

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.”

"The Mystery of Marriage" *Part one*

Since this year's schedule has it so that I bring the message on both Mother's Day and Father's day, I thought some practical advice on marriage would be in order for both weeks. 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! Now, moms, I want you to relax because we are here to honor you on your day:

- It is the men who might be put on the spot today: Lord willing, your turn will come on Father's Day.

In the familiar passage I read this afternoon, the Apostle Paul points out that marriage is closely related to the relationship between Christ and His Bride the Church: What he 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 yet never exhaust what can be learnt.

Marriage is among the four things the King lists as too wonderful for him in Proverbs 30: "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 is not saying he knows nothing about how a bird flies, a snake slithers, or how sailors can navigate the oceans: He is just amazed by those events and knows there is always more to learn! He then includes among them the marriage relationship between a man and a woman.

This mystery is what we could call the big picture & 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.

- And yes, this is how we all should see our marriages!

As pastor Wilkins rightly points out marriage is not primarily for us, but our marriages are for the world!

Now in our world today, marriage and any sexual purity is under heavy attack and I want to respond to those attacks with these two messages, here and on Father's Day: My response might surprise some, but not if we think of these evil attacks in the way the Bible often presents them:

➤ **Darkness, deep darkness!**

I am thinking of something like how God described the state of Israel through the Prophet Zephaniah: "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.

Many of us today sound like prophets calling out all the darkness around us, helping everyone see how truly dark our culture has become, but I am suggesting an alternative... Lets think a bit about darkness:

➤ **Anyone here scared of the dark?**

How many have gone into one of the California caves or caverns where they will turn off the lights and let you truly experience thick darkness? And what do we do about darkness?

➤ **Yes, we turn on the lights!**

If we were God, we could do things like speak light into existence and place the sun, the moon and the stars in the sky. We are not God, but we do have a role to play when it comes to light.

Jesus teaches us that while He is the Light of the World, we are to be like candles that share His light! So rather than curse the darkness around us, I want us to consider some practical ways we dispel the darkness by turning on some light: By having the kind of marriage that lights up the world!

God has always used means to accomplish His purposes: He sent His people into exile as a judgment, but He needed them restored so the Messiah could come through them as He planned. His people had brought great darkness into the Promised Land and now they have been sent into exile in Babylon for some 70 years. Amazingly, God sent them into a land of even greater darkness: Those Jews would likely have desired to rage against the Babylonian Empire and all of the deep darkness found there!

But we need to step back and consider the Lord's instructions to a people in the midst of such great darkness. Jeremiah: "5 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 and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. 7 And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace."

Now those instructions from the Lord should be challenging to all of us here in America today, and with them in mind, I want to turn to our fathers and share some simple suggestions for how we can light some candles in the midst of thick darkness. As we do this our marriages will burn brighter and be a better witness to a watching world.

➤ **Some may chuckle at the simplicity of some of these, but Jesus did not tell us to burn like the sun, but to light a candle.**

➤ **And a single candle can dispel a lot of darkness in one of those caves.**

The Apostle Paul said that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. I want us to think about what that means in our everyday lives.

I could begin with a pretty simple question: When was the last time you told your lovely bride that you love her?

➤ **Do you ever tire of Jesus telling you how much He loves you?**

And you better know how much Jesus loves you, or you will never be able to properly express love to your wife.

- **This is a very critical thing for young men to remember & learn as they prepare for marriage... And for young women to look for in a potential husband!**

That expression of love must also show up in a number of very practical ways. We know from places like Proverbs 31 that the wife has a lot of responsibilities around the home:

- **So husbands, are you a help or hinderance when it comes to that work?**

For example, do your children learn the good habit of picking up after themselves by watching a loving Father pick up after himself?

There are some pretty small things that can leave a BIG impression: When your cloths go in the laundry basket are they right side out or inside out? If you do not think that is a big deal, count up just how many socks, shirts, sweaters, jackets and pants your wife has to wash in an average month? IF each family member does their part it is not much to ask, and takes very little time, but is a BIG help for mom.

- **Time saved means mom can take a little extra time with dinner or spend it with you or the children.**

Speaking of that meal time, are you a help or hinderance when it comes to making meal time a priority?

It is virtually impossible for a working man, and we all need to be working men, to be at a family meal three times a day.

However, except in extraordinary circumstances, a meal or two can certainly be arranged each day.

Those plans should be coordinated with your wife, and you should make that attendance a priority.

And while you are at the table, you should give thanks, have good manners and facilitate some edifying discussions. Again, your children will learn from such a good example.

And I cannot leave the simple to-do list without mentioning chivalry.

