

Pentecost 20
Ephesians 5:22-6:4
October 18, 2009

What a wonderful honor it is to marriage and family that God, in His Word, compares them to the unity and relationships that exists between Jesus Christ and His Church, a beloved and blessed people, a people who love their Lord and Head greatly in return.

Concerning Christ and His Church: Much for Husbands, Wives, Parents, and Children.

Christ loved the Church. The Church certainly needed His love. These are such beautiful, positive words that it is easy to miss how desperately the people who are the Church were in need of our Savior in His love.

The Church, apart from what our Lord has done, would be unholy, unclean, blemished, blameworthy, and definitely not radiant!

You see, the Church, that which we confess faith in in the Apostle's Creed, the communion of saints, the invisible Church, invisible to human eyes, for they cannot see the actual faith in Christ in people's hearts, that Church is made up entirely of sinful people. As believers in our Redeemer, we are among them. In fact, it amazes us that, and it still makes us feel a bit strange when, God names all believers in Jesus the Savior saints, holy ones.

It was Jesus, God the Son, in the flesh, who alone could provide the Church, every one of those who look to Him as Savior, with holiness, blamelessness, purity, flawlessness and radiance. Only Jesus could offer that to everyone. The fact that Jesus did provide all those things to unholy sinners is love.

God defines love. Love is in God. In fact, the Apostle John condenses it down to the sentence, "God is Love." Within God, forever, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit loved one another. As soon as God created everything, He poured out His love on it. In fact, our Lord made it all in love.

The greatness of God's love really shined when Adam and Eve sinned against God, their kind, generous Creator. God's love at once began reaching out to them in order to rescue them from that sin and the resulting guilt and death. God, the merciful, holy, gracious, just, loving, almighty LORD, from start to finish, is the Savior.

Can you even begin to imagine the love that the heavenly Father has for His eternal Son? Yet, the Father gave His Son all the way to death on the cross to accomplish righteousness, forgiveness life, eternal salvation for all sinners.

Clearly, we sinners did not deserve or earn that love of God in Christ Jesus. We deserved the opposite. Our sin has earned death. Death is a violent pulling apart. Eternal death is

a forced separation from God's life and glory forever, and that's what all sinners actually merit, But that's NOT what God our Savior offers, is it?

In love, the Father gave His Son for sinners. In love, the Son, Jesus, gave Himself, His whole self, His entire life in obedience and in death on the cross for forgiveness, life, and salvation to bless the world.

Jesus did that for unworthy people, an often ungrateful and even sometimes quite hateful people, in order that they might be fully, freely forgiven all sin. For all who rely on this Jesus, it means God counts them holy, pure, blameless, radiant, His Church, Christ's Bride.

Because of Jesus, His gift of Baptism is filled with cleansing power by the Holy Spirit, and rebirth from the Father.

Jesus' love continues as He feeds and cares for His Church by His Word, in the Holy Spirit. In this way, our Lord Christ presents the whole Church, all believers in Him, to Himself as a holy, ageless, blameless, shining Bride, one with Him forever.

Thank God for His determination to love that unlovely Church, unlovely to begin with anyway!

And husbands we are to love our wives like that! Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church. Husbands, Jesus has made us head of our wives. So, we are to love them, care for them, give ourselves for them, to them. This is clearly not optional, limited or conditional, unless you think Jesus' love for us sinners is optional, limited, or conditional.

And the Church submits to Christ. Here it is again necessary to know that THE Church is the communion of saints, the united holy ones by faith in the real Jesus. THE Church is not to be confused with the visible churches of the world.

Sadly, much of the visible church is not very submissive to Christ at all these days. Unfaithfulness to God's, Jesus', the Spirit's Word is epidemic and deep. A few unfaithfulnesses have become many. To disobey or not believe the Holy Bible is the essence of sin itself. Much of visible Christianity's definition of love is no longer from the Bible. Even its definition of God's Word is not from the Bible. It's description of Jesus and His work isn't either. This last matter threatens to turn some of the visible church into mere religion, no longer Christianity.

Believers, according to their new God-made nature, by faith in Jesus, submit to Christ. They trust and love His Bible.

Since wives are compared to THE Church, God wants them to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. It's not optional, limited, or conditional either.

The Church is also described as God's family, God's household, God's children. John describes them as born of God by the Good News through The Spirit at work in Word and Sacrament.

God calls Himself our Father; names us His children. Jesus, the Son, calls Himself our Brother; names us heirs with Him.

So, children love and respect, obey your parents, whom your heavenly Father has given you and through whom He has blessed you.

Parents, bring up your children, whom God has given you in the training and instruction of your Lord Jesus. So, you must train and instruct in God's Word, the Bible!

All of this is "as the Lord," ask the Lord, in the Lord and of the Lord. All of this is connected to Jesus. Much here for husbands, wives, parents and children. Amen!