that the Men’s Ministry will effectively unite fathers and sons in making the Lord their first priority
4. **Military Personnel of the Week:** Pvt. Casey Brubaker (son of John, grandson of Larry and Wanda Brubaker):
5. **College Student of the Week:** Paul Boettcher at the University of Oregon (son of Bob and Karen Boettcher):

Today’s study is on the same passage we have been on for a long time. It is on Ephesians 5:21-33. There will be a shift in focus. I am going to be concentrating on just a few of the verses. These are the verses: 21-24 and 31-33. I am going to read those verses right now. This is the introductory verse that covers the entire passage. It is good to always go back and remind ourselves that this is the context for everything that he has to say: “...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” That is the context. “...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives should submit in everything to their husbands...’Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

The title for today’s message is taken from that last phrase: “Respect.” Earlier on in one of the messages I said that there is a distinction between how men submit and how women submit. That distinction is laid out for us here by Paul. Men submit to their wives how? By loving them as Jesus loved the church. Women submit to their husbands how? By respecting them; and that is what we are going to examine today, the issue of respect.

In the beginning God created humanity. He created humanity in his own image and likeness, male and female he created them. Some hold that male and female each equally fulfill the image and likeness of God. It is, however, far more likely that male is incomplete as the image of God without female, which is his completion, which is exactly what it says in the Bible. And by necessary implication, may I point out that male is the completion of female; neither is complete without the other. Humanity rightly represents God in the creation as male joined to female. Therein we are capable of procreation, and that is essential. For God is the source of life, and He increases life over the course of time. So humanity was commanded to increase over the passage of time: multiply, fill the earth. Not only that, but it is in that process of multiplication that we are motivated and spurred on to fulfill the cultural mandate, which is to turn the world into a garden, a place that is suitable for mankind to live.

For that very reason, whereas male and female are equal but not the same, they are not interchangeable. Men cannot be women; women cannot be men. They are equal, but they are not the same. That is essential. If we say that we honor life we must honor the distinction between male and female. And if we would have a proper understanding of marriage, we understand it is to be the ongoing source of new life for humanity. That is what God intended in the beginning and it is not right for us to change the intentions, the plans and the purposes of God.

In First Corinthians II:7 Paul wrote, “For a man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.” For some those are fighting words. For many, they are words simply left silent. We leave them silent because we no longer know how to read them. Why is it said that man is the glory of God? Is it not because in man, in humanity both male and female, we have the highest of God’s creation? God demonstrates His greatest love in fashioning a creature capable of knowing and loving and creating and rejoicing in God and as God Himself does. If God is most glorified when man is most satisfied in Him – that wonderful phrase from John Piper – then as well the glory of God is most fully realized and manifested in God’s love for man, the very love which brought God’s Son to the cross to redeem fallen humanity from sin’s necessary curse. Now consider the parallel that Paul has been inspired by the Holy Spirit to consistently draw: When is a man most glorious? When does a man reach the fullness of his capacities? When does he fulfill all that he can be? What is our image of the fully developed, mature and magnificent male? (That is the second of the questions on the Discussion sheet for the message.) Our culture has a whole lot of images that it would lift up that we would race after: let me be like that; let me be like that! I want to be the fulfilled male. Well I will tell you what God’s standard of fulfillment is: a man is most glorified when he most fully and perfectly loves his wife. Why do I say that? Because that is exactly what Scripture says. Man is the glory of God because the glory of God is manifested in His full love for man, and we in like manner following after that same pattern recognize that as Jesus poured out his life for the

church, manifesting thereby the full glory of God, so you and I, men, are most glorious when we most fully pour out our lives for our wives, and thereby fulfill the model.

We are told that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. That is a sacrificial love. The high point of that love was Jesus' voluntary death for our sins on the cross. We draw the necessary conclusion: a husband needs to be ready to die for his wife. But notice that what Paul actually said was not that Jesus died, but that He gave Himself up. He did die, and that is essential. But any reading of the Gospels makes it clear that Jesus did a lot more than just die, and a reading of the rest of the New Testament indicates that Jesus continues to do a lot more than just die. In Ephesians 5:21-33 the emphasis is not on Jesus dying, it is on Jesus sanctifying the church. When we say a husband is to love his wife as Jesus loves the church, the emphasis falls on what he does to perfect his wife, not on whether or not he is prepared to physically die for her. It is said that a coward dies a thousand deaths and a brave man dies but once. No doubt that is true as regards physical daring do, but in our spiritual and in our married lives it is not true. Jesus said, in fact, we are to die daily, which when applied to marriage means that every day husbands are to die in the effort to sanctify their wives and their children: every day.

