

WELCOME 10th September 2023 – 15th Sunday after Pentecost '23 A

Joshua 24:1-24

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands **Growing Praise** inserts & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link will be on website...Tuesday...Wednesday...

As we move into this week... "Form follows function" – just like measure twice, cut once, we all get the wisdom that the **purpose** of some "thing" (its function) dictates the form the shape or **arrangement** of that "thing." Square **wheels** might look great yet not carry out a wheel's function at all...the form must be round/circular. Form follows function...

The same is true about something as familiar to us as marriage: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord...husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for **her...**" Whatever else marriage is or becomes over a lifetime together as husband & wife, it is first & foremost to **function** as a lived example of Christ's love. God created marriage to resemble his grace-abundant love for us & to be a source of blessing in this & every generation.

But no other relationship on earth has greater power to expose our brokenness & reveal God's grace, fill us w/ joy & frustrate us beyond measure...all at the same time. And there's no other relationship that Satan is more determined to attack & crush, crash & burn than marriage. The truth is no relationship b/t human beings is more powerful & more important than marriage. God created that holy place for man & woman to share life together for life – for children & for the good of the community. As Pope John Paul II noted...**As** goes the home so goes the nation...

So how do we build resilience & persistent joy into our households? How do we build & sustain marriages that last, faith that endures, & love that triumphs over all things? In an era where relationships are too often entered & dissolved because of how they meet **MY** needs, wants, or expectations, how do we live the self-giving self-surrendering love we've received in Christ in the most intimate of relationships?

The answer...generation to generation is **ONLY** life **in Christ** heals hurts, brings hope, provides purpose, & ensures endurance that nothing in the world can destroy. There is joy & promise in God's plan for our Functional Marriages.

Let's pray...and then explore that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father you call us to a life of love & to a holiness that speaks of your life within us. Free us from our worst & release us into your best & most glorious. Pour out again your Spirit among us so that in this hour your word may penetrate deeply into our hearts & be lived every day...especially in those relationships within the walls of our own homes...through Jesus Christ...Amen.

Let's sing & then hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

Someone says to you, "I think most people get married for the wrong reason."

- a. What do you think they mean by that?
- b. How would you respond in a way that points toward Jesus?

15 PENTECOST '23 A – ~~Dys~~FUNCTIONAL: ~~Dys~~FUNCTIONAL MARRIAGES

Over 34 years of being a pastor, I've lost count of the number of weddings I've performed. I'm sure those records exist, I've just never kept a hard count. It must be @ 150 by now. I'm not sure I'd recognize all the couples from when we lived in STx 30+ yrs ago...they'd all be 50s by now. But what I **do know** is not all those "until death do us part" promises I've endorsed over the years have been kept. Some marriages were rocky from the start & some hit the rocks along the way...I know what every one of us knows...whether you're married, not married, previously married... marriage is not **easy**...it takes work & sometimes that work proves not enough.

One author says "marriage forces us to change our natural inclinations, rein in our passions, learn denial of one's own desires, & figure out how to serve others." What makes this hard is that we have two sinful people coming together trying to create a space of stability, love, faith & hope – refuge in an often heartless hard world...add kids to that or \$\$\$ upheaval, health or mental health struggles...Harder still...some in our 21st century world **DON'T WANT** to do that...change their natural inclinations, rein in their passions, deny their own desires, & figure out how to serve others. They're sure the marriage relationship is solely about their needs, their wants, & their expectations.

Fortunately, the Bible speaks right to this...Eph 5 begins like this: *Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled w/ love, following the example of Christ. He loved us & offered himself as a sacrifice for us... Eph 5:1-2 BECAUSE you are God's children model your life on Jesus...all of it in loving service the way Christ offered his life for you... Then... So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do... & as regards the relationships filling your life, the Lord wants this above all else: "...submit to one another out of reverence for Christ..."* Marriage the Bible says, is not about "want" or "get," it's about living & sharing the love of Christ w/in the relationship b/t husband & wife & among those He has given us to love & serve starting w/ those w/in the walls of our own homes. The key is vs 21: "...submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" **SUBMIT** - intentionally stand under someone so their deepest needs are met because what follows that are very specific instructions for wives, husbands, children & fathers...What God initiates in joining man/woman as husband/wife & immerses in his grace through the death/resurrection of his Son is intended to overflow into all the relationships of the household...& of course beyond.

In his great book on Marriage, recently deceased Pastor Tim Keller **wrote**: "Real love, the Bible says, instinctively desires permanence." That is in fact how God designed marriage...for permanence – for life. Marriage is the preparation & practice field for

the love & joy & unity & life & glory of our life w/ Christ for all eternity...Our homes are intended to be like that. Forgiveness, restoration, hope, safety, trust, love & joy ...but John...what about all those promises of "until death" that don't get kept? Excellent question...in fact, it's one Jesus answered.

