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Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
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It Is Not Good For You to be Alone

Genesis 2:18-25

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Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior and brother Jesus Christ. Amen.

We pray, Lord, bring us Your Holy Spirit, that we share in the fellowship of Your Son and Your Word and Your Fatherhood. Amen.

In the words of licensed clinician and social worker Dean Marzofka: "Isolation can destroy a person." This last May, Dean visited us as guest speaker at our Mental Health Seminar. And in his presentation he touched on the topic of isolation. He related his experience in college, when he volunteered to be put into an isolation chamber. As he put it, it was basically an oversized coffin. They built a coffin sized booth and filled with body temperature salt water to make you float. So when you got inside, it felt like you were floating on nothing. And he, being a young and bold 26 year old, figured, I can do this, no problem. Well, after two weeks of blubbering anxiety, he felt differently. He said it felt like he was in that tank for three to four hours, but when he got out, it had only been 30 minutes. Now imagine what solitary confinement can do to a person over longer stretched of time. Hostages will recount the devastating effects of confinement. The way the brain shuts down and no longer acts rationally. A middle east correspondent for the Associated Press recounted his hostage ordeal in the 1980's. After a month he recalled in his memoir, "The mind is a blank. Jesus, I always thought I was smart. Where are all the things I learned, the books I read, the poems I memorized? There's nothing there, just a formless, gray-black misery. My mind's gone dead. God, help me." As Dean said, "Isolation can destroy a person."

Or in the words of God, "It is not good that man should be alone." The Hebrew word for "good" here gives us the sense of "incomplete." The creation was not complete until man had found companionship. So God created community. He created companionship. He crafted our psyche, society, and sociology around marriage and the family. In our sermon today, we will explore how God has granted this goodness to us in community: by crafting Adam and Eve in the beginning; by crafting a wife for her husband today; and by crafting the fellowship of the Church for Christ to dwell in forever.

It Is Not Good For You To Be Alone

1. God crafted Eve for Adam
2. God crafts a wife for her husband
3. God crafts the Church for Christ

We read from Genesis chapter 2,

Genesis 2:18–25

¹⁸ And the Lord God said, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*” ¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name. ²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

²¹ And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

²³ And Adam said:

“This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

This Word of the Lord of the Lord was spoken for you.

1. God crafted Eve for Adam

Adam is lacking something. And he tries to find what is lacking in two places. The first is just a couple verses before our text. Verse 15: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). The first thing God gives to Adam is a job. God crafts the garden for Adam and places him into it to tend and keep it. To bring forth its fruit and beauty and enjoy the labor of his hand. Of course it was a perfect work. A joy that was without thorns or thistles; without mosquitos and bugs to eat his crops. But still it is not enough.

Second, God brings to Adam all livestock, every wild animal, and every bird of the air. As if they were his own children, Adam names them one by one. Of this is a perfect relationship; one in which where even the most wild of animals poses no threat to the master. They are crafted to serve him. But still it is not enough.

Adam still lacks something. It is not good that he should be alone. Meaning, he is incomplete. He is lonely. And he can't fill that void with the joys of work; and he can't fill that void with the joys of nature. It is not good.

The answer must be found in his own image. His own likeness. Of his own flesh and of his own body. And she is later called Eve. A perfect companion emotionally. A perfect helper vocationally. A perfect fit physically. She is his compliment. His helper. And His flesh. Emotionally this woman will supply what he lacks – bringing him conversation, care, and support. Vocationally she will supply what he lacks – helping him with his calling in the garden and in the family. And physically she will supply what he lacks – offering herself to him personally even as he offers himself to her and so creating new life through their two bodies. And in these three ways, the two have become one flesh. One physical organism, talking, working, and being together for all their days. These are things which cannot be supplied in any other thing – not in another man, despite what the courts say; not in work, despite what our American culture would tell you; or in nature, despite what your friends might tell you. God crafts Eve from Adam's own rib, his own flesh and bones, perfectly suited to meet what he lacks. And God sees all that he has made and says, "It is very good." It is complete.