Understand that the objective here is not martyrdom, the objective is not to have men pondering how they can more magnificently demonstrate how to be miserable for their wives. The objective is the good of the wife. The objective is to focus your heart, your mind and your soul to know this woman and to give to this woman whatever is needful [so] that she would be able to blossom and flourish to the fullness of her capacities: that is the intention. But, a wife plays a most important part in this. I have spent three Sundays talking about men; they are fairly dense and need a lot of talking. But today we are talking about wives.

A good wife helps her husband to love her. A good wife helps her husband to love her and their children. The gifts Jesus gives, the trials He permits, the challenges and calls He issues to the church are all designed to encourage the personal growth and the growth together of the body of Christ. Jesus is Lord; but it is a simple fact that Jesus does not lord it over the church as that word is used in its negative sense, any more than Jesus approves as elders those who would lord it over the church. He is quite specific in 1 Peter 5. But it is not just that Jesus is a gentleman for His bride, treating with the utmost respect; it is also that He provided all that is needed for her to grow into righteousness and truth after the likeness of the Lord who loves her. Obviously the analogy between Jesus and the husband, the church and the wife, begins to break down at this point. Husbands and wives are together part of the body of Christ and Jesus is the one true Lord over both. But under His lordship husbands are called to love their wives as Jesus loves the church, seeking her greatest good, equipping her for maximum growth, and wives are to respect their husbands as their husbands seek to accomplish that goal. So again, a good wife helps her husband to love her; a good wife helps her husband to love her as Jesus loves the church. A wife is her husband's completion. We are told that it is not good for a man to be alone. The reason is because a man needs someone to love. Notice the emphasis does not fall on the fact that a man needs to have someone love him: true enough [he does]. But the weight of the passage is that a man needs someone to love as Jesus loved the church.

The essence of these relationships is given to us in the opening verses of that remarkable description of an excellent wife which you find in Proverbs 31. I am going to focus on verses 10, 11 and 12: *“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.”* What follows from here, going on down through the passage of Proverbs 31, is the description of a woman of impossible productivity. I have often hoped that my wife would step up to the plate and pull this off, but she just falls short all the time! Of course she falls short – this is not a real woman. There is no woman on earth who could possibly do this. Rather what this passage does is to point us to the richness of potential in female creativity and productivity, what a wife could be if given permission and encouraged. The passage says something to us. It says, husband, do not underestimate or arbitrarily limit what your wife could be. And it says the same thing to wives: don't underestimate or arbitrarily limit what you can

become. I would suggest that both husbands and wives might on a fairly regular basis want to go and read Proverbs 31 and say to themselves, “Are we in a situation where there is a continually expanding range of action, productivity and creativity? Is it the case that I see my wife, says the husband, is it the case that I see myself, says the wife, with a widening horizon, a deepening knowledge of my own capacities, a delight in the creativity which can flow out of me, and the ways in which I can enrich my husband’s life and my children’s lives and [even] my own; how I can enrich the body of Christ and my community? Am I a person who is reaching for the full potential of what God has built into me that I might become?”

