

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Pastor Matthew Ude

### The Mystery of Christ Revealed in Marriage

**Ephesians 5:22-33** <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. <sup>30</sup> For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> 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.

In our day this is a hard saying, but it is also a beautiful one if you able to grasp the depth of what Paul is really saying here.

I want to start with verse 32, **"This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."**

We spoke a few weeks ago concerning about how God is sacramental in his approach towards men. What does that mean? It means that God always works through seemingly powerless earthly things. His power is hidden but is still able to accomplish great things. This is the essence of a sacrament. Whoever does not understand the sacraments does not understand Christ!

God takes an ordinary everyday thing, like water, and He hides his power in that water so that when we receive it connected with the Word we receive the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. There are only two true sacraments, baptism and communion, yet here in marriage we see a third albeit lesser or we might say earthly sacrament. The only difference between baptism and marriage is that the blessing God gives in baptism is heavenly where as the blessing of marriage is earthly.

Therefore we have two spiritual sacraments, and one earthly. Two that give the blessings of heaven and one that gives the greatest blessing of this earthly life.

This is what Paul means when he says, **“This is a great mystery,”** namely that when a man and a woman join together according to God’s will in marriage, they become one. That is they are no longer two who simply happen to live together, but rather the hidden power of God is at work not only to bless but to join them and create through them something far greater than simply two people living together.

**This then is our defense of marriage.**

It can be a difficult thing in our day to proclaim and defend a proper view of marriage. I think we are often left with the idea that well God said so and therefore that is the way it is. And that’s ok. I mean when God says do this and don’t do that that should be good enough for us. But here we have a better greater understanding of marriage.

When we understand that marriage is an earthly sacrament, that we also understand that marriage is not simply two people who love each other living together. This is the essence of all Satan’s attacks on marriage. He reduces marriage to simply a matter of love, and then if that is it why shouldn’t people live together as long as they love each other. Why shouldn’t they leave if they are no longer are “in love.” If two men love each other why shouldn’t they get married? If marriage is nothing more than two people who love each other then maybe the world is right.

But Paul shows us clearly that marriage is not simply a matter of love. In fact love is the result of marriage not the cause. Instead Paul shows us that love is an earthly sacrament. What makes a marriage a true marriage?

1. A man leaves his parents
2. Is joined to one woman, that is the two promise to be committed to death
3. God blesses the marriage by making the two one

Consider the gears of a bicycle. Any two gears joined by a chain will produce motion. In fact you don’t even need two gears you could do it with one or even more than two. However the correct two gears working together will produce a far greater effect.

Thus the world thinks, any two people as long as they love each other can make a marriage. Some even thing why not three or four or more people. What they fail to understand is that two people who love each other is not a marriage. Rather instead it is two of the correct type of people joined together by Christ.

Do you see the difference? The world thinks it can substitute any two people, as though you can substitute any two gears in a bicycle. The world also thinks instead of Christ being the thing that holds a marriage together it can substitute love. Thus it puts the wrong gears in the wrong place and it holds the contraption together with a far less durable chain. And most importantly there is no blessing from Christ, the one thing that can take two people and make them into something far greater than simply two people who happen to live together.

What is marriage? It is a man and a woman, that is two people who are similar but also different in a way that makes them compatible. This is what God said in the beginning, “a helper comparable.” Thus men and women were made by God to be compatible, socially, emotionally, mentally and physically. So a man and a woman joined together not by their love which will fail, but by Christ a chain that will hold them together as long as they live.

Thus anything that does not conform to the rule that God gives us in his word, cannot be a marriage because it does not have Christ’s blessing.

### **Christ is revealed**

But that marriage which is in accordance with God’s word and receives God’s blessing, not only is that true marriage something wonderful in and of itself, not only does God provide the greatest earthly blessings (companionship and children) through it, but even more than that Paul shows us that the mystery of Christ and the church is revealed to us in that marriage.

Christ himself continually choose marriage as the ultimate parable to show us what our relationship is like

No other relationship or job or institution is ever likely to teach us to be as Christ-minded as marriage will. In marriage we must learn to daily forgive, as Christ daily forgives us. In marriage we must learn to daily sacrifice as Christ sacrificed himself of us.

We do not sacrifice because we love, we sacrifice and in sacrificing we love.

This is the mystery of Christ, that while we were still enemies he died for us, therefore love one another. Rather than sitting in stony silence waiting to see which spouse can remain angry the longest, race each other to see who can be the first to forgive. Who cares if it is all his/her fault. It is all your fault that Christ had to die for your sin. Yet he forgave you and died for you before you ever apologize. Learn Christ likeness.

Each spouse has a unique role to play in marriage as Paul shows us, the husband is to love and the wife is to honor, But both are to reflect Christ in serving the other. They serve in different ways but they both serve.

Thus we see Christ, not in the petty sin filled marriages that we actually live, but in the perfect ideal marriage we strive for, and towards which we grow only by His grace and power.

In this we see an example of what Christ did for us. That he sacrificed everything for us. And in that sacrifice loved us, made us his own, cleansed us and set us apart as things for God.

Amen.