

The 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
August 22, 2021

“As Christ loved the church...” (Ephesians 5:25)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
Today’s text for this 13th Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading – Ephesians 5:25

**“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,”**

“As Christ also loved the church...”

- I. The glorious design of relationship between Christ and His bride, the church

Throughout the book of Ephesians, Paul has been unveiling Christ’s glorious bride that He loves so much – His church...you and me and all believers. Paul has described how she was chosen, how she was made holy, how she is from many nations and how she humbly submits to her Head, Christ Jesus and serves Him.

You might ask why she would do this? Paul supplies the glorious answer that Christ, the Bridegroom, gave Himself for her **“that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 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.”**

Throughout these first 5 chapters of Ephesians, Paul has been unveiling this glorious bride who has been made holy by the washing of water and the word, baptism, continually renewed and sanctified in this faith.

We heard in the first chapter how even before the foundations of the world, Christ chose His bride and predestined His bride to be holy and without blame before

Him. He could only do that by redeeming her when the fullness of time came and Christ Jesus Himself bore the weight of all her sins, forgiving her on the cross.

Paul revealed in chapter two that this bride, so greatly loved with agape sacrificial love was saved purely by grace without works, lest any man should boast. She was created by His workmanship for good works which He prepared for her to walk in.

And this glorious church we learned again in chapters 2 and 3 did not have the face of just one tribe or race, but included both Jews and Gentiles, built on the foundation of the teaching of the prophets and apostles, with Christ Himself the Chief Cornerstone.

Oh we learned in chapter 4 that this beautifully redeemed bride was multi-talented. For God gave His church different gifts of apostles and pastors and evangelists and teachers for the equipping of His church that, **“speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”**

There is only one head, Christ, and His bride, the church, willingly submits to His loving will. She follows His loving commands to use her God-given gifts to upbuild His church for there is only one body, one flesh. All are connected together in Christ through one Spirit and one baptism...oh, the beauty and mystery of the unity of the church!

And we heard as we began chapter 5 how the bride walks in Christ love. What is that love of Christ like again? Paul says,

**“walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”**

Christ’s bride is continually tempted to return to her former life of sin and walk as she did before in darkness. But the Holy Spirit leads her to walk in the light of Christ forgiving one another, encouraging one another with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The Holy Spirit guides His church, each of us to redeem the time by walking as children of the light, reproofing evil and bringing lost people the Good News of Jesus to also become part of the Christ’s church, His holy bride.

And maybe you remember the final verse of last week's epistle reading, Ephesians 5:20-21 for it sums up the love that the body of Christ shows one another.

**“giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

Submitting to one another...for Christ's bride is one, and has been given His humble attitude of submitting in service and love to one another.

As Mark 10: 45 reminds us, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

There is no distinction in God's church between race or gender. No one is superior or greater than another. But, each has graciously been brought into Christ's church by His sacrificial love.

**“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28)**

And again, Christ's bride is reminded to walk humbly before one another as Paul wrote in Romans 12.

**“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Romans 12:30)**

As Christ has loved His church, so His bride, His church is to love each other, humbly submitting to one another.

II. The glorious design of Holy Matrimony based on the relationship of Christ to His Bride, the church.

Now as we begin our epistle for today at verse 22, we come to another beautiful design within Christ's church...God's holy institution of marriage. All that Paul has described to this point of the glorious relationship between Christ the Head and His body the church serves as the backdrop and model for the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage.

**“For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (Ephesians 5:30-31)**

There is oneness in marriage. Not twoness. Husband and wife are one flesh. That is a mysterious statement. They are not one person. But they are a unit. They must treat each other as a unit. Units do not fight themselves.

God gives specific obligations to husbands and wives to make keep this unity that He has joined together and be blessed by Him.

God set up this relationship to be patterned after Christ and His church. The husband is compared with Christ as the groom and head of the relationship, and the wife is compared with the church as the bride of the relationship.

There are 6 “just as” phrases in our epistle. And the first is addressed to the wives.

**“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”**

As a wife loves her Lord she will also follow her Lord by submitting to her husband’s headship. Of course, husbands and wives submit to one another in service to one another as part of the church. But in the relationship that God has created between husband and wife, there cannot be two heads but only one. So as the church follows Christ’s lead, so a Christian wife will follow her husband’s lead.

Paul gives a second “just as” phrase to the wives. **“Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”**

In unity and love for each other, husbands and wives discuss decisions to be made and the husband strives to follow Christ’s example of sacrificing for his wife and serving her first.

So, God speaks to the husband as the head of the relationship, the 3<sup>rd</sup> “just as” phrase, **“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”**

Of course the husband isn’t the savior of his wife, but he is to show sacrificial agape love to his wife just as Christ did for His church, the fourth “just as” phrase,

**“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,”**

And again, the unity in the marriage relationship is such that the husband would show love to his wife as he would to his own body. So, we hear a 5<sup>th</sup> “just as” phrase in our epistle reading.

**“So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.”**

The husband of course feels emotions of love for his wife, but most importantly, he is to show intentional acts of love of the will towards his wife. He strives to do what is best for the family and not make decisions selfishly.

As the church lives by God’s mercy and forgiveness, so a Christian couple also lives daily under Christ’s mercy and forgiveness. No husband or wife fulfills their duties perfectly and for that reason Christ’s forgiveness is the glue that holds a marriage together. In this, there is much submission and service to one another. The husband and wife strive to build each other up through Psalms, spiritual words, and songs. They pray for each other and bring all cares to their Head, Christ Himself.

This brings us to the 6<sup>th</sup> “just as” phrase in our epistle. **“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.”**

Oh, how the Lord does nourish and cherish His church and every relationship between husband and wife that He has created.

Christ never put Himself first in His mission to save all people with His suffering and death. He gave Himself to His church to make it holy with His blood. And He continues to put His church first as He serves each of us with His love and forgiveness in His word and sacraments. What a beautiful relationship each of us has with our Lord, the Bridegroom, either as married or unmarried. He has served us with His best, that we may do so to each other. Amen.

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**