However, it is wise for us to know that there are limits. I said that it is wrong to place arbitrary limits, but there are limits that must be observed. These are alluded to in Proverbs 31:27-28, *“She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”* She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. There are parallels: as the husband-father is expected to sacrifice himself for the good of his wife and their children, the wife is also to sacrifice herself for the good of her husband and their children. What did we think? If it is wrong for a husband to put his wife and children in second place after career, or after his pleasures, or after his sports and recreations or his hobbies and interests, if after his friends, or most pointedly after his own mother and family (for please notice that we are told that the husband is to leave his family and cling to his wife), so it is wrong for a wife to put husband and children in second place. Each you see is called by God to seek the greatest good for the other, to provide the best they can for their children. Traditionally it has been love for our children that has proved the greatest impetus or motivation for fathers and mothers to pursue the cultural mandate, for working and keeping and extending the garden of God’s righteousness and justice for stable governments and healthy communities. The more deeply I love my wife, the more passionately I desire it be well with our children – Have any of you ever been in my home and seen what happens when one of our children phones? That sudden flush of gladness, that light of delight in her eyes, that sudden increase of energy? Or seen her when for too long they have not called and there is the dimming that joy? O I think she loves me; but I know she loves those kids! And if I will give her gladness, if I will give her joy, if I will cause her to hum with satisfaction, then I will do all that I can to bless her children. Those blessings need to reach beyond providing an adequate source of personal resources from father to son and daughter, because our children go into the world and in the world they meet with evil on every level. I cannot bless my children, nor love my wife, and be indifferent to the evil that threatens to overwhelm them.

The husband submits to his wife by loving her sacrificially as Jesus loves the church. The wife submits to her husband by submitting to him the way the church submits to Christ. Paul calls this “respect.” When we think and speak of the husband’s relationship to his wife, we speak in terms of duties and obligations, of all that he needs to do to manifest a Jesus kind of love. The objective or the goal of that kind of love is that his wife will be spiritually perfected, morally pure and fully developed in her character and capacities as these have been given to her by her Creator and Redeemer. When we speak of the wife’s relationship to her husband, we again speak in terms of duties and obligations, of what she needs to do to manifest respect or to honor her husband. Paul uses at this point the word “*φοβος*”. That word [in the Greek] means reverence or fear in respect to one’s office. How many of us men have good days every day? Everyday. . . .let me ask the question differently: wives, how many of your husbands are sterling examples of excellence and perfection every day? Yes! A lot of you are liars and it is nice to know that you have that much devotion for your husbands. Well, I am probably as perfect as anybody in this congregation, and I know that there is an occasional bad day – one in three hundred, perhaps, or maybe more often – So I’m having a really bad day sometime; I am irritable and crabby and I am unreasonable and I am demanding. At that point what does my wife do with me? She respects me. Why? Because I am her husband. She respects the office that I hold. I bear the responsibility. She will order herself, she will order her emotions; she will control her inner impulses in order to respond to me in [not] like manner, [but] in order to encourage me to remember I am supposed to love her as Jesus loved the church.

Paul had already used the word “φοβος”; he used it in verse 21: believers are to submit to one another out of “φοβος” for Christ. We see, therefore, that Paul is continuing the parallel between Christ and the church on the one hand and the husband and the wife on the other. This is significant. What we need to understand is that from the point of view of God both the church and homes are understood as redemptive. That is, both church and home manifest and are animated by God’s redeeming grace bringing salvation to their members. At the conclusion of the Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:39, Peter makes this comment, “. . .for the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord calls to Himself.” The grace of God acts in the Christian family to call the children to faith. What do you think happens to the children in families that profess to believe but leave their Christian practices in the church? What do we think happens in homes where the Word of God is ignored, prayer is absent, and the qualities of Christ-likeness are rare indeed, though mom and dad and all go to church on Sunday? The grace of God acts in the Christian family to call children to faith: we hear it again in Paul’s affirmation in I Corinthians 7:14, “. . .the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.” Paul in 7:14 does not mean that the unbelieving or the as yet unbelieving children are saved. What he means is that they enjoy a special relationship with the truth and grace of God and participate in fulfilling the purposes of God by means of the covenantal faith of the believing parents. Recognizing that forgiveness of sins and eternal life are what is at balance here, fear is the right response. Fear! So that the woman, the mother, the wife, as she contends in her soul with the unbelieving husband, cries out to her God and says, “My Father in heaven, do not allow the unbelief of my husband to infect my children so that they never come to know the Lord. Don’t let that happen!” Fear pulses through. Why? Because eternal life is the issue. And the husband whose wife does not know the Lord comes to his Father and he says, “O Father, how will my precious children know your love for them if my wife is no channel of grace and brings none of your sweet endearments and does not draw them into the trusting relationship which is the foundation for personal faith in the Living God?” Fear, of course! You see, beloved, this kind of fear is the other face of love.

