

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
October 4, 2015  
Genesis 2:18-25  
“The Bride”

The little girl climbed into her grandfather’s lap. She had done this many times before. Often she would trace the lines on his big wrinkly hands. Sometimes she would ask just him to tell her a story. Today however, she had another goal in mind.

Today she wanted him to explain to her why her parents continually argued. She didn’t need to know that they were arguing once more about money, she knew that all too well. What she really wanted to know was why it seemed like they just couldn’t get along at all. What she really wanted to know was why her mom and dad *always* seemed to be yelling at each other. What she really needed to know is why her parents would so often break her little heart. Didn’t they notice the affect their arguing had on her, how she would withdraw a little more each time they fought? Didn’t they care that the dissension in the family was making her uncomfortable? Didn’t they care about her at all?

That’s what she really wanted to know. But she was young. She didn’t know how to ask her grandpa all that. So instead she asked him, “Grandpa, tell me ‘bout the good old days. Tell me what it was like in your family. Tell me what it was like when people didn’t fight so much.”

“Oh little one,” he began, “it wasn’t always easy. Your grandmother and I had our share of disagreements. I remember a long time ago in fact when she was very angry with me. You see I wanted to have our son dedicated to the Lord God, but she refused. She wanted to wait. She continued to drag her feet and delay what I knew needed to happen. So one day while I was walking along I was almost struck by lightning. When I came home with my hair singed and my clothes smelling of smoke I told my wife that the Lord was trying to kill me because I had not done what needed to be done. So she took the child and dedicated him to the Lord. Oh was she ever angry at that. We had a long argument over that one. She never did let me forget that I made her do what she did not want to be done.”

“You see,” my dear, “in this world things are not as they were supposed to be. Husbands don’t love their wives as they love themselves. Wives often don’t respect their husbands the way they should. So there is discord and disharmony in families today. Husbands and wives resist becoming one flesh because they prefer to be selfish. Relationships are broken.”

“But grandpa, has it always been that way? I mean, can’t a husband and wife really love each other and their children the way they should? Couldn’t mom and dad just try harder and then everything will be the way it should be?”

“Oh sweetheart, I wish it were that easy. I really do, but just trying harder won’t fix the broken relationships and broken hearts of this world. You see there is a real problem with people. We are selfish by nature. We look out for ourselves. We think about our desires, our needs, more

than we think about others' desires and needs. There is a problem deep down in each one of us that we just cannot fix."

"But what is it, grandpa? Why did God make us this way?"

"Oh honey, God didn't make us this way. We are this way because Adam and Eve fell away from their original state of righteousness and holiness. They did not follow God's commandments and so people started to view others as products to be used for their own benefit and pleasure. But in the beginning God had created Adam and then He said, "It's not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper that corresponds to him" (Genesis 2:18). "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept God took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He built into a woman and brought her to Adam" (Genesis 2:21-22). It was at this time that Adam said of this gift from the hand of God, "This one is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one will be named 'woman' for out of man this one has been taken" (Genesis 2:23). You see, God specifically built for Adam his wife, Eve. And in the beginning he received her as a precious gift given specifically to him out of God's abundant grace. But that didn't last very long. Once Eve had taken the forbidden fruit and ate it, she gave some to her husband who also ate, and then God questioned them about what they had done. It was at that time that they turned on each other. When God questioned Adam what had happened He blamed the woman whom God had built for him. From that moment on people have sought to look out for themselves. People became selfish."

The little girl nestled her head under the hairy chin of her grandfather thinking about what she had just learned. It seemed to her that God could do something about this situation.

That scenario of course could be descriptive of anyone of us. It is universal in scope for we all deal with the very same underlying problem. We are all conceived and born in sin. We all have the same sinful nature that affects each one of us. And that sinful nature that dwells so deeply ingrained in our hearts, minds, and flesh affects and breaks all of our relationships.

Husbands habitually refuse to love their wives as Jesus loved the Church. If it were not so the rate of divorces in our country would not be so high and the majority of children would not be growing up in broken homes. And even those of us who have not suffered through the agony of divorce still don't love our wives the way we are supposed to. Our selfish desires and whims get in the way. We are called to spend our very lives in service to our wives. Do we do that? Our relationships are broken. Look around, there is not a perfect husband to be seen in this room. We have all fallen short.

Wives likewise do not love and honor their husbands the way they have been called to. Wives get short with their husbands and often resort to nagging them to do this or that. And when that fails to get the desired results they grow resentful and begin to complain that their husband doesn't love them because if he did then he would surely do what they want him to do. And all of a sudden our relationships are broken. Again look around, there is not a perfect

wife to be seen in this holy place. All have fallen short of the expectations and commands of the Lord.

The relationship between parents and their children are likewise broken because of our sinful natures. Parents often exasperate their children, treating them as commodities, products, or even burdens rather than gifts from the hand of the Lord. Children refuse to honor their parents the way they should because that rubs against their selfish little natures that demand constant attention and new gifts all the time. Our relationships are broken. Look around, there is not a single perfect parent or child in this sanctuary.

