

Sermon scripture: Genesis 2:18-24

Title: In the beginning there were relationships.

1. no degree of kinship

In Korea we usually refer to a married couple as “muchon” meaning the closest degree of kinship. Siblings born to one parent are considered the first degree of kinship. However, a woman and a man born of different bloodlines are called Muchon, and we live as the closest member of a family. If you think about it, marriage means leaving one's biological relationship (parent-child relationship) in order to live with a non-biological outsider. In that respect, it seems that this marriage is rather a risky decision and quite an adventure.

How would you feel if you put your husband and wife's names in the text we read today instead of Adam and Eve? So, if we read verse 23 with my name and my wife's name, it would be like this. At that time, Kyung-Hun Kim said: “You just showed up, you Chun Ji-Eun! The bone is my bone, the flesh is my flesh”. Yes, sounds cheesy, right? Some of the wives might say “Oh stop! Now that's awkward!” and might want to keep her husband from going any further. Did you leave your parents who gave birth to you to live with a man or a woman whom you did not know before? What meanings are you discovering through meeting and living with your spouse? If you're still single, do you think it will be good and meaningful to find your half?

Women and men are clearly different. But the Bible says that a man and a woman, or a woman and a man, become one and become one flesh. As separate beings, how can they become one body, and what does that mean? And what does it mean to take Adam's rib and make Eve? And what does this mean for us living in the present? We would like to examine the meaning of our marriage, family, and church through the relationship between Adam and Eve in Genesis 2.

2. Man made in the image of God

First of all, we must point out that Adam is the archetypal being of mankind. Adam is the archetype that represents and symbolizes man. So Adam's experience can be the existential experience for all of us. That it was not good for Adam to be alone was not in line with God's principle of creation. When God saw what he had made, he was pleased and said it was good. He made man (Adam) at the time of creation and said twice that it was good. But it was not good in God's eyes for Adam to be alone. Since Adam is the archetype representing mankind, our existence is more meaningful when we are together than when we are alone. Actually, our existence is complete when we are connected with others. I spoke about this the first week of September during my inauguration sermon. Our true humanity is completed through our relationships with others.

God made man in his own image. However, Genesis 1:26 uniquely describes the expression God made in His image. “And God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness. And let him have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over every beast of the field that dwells upon the earth, and over every creeping beast that creeps on the earth”. I would like to note the use of the first person plural as the subject in this verse. 'We' is clearly plural. In the expression that God made in His own image, God is expressed in plural. Why is God used in the plural? At the time of the writing of Genesis, there was no such thing as the doctrine of the Trinity, but we can interpret this verse through the Trinity. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus, who was the Word in the

beginning, already existed when God the Father began to create the heavens and the earth. Also, the Spirit of God was operating over chaos and emptiness (verse 2). When we created human beings, Jesus and the Holy Spirit were included in what we asked to make in our image.

The Trinity is indeed a mysterious doctrine. God revealed by Jesus Christ means that three persons share one essence (substance). It is also a doctrine that is difficult to understand. Traditionally, the Greek expression 'Perichoresis' is used to describe the existence of the Triune God. This means that they exist by inter-penetration and inter-dwelling with each other. Simply put, the Trinity is a word that represents a communal way of being. In other words, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit exist for each other. It means that they do not work for themselves, but rather have a sense of community that works for each other. This is the way the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist. The Son works for the Father through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals the Father through the Son. The Father serves the Son through the Holy Spirit. It's hard to understand, but God exists for each other. This is the most characteristic way of being God. However, when creating human beings, the Triune God implanted their way of being in humans as they are. This means that God itself is communal, and that human beings who resemble God's image are also relational and communal. This is a very important part. What is the title of today's sermon? "In the beginning there was a relationship." It means that the good and beautiful aspects of creation are relational. It was a good thing in God's eyes to see humans having a relationship with God and also with each other. That was the original form of creation. Therefore, the image of the kingdom of heaven, that is, the image of the kingdom of God, is a kingdom in which all relationships are peacefully restored.

From the moment humans were created, a communal DNA was planted deep within their being. That is why a person can discover his own meaning when he is in a community. The reason the church should be a community is that true humanity can be achieved through the community. Since God Himself is a communal being, the church, the body of Christ, must also be in a communal way of existence. If the church loses its sense of community, it is no longer a church. The important point is this. Being made in the image of God means that we are relational beings. The life of a married couple is the most fundamental form of this relationship. That is why the first two chapters of Genesis portray the nature of the creation of men and women and their relationship.

3. Eve is created from the halves of Adam.

Genesis chapter 2, which we read today, describes the process by which the woman was created through Adam. We have surgeons in our congregation, and it seems that some kind of surgical procedure was performed on Adam by God. While Adam was asleep, God created a woman from Adam. Bible says while asleep, and it reminds me of anesthesia. I too have the experience of lying on an operating table when I had a major operation. The nurse said, "We are now injecting anesthesia" and I fell to sleep right away. When I woke up to the sound of the nurse calling me, "Mr. Kim Kyung-heon, wake up," six hours had already passed. Adam closed his eyes for a moment, and then opened his eyes to see a woman approaching him. We can only imagine how surprised and excited Adam might have been.