2. God crafts a wife for her husband

So woman is made for man, and man gives of himself for the woman. Children are born, society is born. And here we are today. All children of someone. All products of this crafting of God. All part of a family. God has not only crafted Eve for Adam, but for this reason, a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. Marriage is beyond just Adam and Eve, but it is something that has existed down through the ages. It is the most fundamental puzzle piece to all that society and this world's economy is built around. And that is because marriage and family fosters community. Since the beginning of time, God has been crafting wives for their husband and joining them together in families. Because it is not good that you should be alone.

You can see it on the grandfather's face. Now, from my perspective, I couldn't see it as well. But my father could. I remember the look on his face some time ago at a family get together. We managed to get everyone together for Christmas. It was my sister, my other sister and her husband, my brother and his wife, and myself and Deana.

And then there were all the kids. Little things just running loose, climbing into things, climbing onto things, falling off of things – and there were the parents who were also aunts and uncles – all trying to get things under control; getting the kids to eat; getting them to sit still for presents; getting them to sit still for a picture – from my perspective I couldn't see it. But then I saw grandpa's face. The look that only a grandfather can have in such a situation. And I realized later, this was good because in his eyes, he saw that everyone was there and this was complete. It is not good for man to be alone.

So often it is our perspective that is what matters. What family get together ever goes smoothly. What marriages ever go smoothly. When you are in the midst of it; the emotions, the vocations, the physical needs of marriage – it is not so easy to see the goodness. And Adam and Eve were no different. They were not seeing the goodness, the completeness of what God had crafted. They were right in the middle of it, and couldn't see it. Instead they thought there was something missing. Something lacking that God was not giving. And as soon as that thought lay hold, the devil had them. He had them looking to be made more complete than what God had crafted. So they took of the fruit, shared in sin, and blinded all creation of God's goodness in marriage, family, and life.

Why do marriages end in divorce? Either the husband or the wife are looking for what they lack somewhere other than in their spouse. Whether emotionally, vocationally, or physically. They are looking for emotional companionship elsewhere, support in their calling as husband or wife elsewhere, or physical satisfaction elsewhere. And what do men so often do to cause these issues?

They turn to work or they turn to nature. They pour themselves into their jobs or a long work trip or some project at home or maybe just mowing. That is what God crafted them to do after all. Tend the garden. So they turn to work. They become work aholics, and mean while the wife is left at home, a rib without a body. Or the husband turns to nature. Fishing and hunting trips, they isolate themselves so as to escape what ever it might be that is happening at home. In either case, it is easier just to run away from the responsibility; not realizing that the responsibility is really what will fulfill him. And the devil has you.

Isolation can not only destroy a person, but it can also destroy a marriage. To leave one spouse isolated, alone, in marriage – whether emotionally, vocationally, or physically – will destroy the bond. And that is why the healthiest marriages are those where the husband and wife are together. They are together emotionally, vocationally, and physically. And especially when they are together spiritually. That is the perspective that matters the most. When the office of husband is seen from God's

perspective – a sacrificial office, where the husband is willing to give of himself, of his own rib, as Christ has given himself to save the Church, so the husband is savior to his wife. As it says in Ephesians 5, “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself” (5:28). Likewise, this is the sort of marriage where the wife is fulfilling what the man lacks – emotionally, vocationally, and physically. She completes him by holding him up as her leader, her provider, her own savior; as it says again in Ephesians: “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” (5:22-23).

And that spiritual union cannot survive without an understanding of the gospel. From our perspective things we might see all the little things just running loose, climbing into things, climbing onto things, falling off of things; we might be trying so desperately to get things under control, to get things to stand still, to fix it all – but we will never see things properly from down here. Only from our heavenly Father’s perspective do we see marriage as it ought to be – full of forgiveness and the grace of God which is glowing in the face of Christ Jesus. There in the cross of Christ we are united to God and have fellowship with one another. That is the forgiveness we need in marriage and family, and also in the vocation of single hood, in virginity, in chastity, in abstinence, in times of separation and divorce, in times of the loss of a spouse.

