

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5

“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 the Body of Christ”

We have been looking at the various instructions that the Apostle Paul has given so we can walk as children of the light, walking in the good works that we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in.

- We have looked at men & women, along with husbands and wives in past weeks and we will move on to children and parents and servants and masters in the weeks to come.**
- We have been looking at them in terms of submitting to one another in the fear of God!**

This week I want to step back and consider marriage itself. We have seen that it has its origin in Genesis where it was not only God’s plan for men & women, but the beginning of a grand story that God is working out in history. While there are many failings in our fallen world, we must see that marriage itself is the ideal that we can all look up to and strive for.

This is why the Apostle Paul simply cannot address the roles of men & women without including the grand example of marriage we have with Christ & His Bride the Church.

I am sure after many weeks of reading this passage you all have noticed that Paul presents far more than a how-to list of commands for husbands & wives.

We spoke last week about the importance of preparing to be husbands and wives, the problems we may see in marriages in our fallen world and a bit about why God provided such severe penalties for violations of the marriage bed.

When considering sexual sins, we cannot simply teach how wrong it is to have sexual activities outside of marriage, but must also stress the glories that are to be enjoyed within marriage and what the marriage relationship represents.

- And sadly, in our world filled with sexual sins and temptations this is often where the Church has seen one of its greatest failures.**

There are many themes that run throughout all of the Scriptures.

I remember as a young Christian hearing a pastor survey the entire Bible in a single sermon using the theme of the Lamb of God, from the first promise of a Savior in the Garden to the final judgment in Revelation.

We could survey the Bible with the theme of blood, from those first animals killed to provide skins for Adam & Eve to the blood of the wicked being shed at the end of Revelation.

Of course, whatever theme we choose, Jesus must be at the center if it is to be a Biblical theme! Thus I think we can rightly see marriage as the grand story of history: As Pastor Wilkins suggested at camp many years ago, we can sum up the entire Bible as the story of boy meets girl!

- **Or as Nate Wilson presents it, the story of the boy winning his bride after killing the dragon.**

So now let me quickly look at our text in this light...

At verse 22 the Apostle says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.”

Now that makes it into all the marriage books, and they will also include the part of verse 23 that speaks of Christ as head of the church” to establish that authority, but Paul also reminds us that Jesus “is the Savior of the body.” So when he says in verse 24, Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything,.” We begin to see there is more to this than just establishing a pecking order.

We are the bride of Christ, so do we gather here for worship with the attitude that we have to be here because Jesus is the boss and He will be upset if we don’t keep in our place?

- **If we see submission in marriage in that way then we are missing what Paul is teaching!**

We see this even more clearly as Paul turns to the husbands telling them in verse 25 to: “ love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,”

Again, we should note, that Paul is not commanding husbands to love their wives because they are in charge and should be kind to them as they rightly submit to your rule.

NO, husbands are to love their 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.”

Now we could see applications there for husbands disciplining their wives and leading them in studies of the Word, but while that is certainly true it misses the major point Paul is making.

There is much more involved here than just one husband and one wife..

- **Rather the Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wants us to see marriage as a picture of Christ & His Bride, the Church.**

Here we are to see marriage as the grand theme of the Bible where the story of history is Jesus receiving His bride which Paul says will be, “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

I often point out in marriage ceremonies I have performed that as the Apostle goes on at verse 28, it becomes almost impossible to separate his thoughts of a particular marriage of one man and one woman, from seeing the Church as the Bride of Christ.

- **That is exactly as it should be:**

“ 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.”

- **The Apostle reaches right back to the origin of marriage in Genesis, which we have stressed is so important, to see both the glories of marriage & the glories of the Church!**

When a man and woman are joined together in marriage they become as one flesh, not just through the sexual union but as a new relationship...

- One that is as close as Christ and His Church!

Does that sounds profound? Well it should, which is why Paul says in verse 32: “This is a great mystery!”

Now let me stop there for a moment to make sure we all agree on what kind of mystery the Apostle speaks of here: In many religions you have mysterious things that either cannot be understood or only explained by folks who have some sort of special knowledge. Or you have important secret truths which are hidden from the common folk...

But that is NOT what the Apostle is doing here. We can rather think of a mystery novel:

If you figure out what is going to happen in the first few paragraphs of the book, it if not a very good mystery novel, is it? On the other hand, if you read a three hundred page book and the mystery was never revealed or solved, that would not be very fulfilling would it?

No, the great mystery novels keep you on the edge of your seat, with rich character development and lots of twists and turns in the plots, but in the end it all comes together with the mystery solved and its resolution helping you to better understand all those details in the earlier pages of the book.

So, when we talk about over-riding Biblical themes, or what our world today likes to speak of as meta-narratives we should think of God telling the grandest story of all.

So, with that in mind listen again to what the Apostle says beginning with verse 32 “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ & the church.”

- So why is marriage important? Because it is to demonstrate to the world the love of Christ for His bride the Church!

And so Paul concludes at verse 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.”

Marriage is established in Genesis between the first man and the first women and marriage is seen in its final climax as the New Jerusalem descends as the Bride of Jesus in Revelation. History moves from a garden to a garden city, from a single couple to an earth filled with righteous people who are the Bride of Jesus presented as,

- A glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, both holy and without blemish.

Something seen by the Prophet Isaiah in chapter 61 at verse 10: “I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

Or as the Lord proclaimed to the Prophet Jeremiah “Thus says Jehovah: ‘Again there shall be heard in this place—in the cities of Judah, in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, 11 the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say:

“Praise Jehovah of hosts, For Jehovah is good, For His mercy endures forever” Jeremiah 33:10-11

With that theme in mind, your homework can be to review those final chapters of Revelation where John sees, “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

- There should also be some discussions about how and where we see marriage in the Scriptures.

- How many times do we see men finding wives by wells? And then Jesus speaks with a woman at a well.

Why does the Bible include a book like the Song of Solomon that is all about romance:

- A book that sadly some Christian parents hesitate to have their children read!
- We should ponder why the first miracle of Jesus was performed at a wedding!

So yes, young people marriage is important and unless God gives you the gift of celibacy it is something you should prepare for and strive for. And as for those already married, I don't think I need to remind us that we can always be more Christ like!

But we also want to remember the importance of being part of the Church, the Bride of Christ and Jesus reminded His people of that reality with one of His most glorious but also most pointed parables found at Matthew 22: "And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:

2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, [there we have that grand theme we have been considering!]

"a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. 4 Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."

- Remember at this Table last week how we considered the call of Lady Wisdom after she prepared her fine wine?

5 But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. 6 And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.:

- Sadly there are far too many examples today of folks who simply ignore God or hate Him, and we do NOT want to be among them!

7 "But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. [AD70] 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' [bringing in the Gentiles] 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good.

- A reminder that we are saved by Grace, not by works or any worth that can be found in us!

"And the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless."

- Again we are saved only by the Grace of God and must stand before God only in the righteousness of Jesus wearing the wedding garment!

The Apostle Paul reminded us that he was thankful for such grace in his life back in chapter three, where he also began to tease us about the climax we now find in our text from chapter five:

Ephesians 3: ” 8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness & access with confidence through faith in Him.”

➤ **That eternal purpose is the grand story our God is telling in history!**

And then the Apostle prays for those Saints as we should pray for each other...

14 “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Communion Meditation: John 20

“Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, ...

13 Then [the angles] said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus sta

nding there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

16 Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”