The Hebrew word for rib as used here, chela (צֶלַע), is an anatomical term never used in the Bible. Chela is often used as a word related to the temple. For example, it was used to refer to the handles on both sides of the Ark of the Covenant, and the north and south sides of the temple. This word is used to refer to one side of a symmetrical thing. So He didn't just take one of Adam's ribs but half of Adam's rib. So He took the half of Adam. The ribs have the most symmetrical bone structure in our body. God did not take one of Adam's ribs, but took the half of a rib from Adam and filled the removed part with new flesh.

That is why Adam confesses this when he sees Eve for the first time. "The bones are my bones, and the flesh is my flesh" (New Translation). There is one more word that supports this interpretation, 'neged' (נֶגֶד), which is translated as "helpful matchmaker" in verse 18. This word means the opposite side. 'The other side of the other half' means closer to the original language than the word 'matched'. Literally, a man is made from the half of a woman. It doesn't matter who is better and who has the upper hand. Making a woman out of ribs is not about what material the woman is made of. It emphasizes the symmetrical equality of men and women. Being a man and woman means more than mixing bodies. It really is half and half meeting and becoming one. As a couple, we must discover this mystery. It is about realizing that there is magic in finding one's true self through relationships.

In the world at the time this book of Genesis was written, women were msuperiorerely an accessory to men. But the Bible says that women are equal to men. This is a revolutionary proclamation in ancient times. It is through women that the existence of men has meaning and that they realize the true purpose and meaning of life. A revolution that cannot be found in any other religion is happening right from the very beginning of the Bible.

As creation progresses, more perfect and superior being are created. It is significant that men are made and then women are made. Men may feel offended, but in my view, women are more complete and superior than men, because women were created later. That is why women are much more complex and detailed than men. It is women who have the function of giving birth. That's why it's much harder to raise three girls than it is to raise three boys. In my view, raising girls is much more emotionally exhausting. Whether my wife knew this before her marriage or not, she desperately wanted to have a son, despite my wishes. So, unfortunately, I became a father of three boys. That's why conventional wisdom is saying, listen to your wives. What I also experience existentially is that my wife's opinion is almost always right. In front of my wife, I can't admit that because of my pride, but when I turn around, I say, "Yeah, I think my wife is right. But I don't want to admit it to myself."

4. In the beginning, there was a relationship.

Humans are relational beings. Because it resembles God, who is a relational being. God says that from Genesis chapter 1, he will make men and women and discover the true meaning of life in each other's relationships. And Genesis chapter 2 tells us that their very existence itself is dependent on each other. We are made to love one another. That is why we find the true meaning of life in a relationship of love. We basically learn love and practice love through our relationships with our spouses. That's how you discover the true meaning of life in it.

Relationships are like ribs divided equally on both sides. A perfect relationship cannot be achieved without equal beings starting from equal positions and values. Married couples are equal. No one is more noble and superior than the other. Rather, Jesus goes so far as to say, "Think of others as better than yourselves". All relationships including married couples can develop into healthy relationships from this mutual equivalence.

Look at Jesus Christ. He came wearing a human body equal to ours to reconcile us with God. He had been through all the tribulations that humans go through and experienced the pain himself. A remarkable history of salvation occurred when Jesus gave up equality with God and became humble as an equal to man. This is because the problem of human sin could not be solved without being equal to humans. In Romans 5:10, it is said that we have reconciled with God because of the death of God's son. The original meaning of the word reconciliation here is exchange. Reconciliation is an equal exchange between Jesus' righteousness and our sin and death. And

furthermore, Corinthians 5:19 entrusted us with a position of reconciliation. God did the major surgery on Adam again on the cross. He put Jesus Christ to sleep on the cross and stabbed him in the ribs to pour out water and blood. This was a tremendous love of God. The church, the body of Christ, was born through the water and blood flowing through the hollow ribs of Jesus.

So he sacrificed Jesus, who was half of God, to make peace with the people he loved so much and their world. And God recovered us, the other half of him that had been lost. The relationship with humans that collapsed at the beginning was beautifully restored at the cross.

5. Life that bears fruit in everyday relationships

In the beginning there was a relationship. God's greatest joy is to have fellowship with us, who are in His image. In a way, God shared with us the unique nature of his existence. The fact that we are born in the image of God means that we are just as worthy as God. We must know that the worthiness does not apply only to us but to everyone we meet and hang out with. This attitude of mutual respect and equality is what makes our relationships beautiful.

You're all living in a network. I live in a network of intertwined relationships, such as home, work, school, clubs, neighborhood, etc. This network is called a neighbor. What is the way to achieve God's kingdom and God's will in this relational network? If mutual respect and reconciliation are achieved within all the relationships we have, what can it possibly be other than the kingdom of God? I wish you all the best in your family's relationships. I give you blessings so that you will have a beautiful reconciliation and the fruits of Shalom in your daily network. Loving your neighbors is not far-fetched. When someone within your relationship network feels their self-worth through you, that's neighborly love. I hope and pray that through you, your spouse and your neighbors will blossom and bear fruit.