3. God crafts the Church for Christ

Yes, we know not everyone is called to marriage. That is why God has crafted a family that is for everyone. A family reunion that draws us back to the source of all that we lack – God himself. So God has crafted the Church for Christ so that all who believe may find companionship, vocation, and eternal satisfaction for all their needs and afflictions.

Because we know that family reunions are not always so pleasant. Maybe its a wedding; maybe its a funeral – its one of those situation which draws together old acquaintances, old friends, and family members that are not so easy to get along with. She walks into the banquet hall without a date. The room is full of bustle, but there she stands, still socially awkward at 45. She knows this will be especially awkward since she will be seeing people who haven’t talked to her in over ten years. And most of them who were her age are now married and have kids they have brought to the get together. And there she stands alone, divorced, and single and feeling the isolation close in. And what sort of welcome will she find?

That AP correspondent relates how he felt after months of isolation. He writes how he brooded incessantly, thinking back on all the mistakes he'd made in life, his regrets, his offenses against God and family. The fall of Adam and Eve has left many of us feeling estranged, brooding, thinking back. Sin has left us feeling awkward. Not really fitting in. And the world is no help. It tries to make divorce seem like something that is liberating, a sort of right to happiness, irreconcilable. It tries to make gay marriage seem like something that can be a substitute for all those broken marriages, broken homes, and children who are up for adoption. But all the while we know there is something wrong with this conversation. We know this room we are walking into is not quite right. And it makes us feel estranged, awkward, nor really fitting in. Whatever the brokenness, it is there in our past, and into our present. Maybe we are children who come from a divorced household. Maybe we are a wife or a husband who has been divorced. Maybe we are not attracted to the opposite sex. Maybe we are just single and can't seem to find someone that will marry us. Maybe we are just isolated in our own guilt. After the hAnd we wonder, why am I different? What sort of welcome will I find in this room?

But there in the midst of this room, this world of brokenness, stands one who wears the same skin that we do. Who knows the same isolation, estrangement, affliction, that we do. For he came to his own, and his own did not receive him. But he shared in flesh and blood that he might taste suffering, and death for everyone. He was made a little lower than the angels, so that he might accept the confinement of hell for our sins. Jesus was made to be flesh and blood, crucified on the cross, with real pain, and real guilt, as God himself forsook him. He tasted death for everyone. But with that same flesh and same blood, he arose. He conquered death. He destroyed death and the devil. He was reunited with life and with the Father forever. He is crowed with glory and honor, and now calls us his brother.

He stands in the middle of the room, in the mist of this congregation, in this world full of hustle and bustle and he brings us together in a family reunion. For we are members of his body, the church, and are joined together in the gospel, so that this place, this church, this congregation is crafted for Christ to dwell in and with and through. Just like a wife is crafted for her husband, so the Church is crafted and joined to Christ. As Paul writes, "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 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." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (5:29-32).

Here God welcomes us into his family. So whether you are single or married, divorced, or never been married, a child who has lost a parent, or a husband who has lost a wife – no matter how sinful, broken, or afflicted you are – God says to you here: “It is not good for you to be alone.” And he creates the Church as the bride of Christ, and offers in bread and wine the very body and blood of the risen Christ, uniting us to him forever.

Dean was right when he said, “Isolation will destroy a person.” So the point is, don’t isolate yourself. Be part of a community. Be a neighbor to someone in need. Be a friend, a wife, a husband, a daughter or son, and be a brother or sister in Christ. For in love, God has bought us back from ever being alone. He has sent His Son, to redeem us, make us his own special children, to provide what we lack and make us complete in Christ. He crafted Eve for Adam. He crafts a wife for her husband. He crafts the church for Christ. And looks out over what he has made and says: “This is very good.” Amen.