

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
October 11, 2015
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Ephesians 5:21-31

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (NIV)

I have to be honest. I wasn't all that excited when I saw this was the topic God's Word placed before us today. I knew I was in a time crunch this week to get the sermon done and there is a great challenge to proclaiming the truth when it comes to this topic of marriage. But it's more than that! Our society keeps turning God's institution of marriage into something they want to design instead of what God has made. But it's more than that! Divorce has become more of the norm rather than the exception. But it's more than that! These words here in Ephesians are sometimes considered to be outdated or even a form of discrimination. People misunderstand them and get upset by them. But it's more than that! These words from our God are ones that I would have rather not of had to work with this week because they hurt us. They cut to the heart and expose our sinfulness. These words can leave us carrying a burden of guilt for our failures.

Yet today, despite my initial reservations, I will do my best to do the work the Lord has called me to do. I will preach the Word and reveal to you the whole will of our God, including what God says to husbands and wives about marriage. We will talk about marriage as we look at these words of God - these important words - these eye-opening and actually beautiful words. As we listen and learn once again from our God who gave us marriage, I pray we see that the Lord wishes for us to truly have: **A Marriage Made in Heaven.**

I know one thing to be true here. If everyone listened and obeyed these words of God all of the time do you know what there would not be? There would be no more troubled marriages, no divorce, no abusive husbands or wives for more women's rights. There would be no need for marriage counselors or marriage lawyers or marriage advisors. There would be no more broken homes and families. If all couples listened and obeyed to what God commands here there would be no more of all of this. Instead, we would have marriages made in heaven. So I pray we pay close attention when our God who instituted marriage gives us the best marriage advice I've ever read.

Paul writes, *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."* Paul is about to list a table of duties to fit whatever role we may have in life. Whether you are a husband or a wife or a parent or a child or an employer or an employee, God has some wonderful advice for you. Our

text speaks specifically about the roles God has for husbands and wives. Whatever role God has given to you in life, God says to submit to one another. We are to live in humility and carry out the roles God gives to us. We are to obey God's authority. Why? We do it out of reverence for Christ. We submit to God and whatever God tells us to do because we have a Savior who poured out His lifeblood for us on a cross. We have a Savior Jesus who lived and died and rose again so that we could be His own and live for Him.

It is Christ's love that motivates us to listen to and obey these words. First speaking to wives, God says through Paul: ***"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."*** Wives, do already feel your sinful nature rebelling as these words hit your ears? *"I'm supposed to submit to this guy – in everything!"* In fact, there are times when couples have asked for these words to be taken out of our liturgy for Christian marriage. People think it isn't really right or fair to ask wives to have to submit to their husbands. However, God's Word is clear. Wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. They are to submit to their husband as their head as the church submits to Christ as the head. Wives are to obey their husbands and listen to them just as the church listens to and obeys Jesus, who is also, as Paul adds, the Savior. This doesn't make husbands superior and wives inferior. For the good of the home God has established an order so instead of couples conflicting they work to cooperate with one another.

So wives, what does God want from you when He tells you to submit to your husbands? He wants you to respect them as the head of the house. This means speaking kindly to them and not belittling them. This means giving them honor and love. This means listening to them even when you don't feel like it. This means working with and not over or against them. This means being their loving helper, companion, support, and friend. This means obeying them as if obeying the Lord and looking to them just as the church looks to Christ. If we want marriages made in heaven then wives will submit to their husbands in everything!

Do I see the men sitting up a little taller in their chairs and the women sinking a little in theirs? Husbands, God hasn't forgotten about what He wants from you. In fact, I always notice when I open up my Bible to this section that the paragraph addressed to husbands is quite longer than the one for wives. The Lord begins by saying, ***"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."*** Men, can you feel your sinful nature rejecting this? *"You mean I have to love her all the time – even on those days she is not so lovable!"* Again, God is clear. Husbands, we are to love our wives and not just with any type of love. God tells us to love them with agape love, love that is self-sacrificing, unselfish, committed and unconditional. We are to love our lives in the very same way Christ loved the church. Paul adds: ***"In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."*** Using a practical example, husbands are to take care of their wives as they would take care of their own bodies. After all, as we are reminded in marriage two become one. By taking care of his wife the husband is really looking after himself for the two are now united as one. They are in every sense a true team.

So what does this mean for us husbands? It means putting our wives first. It means caring for them and their needs. It means listening to them (even when we don't want to or Sportscenter is on). It means sacrificing for them. It means loving them in everything we say

and do. It means that as the head we lead in a way that always has our wives best interests in mind. This means loving our wife with same selfless, unconditional, committed, unfading, and unending love Jesus has for His church. If we want marriages made in heaven then husbands will love their wives just as Christ loved the church!

So how many marriages made in heaven do we have here? How many of us grew up in homes where this was always the case? At this point we all should be sitting a little lower in our seats. Sin has really thrown a wrench into this great institution called marriage, hasn't it? I find it interesting that whenever couples come to me with marriage issues that when we get down to it there are really two major problems. The husband is really complaining how his wife doesn't respect him. The wife is complaining her husband doesn't love her the way he should. Ahhh...sounds like God knows what He is talking about after all!!

So what do we do now? What do we do with all our failures when it comes to marriage and the sixth commandment in general? What do we do when we have made a mockery of this wonderful thing God gave to us called marriage? What do we do when our sin has troubled or even ruined our marriage? What do we do with all the sin and guilt and hurt these words of God from Ephesians chapter 5 bring us? I pray we recognize that everyone of us, whether we are married or unmarried, already has a marriage made in heaven! You are the bride of Christ. Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you – on a cross. Jesus has made you holy. Jesus has cleansed you by washing you with water and His Word in baptism. Now Jesus presents you to God as **“radiant”** - no wrinkles - no blemishes - no stains! On the Day of Judgment we will stand before our Maker holy and blameless. Do you see how you look now in Jesus' eyes? He sees you as His beautiful bride – perfect and flawless in every way! He loves you and He will always love you. Not even death, not His or yours, will be able to separate the two of you!

What an awesome picture this relationship of Christ and His Church is now for husbands and wives! When a young couple comes for pre-marriage counseling sometimes they still have stars still in their eyes and you can tell they are thinking their love will conquer all. I kind of chuckle to myself and think *“you don't really know what you are in for!”* But one of the great privileges I have is to point them to a love that really does conquer all – the love of Jesus. How blessed is a marriage and a home where Jesus is at the center! I am thankful for these words today and the opportunity I've had to proclaim the truth about what God wants marriage to look like. With our Savior leading the way we too are able to have marriages made in heaven! Amen.