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 Sermon  
 January 19th, Epiphany 2

All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.

That inspired and well equipping Word of the LORD which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes to us from Ephesians chapter 5, starting at verses 22:

**Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he himself is the Savior. 24 Moreover, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. 27 He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless. 28 In the same way, husbands have an obligation to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 To be sure, no one has ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 In any case, each one of you also is to love his wife as himself, and each wife is to respect her husband.**

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and from your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

The text that we just read is a familiar one. They are words that you might expect to hear at a wedding. And you could see why that would be the case, they are the God-given commands for husbands and wives. But, these words are more than just marriage advice.

In our text this morning, we are told by God (through the pen of the Apostle Paul) to do certain things. Wives are told to submit to their husbands. Husbands are told to love their wives. These directives seem obvious, but they are easier said than done.

Have you ever asked for something and gotten denied? Perhaps when you pressed for a reason why or why not, have you ever gotten the answer, “Because I said so!”? We really do not like that explanation. It leaves much to be desired. It does not

explain the decision making into why or why not. It simply asserts authority. “I have spoken and my decision is FINAL!”

Sometimes we have such a dialogue with our God. We ask for things all the time from Him, and sometimes we do not get what we want. When this happens, our sinful minds desire something else... an explanation. HOW COME??? But we know that what God ordains is ALWAYS good. Sometimes something we plainly desire makes all the sense in the world (to us) that we should obtain it. But the reality is that God knows better than we do. We do not always get an explanation from God. But here, when we are told to do these things from God, we also get an explanation as to why we are to do them. We are to do these

things. The reason that is given as to why we are to do them is a perfect one. It is the example of Jesus Christ, our Savior! And so we pray: O LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!

While these are commands to what a husband and a wife are supposed to treat each other, they are quite impossible demands for sinners.

**Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. | Husbands, love your wives, in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**

Everyone is familiar with these concepts. No matter who you are, you are familiar with submitting. We all are told, by God, to submit. We are to submit to Him, first and foremost. Then, we are to submit to those who God has placed over us. We submit to our parents, our teachers, our bosses, and our elected officials of our government. We all need to submit.

Likewise, we are all familiar with love. Again, just like submission, love begins and ends with God. That is what the first commandment is all about. **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” (Deut 6:5)** Hopefully, love is also something we are familiar with in our relationships as well. We experience the love of our parents and we then are taught to love others as well. Love is something that is commanded of us even. The first table of the Law tells you to love God. The second table tells you to love our neighbor as yourself. Jesus correctly concluded, “Love is the fulfillment of the Law”.

But, even though we are all familiar with the concepts of submission and love, the problem is that we are not very good at doing them. We don’t submit to God like we should. We go against His will and His commands. That is what sinning is. Likewise, when we do this, we are not loving God in the way that we should either. We also don’t submit or love our neighbors like we should. When we are given orders by someone who God has put over us, our first sinful reaction is normally, “No!”. We want to do what we want to do, not what someone else has told us to do!

This happens at every level. Likewise, we don’t show love in the way we are supposed to either. We often neglect to love our neighbor as ourselves. Even though we are so familiar with both of these concepts, we come up very short in both submission and love.

And yet, these are the commands that God gives to the roles of husband and wife. **In any case, each one of you also is to love his wife as himself, and each wife is to respect her husband.**

Well, “How come?” Why? Why does God give two different directives here to the wife and then the husband? The answer is a very simple truth that many people want to dispute today. The simple fact is that men and women are created differently. Both sexes are equal to God, yet they are created differently. Thus, when a man and a woman are united in marriage, they have different roles in that family.

Each man and woman are different, but what each one needs from the other is the same, and Paul hits on that here. The husband is required to love the wife. As Paul puts it here: **husbands have an obligation to love their own wives as their own bodies.** Why is the husband to love his wife? It is vital to the wife to be shown love by her husband. This may seem obvious, but it is important that a husband shows his wife love. This seems like a no-brainer, yet it is important, and it is something that every husband has failed at.

On the other hand, wives are also required to show their husbands a different kind of love, that is submission. **Moreover, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.** It is vital to the husband to be shown respect by his wife. Why does the husband require respect while the wife requires love? Because men and women are created differently!

The neat thing about these commands of husbands and wives is that God gives us the reason as to why we are to respectfully love and submit.

**For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he himself is the Savior. 24 Moreover, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.**

This idea of wives submitting to their husbands is not a popular one today. People want to blur the clearly drawn lines of marriage that God gave us. The world not only wants to blur the lines of who can get married to whom, but they also want to blur the roles of the spouses in the marriage as well.

But the fact of the matter is that God intended the husband to be the head of the marriage and for the wife to support the husband in that marriage. This is not to say that women are less capable than men. In fact, the only thing that this is talking about is the family/marriage relationship. In the workplace or in the government, women can and do lead. But when it comes to the family and the spiritual well-fare of it, the wives are to submit and support.