It comes down to us from the age of Knights who were expected to have virtues like piety, honor, valor, courtesy, chastity, and loyalty.

[mention the list of Knightly values]

While Knighthood is largely a thing of the past there are some things that would be nice to have. The old women and children first would not have been controversial in the past, but today it seems to be everyone for themselves. Husbands can shine some light here by treating their wife and other women well. Giving up that seat on the bus or opening a door, are very simple actions that speak volumes about what it means to be a man in today's world.

- **So there you have some examples of simple but practical things to do!**
- **BUT, there are also some simple and important things NOT to do:**

We are surrounded by a world filled with foul language and nasty habits:

You should be very careful NOT to bring either into your home, and I have pretty strong Biblical support on this from the Apostle Paul...

Ephesians 4: "30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

A construction worker or a man working in an oil field would never think about walking into a carpeted home without checking his shoes: Not doing so could be a costly mistake. However, we should consider that fact that it can often be much easier to clean or even replace a carpet than it is to repair the damage foul language or actions can do to a young child, and yes they also impact your wife.

- And do you know the best way not to “slip up” around the house?

That is right, don't use that language anywhere. It cheapens your speech and makes you a lesser man. We must also remember that if you have little ones in your home, they too are fallen creatures with a propensity to sin: So you must not only avoid being a bad example for them to follow but also be an integral part of their discipleship as they are raised in the fear and admonition of the Lord, as many of you swore to do before this congregation.

- You must NOT ignore bad behavior in your children AND you must not assume their education is the sole responsibility of mom. An entire day of Biblical training can be undone by Dad allowing bad behavior because he is home now and wants to be friends with those children and NOT their parent. And now let me share with you the most important light that you must keep burning in your home. You and your wife must be best friends who are always drawing closer and closer to Jesus!

These two should go hand in hand! Remember that Jesus said to seek first the Kingdom of God and He will provide what we need, both materially and spiritually. God provided your wife as your helpmeet and He expects the two of you to be friends! Your leadership in your home begins on your knees, asking God for the help you need. Desiring that His Kingdom come not only on the earth as it is in heaven, but specifically in your marriage and family! That is a bold prayer that the Lord delights to answer.

You must then be a man of the Word and a worshipping Saint! As you grow closer to Jesus you will naturally lead your wife to also be closer and as you both draw near to Jesus, what happens?

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

As you do this, your marriage will be filled with passion [read the Song of Solomon often]; filled with wisdom [read the Book of Proverbs often]; and a marriage filled with obedient living [read the Gospel and Epistles often]. Your marriage will also involve confession and forgiveness as two new creatures in Christ draw closer to Him. 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.

We started with the mystery of marriage and one can learn about flight or slithering or sailing, so you will know more about the mystery of marriage as learn to do all this with your best friend telling her you love her at least every day! A lot of simple steps that can help make your marriage and family be that shining city on the hill casting out the darkness around it with the Light of the World. And let me close with some advice from the Apostle Paul that will help you to have growth & peace in your marriage.

Philippians 4: “8 Finally, brethren,
whatever things are true,
whatever things are noble,
whatever things are just,
whatever things are pure,
whatever things are lovely,

whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Communion Meditation: Jeremiah 17

**“12 A glorious high throne from the beginning
Is the place of our sanctuary.**

13 O Jehovah, the hope of Israel,

All who forsake You shall be ashamed.

**“Those who depart from Me
Shall be written in the earth,
Because they have forsaken Jehovah,
The fountain of living waters.”**

**14 Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed;
Save me, and I shall be saved,
For You are my praise.”**

Some suggested qualities for any good Knight

Humility: *Never announce that you are a knight, simply behave as one.*

Gratitude: *The only intelligent response to the ongoing gift of life is gratitude. For all that has been, a knight says, “Thank you.” For all that is to come, a knight says, “Yes!”*

Courage: *Anything that gives light must endure burning.*

Generosity: *You were born owning nothing and with nothing you will pass out of this life. Be frugal and you can be generous.*

Discipline: *In the field of battle, as in all things, you will perform as you practice. With practice, you build the road to accomplish your goals. Excellence lives in attention to detail. Give your all, all the time. Don't save anything for the walk home. The better a knight prepares, the less willing he will be to surrender.*

Faith: *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:4*

Justice: *Every knight holds human worth as an unwavering truth. A knight is never present when men or women are being degraded or compromised in any way, because if a knight were present, those committing the hurtful acts or words would be made to stop.*

Love: *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” I Corinthians 13:4-7*

Death: *Life is a long series of farewells; only the circumstances should surprise us. A knight concerns himself with gratitude for the life he has been given. He does not fear death, for the work one knight begins, others may finish.*