

Ephesians 6:1-9
Living in all things, ALL relationships,
as Unto the Lord

As most of you know I run and bike throughout the week. A couple of weeks ago though I begin having a lot of pain through my shoulder, into my neck and up into the base of my skull. I knew my heart was okay because I had a battery of tests a few years ago so I wasn't worried about that.

I tried munching Advil, I used a bunch of liquid pain relief but the pain was persistent, getting worse and even keeping me up at night. As I was visiting with my brother about it, he suggested that I go see a massage therapist he knew that had helped him. I was skeptical and a bit apprehensive but I said okay. I was desperate for relief.

When the therapist heard what I was experiencing she said it was probably a case of having muscles that were all bound up and knotted, putting pressure on my nerves. She said this probably occurred partially from my exercise, partially from sleeping on my side and partially from stress.

I agreed with the first two, exercise and sleeping on my side but didn't think I was experiencing enough stress to have it affect me. But stress is a funny thing isn't it? Most of you experience stress in different ways and it can affect you even in a sub-conscious level.

She suggested that I allow her to work my neck and shoulder muscles out in such a way that they would release their tension and the knotting and become stretched back to where they belong.

I said okay but I had no idea of the pain she would inflict. She took her elbow and I don't know what else and began to work my shoulder and neck muscles and at times, I was near to tears. But the end results were truly amazing.

The pain throughout the back of head and neck almost instantly went away although the muscles themselves were sore from being worked and stretched back into position.

Then she gave me exercises to do that would keep my neck and shoulder muscles from getting all knotted back up.

I say this because I know each of us can become all knotted up in many ways and not just physically. We can become knotted up emotionally, mentally and spiritually and when we are knotted up it is painful, creating anxiety, stress and affecting not only our own lives but those we are in relationship with.

I think the teaching we find here in Ephesians and the passage we will be looking at in Colossians, if we will take it to heart, it will help us to release some tension and protect us from getting all knotted up.

First look with me at a couple of phrases that occur in this teaching in Ephesians 5 & 6 about relationships. Anytime you see a repetition of phrases in the Bible then you know it must be important. Look with me.

Ephesians 5:22, "...as to the Lord."

Ephesians 6:5, "...as to Christ."

Ephesians 6:7, "...as to the Lord."

These phrases are found throughout the teaching on how a woman is to interact with her husband. How a husband is to interact with his wife. How a child is to interact with their parents. How a parent is to interact with their children. How a slave is to interact with their master, and how a master is to interact with their slave.

This teaching is repeated in Colossians in pretty much the same order but in a way that I felt led for us to focus on this morning.

The book of Ephesians is a letter which Paul wrote, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the Christians in Ephesus. The book of Colossians is a letter Paul wrote, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the believers in Colossae.

I guess God felt it was important to share the same message in both places and with us as we sit here this morning.

Read with me the teaching Paul has in Colossians.

Colossians 3:18-24 “¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. ²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

As we have spent time with this teaching in Ephesians, we have come to understand that the relationship between men and women is a lot different in the kingdom of God than it was when this was written.

In the society that existed when this was written and before it was written, and even within the Jewish community, women were barely human, slaves were treated as animals and children were treated much the same.

Jesus comes along and He changes the rules and Paul is writing that the church is to model something that is different, something that is holier and in line with the Kingdom of God.

Look with me a little bit earlier in Paul's letter to the Colossian church. **Colossians 3:11, "...there is not distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all and in all."**

In his letter to the church in Galatians Paul says even more.

Galatians 3:28, "For there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Paul writes this over and over again, the kingdom of God works different. It wreaks havoc on the regular way of doing relationships. Enough of control based upon human categories of bosses and workers, male and female and children and parents. We are in Christ now he says, leave the human way of doing things to the world who does not have Christ. Their relationships are empty and how they interact with each other will only lead to more and more destruction as they are not in Christ.

Boy we can sure see this is in the world around us can't we. Not only has God's kingdom principles been thrown out the window but it seems like all common sense has been too. I better not go there or we will be here all day. But in God's kingdom there is a different way of treating others.