Mt 19:3-8. Jesus gets gangtackled by some religious bigshots who were always trying to trick him into saying something for which they could have him arrested & **killed**: *Some Pharisees came & tried to trap him w/ this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?" "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male & female.'" He said, "This explains why a man leaves his father & mother & is joined to his wife, & the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together." "Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce & send her away?" they asked. Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God originally intended." The fact that we fall short of an ideal does not diminish the ideal **NOR** does it place us outside the reach of God's grace. But to replace **ANY** ideal w/ a different set of values is a tragic choice for sons & daughters of a heavenly Father who is love & a Messiah/Son who came to redeem & recreate us according to the Father's desire & design...the ideal. God is not looking for an excuse to blast us for our failures but desperately seeking to reclaim us by Christ's love poured out for us...*

1 Peter 1:18-19 - *For you know God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. It was not paid w/ mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. In Jesus God destroys sin & death – crushes hell – so you can be his & his alone. That same self-giving nothing held back passion he has for each of us should exist in our marriages as a foretaste of the marriage celebration to come where Christ receives his bride, his church, to himself for all eternity. And yet...*

In the uncertainties & insecurities of every age...in the wildly blowing winds of society's distresses...in our post-modern world, where all things seem up-for-grabs: How do we live together with a sense of purpose & hope? How do we build resilient & persistent joy into our households? How do we create marriages that last, faith that endures, & love that triumphs over all things? In an era where relationships are too often entered & dissolved because of how they meet **MY** needs, **MY** wants, or **MY** expectations, how do we live the self-giving self-surrendering love we've received in Christ in the most intimate of relationships? Where doing it "right" guarantees 0

1st As husband/wife remind yourselves who you are & what you have been given as God's people...Celebrate & give thanks for the saving grace of God in Jesus & live

faith in Christ as the foundation every day for every decision you make as a family. **Josh 24:15** - "As for me & my family, we will serve the Lord." That's not a sometimes proposition. It either is or is not your family's fundamental truth. Make that the non-negotiable from day one...Be careful about saying "I do" if they won't say "I believe."

2nd As husband/wife remind yourselves that God intends to make his promises for the world real & visible through you. **Ps 145:4** - *Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts; let them proclaim your power.* Faith is not handed on by osmosis or by accident & it is not the job of professionals. No one speaks w/ more authority in your house than you. No one is either more believable or unconvincing than you. After Joshua died, we read one of the saddest of all Scriptures: **Jdg 2:10** - *After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.* We cannot assume past faithfulness will persist or future generations will somehow know the great spiritual treasure that is theirs unless it comes through us by word **AND** worship **AND** lived example. The passing on of our faith must continue to be refreshed in each generation.

3rd As husband/wife remind yourselves that God has planted the light of his life & love in your hearts & home so that other families might experience the grace & provision you have experienced. You know...families today face challenges previous generations never dreamed of. Almost every measure of family health & well-being trends downward. JP11 - *As goes the home so goes the nation...* The story of the nation is the story of the family writ large. So pray for the families on your street ...your children...grandchildren...their friends...people you know by what they "do" for you...hairdresser, Dr, regular faces at the shops...Near the end of Paul's life he had handed over to young Timothy the care of some of the churches they planted but Paul knew Timothy would one day preach his last sermon...so Paul counsels: **2 Tim 2:2** - *You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other faithful people who will be able to pass them on to others.* Always have an eye to the next generation & work hard for their faith.

When husbands & wives take seriously their responsibility to imitate Christ in their marriage they grow both their individual & their combined spiritual maturity & when they intentionally infuse that in their children & vigorously defend their children from the various contrary forces & counter worldviews that would lead them away from a consistent clear life in Christ we honour what God intended when he first joined Adam & Eve in the garden. Whatever else marriage is or becomes over a lifetime together as husband & wife, it is first & foremost to **function** as a lived example of Christ's love. God created marriage to resemble his grace-abundant love for us & to be a source of blessing in this & every generation.

How do we live together with a sense of purpose & hope? How do we build resilient & persistent joy into our households? How do we create marriages that last, faith that endures, & love that triumphs over all things? In an era where relationships are too often entered & dissolved because of how they meet **MY** needs, **MY** wants, or **MY** expectations, how do we live the self-giving self-surrendering love we've received in Christ in the most intimate of relationships? The answer...generation to generation is **ONLY** life **in Christ** heals hurts, brings hope, provides purpose, & ensures endurance that nothing in the world can destroy.

Marriage is not about "want" or "get," it's about living & sharing the love of Christ w/in the relationship b/t husband & wife & among those He has given us to love & serve. For the long haul...in the face of whatever else might come against you & those you love what's the one sure thing for our hearts to cling to...

*Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us & offered himself as a sacrifice for us... **BECAUSE** you are God's children model your life on Jesus...all of it in loving service the way Christ offered his life for you...& in your home "...submit to one another out of reverence for Christ..." **SUBMIT** - intentionally stand under someone so their deepest needs are met by him who meets our eternal need...*

TAKE IT HOME - *As you leave today...be specific & share with your neighbour...*

Think of 3 married couples you know at least a generation younger than you.

What will you pray for in their lives this week? > blessing/protection

How will you encourage them this week? so that they know you care about them

Let's pray with that in mind...

Lord Jesus...you called God "Father" & by your sacrifice have made us sons & daughters of the King of Heaven. Let us now look to our families & especially those you have given into the intimacy of our lives. Defend us from the evil one & let us all delight in the Fatherly goodness and care of the One God who reigns through all endless ages Teach us also to hand on to our generations... those younger & more vulnerable in this world faith in you, hope through you, & love of you. Through Jesus Christ...Amen