This is a hard one for us. We don’t like this, emotionally we don’t like it. “Reverence” and “fear” are the opposite of “cool”. “Reverence” and “fear” both say that some things matter a lot. “Cool” says the only thing that really matters is my inner calm; as long as it’s ok with me; it’s ok! Cool as a value reflects the increasing trivializing of all things in our culture. We prefer to laugh things off, to reduce conflicts to harmless jokes. The person who takes matters seriously is made to feel embarrassed by the rest who present themselves as too sophisticated to be bothered by such small things. The only problem is that for the cool person, there are no large things; there is nothing about which to be bothered. This is, perhaps, the unintended but devastating consequence of living in a morally empty culture. If nothing matters much, then there is never any reason to get upset. If we are troubled by nothing, we will have nothing to forgive. If we manage to bend ourselves around so that we agree that because all people are equal before the law, therefore every opinion and preference and practice is equally valid, it is just a matter of taste, then there is and can be no higher standard by and before which anyone is held accountable. This allows a person to move unscathed through life: “O, you’re a drug addict? If it makes you happy, that’s fine. O you’re a practicing homosexual? If it makes you happy, that’s fine. O, I see, you’re on your fourth wife? Well, hope you’re happy; doesn’t bother me, must be ok. I’m not troubled; you shouldn’t be either. Don’t take life so seriously; it is just a matter of being satisfied with yourself. . .” or so it goes. Unscathed perhaps, they also move through life disconnected, disengaged and without convictions regarding what is good, right, just and so on. But let me draw another parallel: as leprosy attacks the nervous system and in the course of time by deadening the nerves leads to countless wounds and the decay of the body, so the death of moral conviction and sensitivity leads to countless wounds in the soul and spiritual decay.

Hopefully a Christian wife can see Christ in her husband. Even if she doesn’t, she needs to see Christ through her husband. This would be the case with the wives that Peter addresses in IPeter 3:1-2. “*Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct*

of their wives—when they see your respectful and pure conduct.” She respects her husband because she has reverence for Christ. What is respected is the Creator’s purpose, the arrangement made by God for the well-being of her children and of herself. She wants her husband to be what God made him to be, for that is the single greatest guarantee that her children will be blessed with healthy minds and spirits, and it is the greatest guarantee that her own life will not be in vain, drained of all joy as she watches her children spin out of control because they have not learned self-control under the guiding hand of their father.

Paul concluded his brief teaching on Christian marriage by citing the foundational truth from Genesis and giving a last exhortation: *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”* A good marriage heals the wounds of childhood and the church is to heal the wounds of the lost, a community of faithful families animated by the love of God for proclaiming the gospel and extending the kingdom of God’s righteousness in the world. Beloved, may we love our wives and our wives respect us.

Let’s pray: Our gracious Father in heaven, the words that You have written are good words. They speak to our hearts and our minds, and they speak to those matters that lie most close and are held most dear. May we have the wisdom given to us in Proverbs to lean not upon our own understanding but in all our ways to trust in You. Let us not refuse Your discipline, but rather willingly come under Your directing hand. So may our homes be sanctuaries of grace and truth, may our lives be a display of Your goodness, and may we be about the business at all times of glorifying the name of the Father, who loves us so much that He gave His Son who died for our sins that we might be forgiven and receive eternal life. It is in His name we pray. Amen.

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. If two things are equal, does that mean they are interchangeable? Can two things be equal but not the same?

2. When is a man most fully and perfectly a man according to our culture? When is this so according to the Bible?

3. How would you explain to a ten year old child what it meant for the Son of God to give himself up for the church?

4. How do martyrdom and sacrificial love differ?

5. When God said it was not good for man to be alone, what was wrong and how does this relate to what husbands are to do for their wives and wives for their husbands?

6. What is Proverbs 31 teaching us regarding wife-mothers?

7. What rightly and necessarily limits what either a husband-father or a wife-mother is to do with their life?

8. For what reason is it right and wise for a wife to fear relative to her husband? What is the origin of such fear?

9. What is the best guarantee for the well-being of children?