The husband is the head of the marriage. The wife is the heart of the marriage. They are both vital to the body and to each other. They both have a specific function within that same body. One can not survive without the other, but they each need to function as they were intended to live properly.

In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as if they are their own bodies! **Husbands, love your wives, in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. 27 He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless.**

Husbands are to love their wives. But not only that, they are to love them to the extent that Christ loved the church and gave up His own life for it! The fact of the matter is that every husband and wife have failed to do these roles properly. Sinful wives do not submit to their sinful husbands the same way that the Church submits to Christ. Sinful husbands do not love their sinful wives in the extreme, self-sacrificing way that Jesus loved us. God demands the highest of us, and we constantly fail.

And yet, there is a very important reason why we are to do these things. Namely, this is the only way in

which a marriage can work. If you don't have love and respect in the two roles of husband and wife, that union will not function like it is supposed to. To further illustrate this point, Paul points to the ideal marriage. He points to Christ's relationship to us!

**In the same way, husbands have an obligation to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 To be sure, no one has ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.**

I really like how this translation renders this idea, "**an obligation to love**". That is a contrary idea most of the time. Love is often viewed as something that is a force of nature, that when you are in love you just can't help it. But this idea is merely a dream of men. Some would say that love is a prerequisite to marriage. I would say that usually helps. But whatever the case, once in marriage, love is an OBLIGATION!

What a beautiful picture that is painted out here! The love that Christ has for us is one that husbands are to strive to have. But Paul also describes what His love means for us. It means the same that Adam said when he saw his wife Eve for the first time, who Paul also quotes here: **This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh.**

That is how deeply Christ loved us. He loved us so much that He was willing to die for us. He bought us back from sin and death. We are now part of His family. We are now made members of His body!

This text does have a lot to do with marriage. But it also has to do a lot to do with you, no matter who you are. Really, Ephesians in general covers the role of the Christian who has been saved by grace through faith. At the very beginning of this letter, Paul greets the Ephesians and is talking about how they have been blessed by God. He writes: **He did this when he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. He did this in accordance with the good purpose of his will, 6 and for the praise of his glorious grace,**

**which he has graciously given us in the one he loves.**

Jesus redefines what love is. It is not some magical feeling that the world seeks and has an ever changing definition of. The love that your God has for you is much more concrete, much more certain, and much more powerful.

In our text, our relationship to our God is pictured as a marriage. This is a picture that is found all throughout scripture. Everyone would say that a marriage is founded on love. But think back to the custom of arranged marriage. This is still a practice that takes place in some parts of the world. Imagine that you were arranged to be married to someone that you have never even met. Think about how stressful that prospect would be! You would not even know the person you were to marry, let alone love them. Yet, some would argue that these arranged marriages have a better “success” rate.

Well, I cannot say for certain which practices are better. Yet, when we think of the picture of our marriage to Christ, this arranged marriage is incredibly comforting! We did not know our bridegroom, but He knew us! He loved us before we ever even knew Him. He loved and chose us “from the foundations of the world”! We have not loved Him, and have constantly been unfaithful to Him. Yet He continues to love us anyway! We get to be part of His family! This is what love and grace truly are!

The apostle John writes: **Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love has not known God, because God is love. 9 This is how God’s love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. 10 This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another. (1 John 4:7-11)**

This is the whole point of this text. The love that our God has for us is the motivation for us to love. God is love, and we love Him because He first loved us. This

is how we are to love one another, through the love that God has for you!

Yes, the ideas that Paul brings up in this text are not exactly popular today. That is because what he is talking about real love. Yes, the commands and the directives that Paul brings up in this text we don’t follow on our own. But we can obey them through the love of Christ! Wives can submit to their husbands, through the love of Christ. Husbands can love their wives as if they were themselves, through the love of Christ! We can love one another through the Love that our God has for us!

All you need is love. This is an idea that has been sung about often by different tongues, and it is an idea that is largely accepted. Not a lot of people are going to argue against that point. We would not argue either, but that is because we have seen what REAL LOVE is. It is the love that your LORD has for you! What does the Love of God mean for you? **He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless.**

The Love that God has for you has made you holy. It purifies you. It literally saves you. It means that we have been forgiven. That we have been saved. Submitting to others and loving others as ourselves is not a burden, now it is something that we can do willingly, OUT OF LOVE! We do not deserve the love of God, but dear Christians, that is what makes it grace! God gives us all of this pure and perfect love freely. We do even want an explanation, because it does make sense that God should love us. But He does! HOW COME? Because that is just how great our God is! He loves us worthless sinners, and that love makes us pure and blameless! This love that we have been shown is awesome. It is so incredible. It is how we can do anything good in this life. Literally, all we need is love, the Love of God!!! All praise and thanks be to the LORD who loved us so immensely that He would even die for us! AMEN!!!