God in Christ has redeemed, elevated relationships. Men and women are created in Christ as equals. Their love relationship for each other is a reflection of Christ's love for the church.

Even the relationships with children have been changed. For years children were seen as lesser beings and were to do what their parents asked no questions asked. While we know we are to bring up our children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord, our passage says that we are not to exasperate them so they will not lose heart.

It is true that for a season, the gift of children we are given, they need rules don't they? Rules they don't always understand. This is for their protection from physical danger. We say things like do not touch, you'll get burned. Look both ways before crossing the street. Children need rules and structure.

But at some point, when they become little adults, children are to be treated with the same respect you would any Christian. No longer can you say because I say so and that is enough. No longer can you say because I am the adult.

At some point they are due the respect you would give any fellow believer in Christ. I think this means for our children that we sit down and talk with them, listen to them, pray with them and even compromise with them.

In all of the relationships mentioned here I think what Paul is saying is

- 1. There is no longer one who is the boss over another but there is a mutual submission, a mutual desire to serve each other. There is actually a relationship that both sides are mindful to the others thoughts and feelings as opposed to one person telling the other what to do.**

Let's take a peak at how Jesus lived this out.

John 13:3, "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was back to God..."

Jesus, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Creator, the One who God gave ownership of all the earth and universe does something that catches His disciples by surprise.

4-5, (Jesus) got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

12-17, “So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord and you are right, for so I am. If then, the Lord and the Teacher washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.’”

The significance of this story is Jesus’ humility and willingness to serve His disciples. Yes He was Lord. Yes, He was Teacher but just because he was those things didn’t mean He was there to Lord it over them.

2. Jesus came to serve the disciples and to give them an example of how they, and we, are to serve others.

For us today, following Christ’s example means we are to always put others first. Whether they are your boss, or you’re the boss. Whether it is your spouse, your child or someone else we are there to find ways that we can serve them.

And Paul tells us how to serve them.

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

What if Jesus came in the flesh and asked you to do something? First of all you would be in awe of His appearing but once you got over the shock I think you would not only want to do the best job possible but you would find ways to do it over and above what needed to be done.

This is how we are to treat and serve others. Just as we were serving Jesus in the flesh.

O church. I cannot share strongly enough with you how important this kingdom principle is. How important it is that we keep this Christian principle in the forefront of our minds.

The society we live would have us look out for number one. It would have us only serve those we deem to worthy of service but that is the world's economy not God's kingdom economy.

Jesus said the following in Luke 6.

Luke 6:31-33, 35, ³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them...then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Jesus puts how we are to treat others, our spouses, our children, our bosses and our employees in perspective doesn't He?

He doesn't say if they treat nice treat them nice. No,

- 3. Jesus teaches us that in God's kingdom economy we are to show love and respect no matter how the other person is treating you.**

This is God's kingdom way of doing things.

I started this sermon talking about the pain I was experiencing in my neck. It was because my muscles were all knotting up, putting great pressure on the nerves in my neck, shoulders and back of my head.

For me, I needed to see a specialist to help me get my muscles all unknotted and back in line where they are supposed to be. And unless I keep doing my stretches, chances are they will end up back into the same old place, knotted up and giving me pain and headaches.

Guess what? When we are not following the kingdom principles we find here in God's word then we and all of our relationships are getting all knotted up, putting pressure on our nervous system and everyone else's as well.

That is not the life Jesus came to give us. Jesus, the specialist came to show us a different way, a kingdom way. A way that keeps the peace in your heart and between you and the people around you. A way that shows the world what love truly looks like. A way that keeps you and the relationships you have with others from getting all knotted up.

Paul said when we live by kingdom principles that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

Jesus said your reward will be great when you treat others with love.

Paul and Jesus are not just talking about what is going to occur once you get to heaven. No, I believe they are talking about the rewards of a life a peace, a life of giving and receiving love.

And that is what we all want for ourselves and for those around us...Amen?

Ponder and pray over these things.