And if you have never been married or if you have lost your spouse and if your children are all grown up and moved away you are not free of broken relationships either. To what has the Lord called us as His children? Did He not agree that one part of the summary of the Law is that you should "Love your neighbor as yourself?" And who is your neighbor? Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan to teach us that our neighbor is the one who needs our aide. That is to say that our neighbor is the grumpy lady who no one visits because of her surliness. Our neighbor is the man who stinks because he has not had a shower in two weeks and has been wearing the same clothes for nine days. Our neighbor is the child who continually misbehaves because his parents have never instilled any sense of discipline in his life. Now whoever has kept this law from the heart and has loved everyone equally as he or she loves himself or herself, would you please stand up so that we can acknowledge your sainthood? Nobody? Oh, what a disappointment! All have sinned. All have fallen short.

You see, all of our relationships are broken. And not only our relationships with our fellow man, either. Our relationship with our Creator is likewise broken. Before Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden the Lord, their Creator, walked and talked with them but when they had fallen the Lord had to drive them from the Garden and His gracious presence lest He destroy them in their sin. Every man and woman who has since been born has been born with a sinful nature. We are therefore born apart from our Creator. If He had not taken steps to correct our broken relationship with Him we would forever be separated from Him, which is to say, we would forever be where God is not, Hell.

Yet the Lord *has* taken steps to restore our broken relationships with Him and with other people not because He had to but because He wanted to, because He loves us, His creation.

The little girl sat there with her head tucked under her grandfather's bearded chin and she said, "So Grandpa, why hasn't God done anything to fix the problems we have?"

"Oh, but little one," her Grandpa said, taking her little shoulders in his hands and looking right into her piercing blue eyes, "He has. You see this same God who made Adam and built Eve, also took upon Himself the flesh of man. He was born into a human family with a human mother and a human father through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. This same God who created everything you see and know became an infant in His mother's belly by the work of the Almighty. There He grew until one day, He was born just like me, just like you."

“Oh, you’re talking about Christmas,” the little girl said her eyes twinkling with joy at the thought of that festive time of year.

“Yes, little one, the enfleshed Son of God was born on Christmas. And then He grew up and He learned first how to walk and then how to talk. He learned how to feed Himself and get Himself dressed. He learned how to read and write. He studied the Word of God and then He began to teach it to all sorts of men and women. He loved His enemies. He prayed for those who hated Him. He wept for those who rejected Him. He taught them that the Creator created them to love one another and to love God with all their being, but many rejected Him. Many hated His words. And they nailed Him to a tree.”

“Oh, oh, I know that story, the little girl cried! You’re talking about Jesus on the cross, aren’t you?”

“That’s right, my dear. Some men called Pharisees and Sadducees wanted Jesus to go away because He was not teaching what they taught. So they brought Jesus before Pontius Pilate who was governor of that area. He examined Jesus but found nothing in Him worthy of death. But the Pharisees and Sadducees insisted that Jesus be put to death. So Pilate relented and had Jesus crucified on a cross. He hung there for three hours on Friday.”

“Good Friday.”

“Yes, that’s right. Good Friday. And when Jesus finally died a Roman soldier thrust a spear into His side to make sure He was really dead.”

“But Grandpa, wait. I don’t understand. How does Jesus’ dying on the cross fix our problem?”

“Oh, well that’s the whole point, honey. You see, Jesus didn’t die for Himself. He died to pay the penalty for mankind’s disobedience and brokenness. When He died all of the sins that were ever committed and will ever be committed were attributed to Jesus so that the Almighty God could punish them all in His Son. He did it that way so that we could be forgiven and set free from the punishment which we earned for ourselves. So Jesus’ death on the cross is the payment for all disobedience. But that payment must be applied to each person.”

“Do you remember the story of how the Creator took the rib from Adam’s side and built for the man his wife?”

“Yes.”

“And do you remember that when Jesus died a soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a spear?”

“Yes.”

“Well out of that wound came blood and water. Those two things indicate the means that God appointed for applying Jesus’ death to each person. The Lord decided to use water in Baptism and Jesus’ blood in Holy Communion to wash away sin and give holiness as a gift. And where do we get these gifts given to us?”

“In Church! I’ve seen people being baptized and I’ve watched people eating the bread and drinking from the cup and I’ve heard what the pastor says, “This is the body of Christ, this is the blood of Christ given for the forgiveness of your sins.”

“Well done, my dear. It’s as if God the Father took one of Jesus’ ribs and fashioned it into a bride for Jesus. He even calls the Church, “the Bride of Christ.” It is in the Church where we receive the gift of forgiveness and it is there that we learn to forgive those who hurt us. Can you understand that?”

“Yes, grandpa. I understand. Do you know where mom and dad are? I think they are in the kitchen. Okay, thanks.”

“Where are you going?”

“I am going to tell them that I forgive them because Jesus forgives me all my sin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”