

Right before our text Paul says, *"The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior" (Ep 5:23).* Heads who are like Christ accept responsibility. Heads like Christ take care of the members of the body. Heads like Christ are wired to the nerve endings that send pain message from all over the body, so that, when the body hurts, the head hurts. Moms, wives, women, you know the truth of this—life in the home and elsewhere is awesome when men lead like Jesus, when they lead with love, with humility, with service, with sacrifice. God grant us men who lead like that!

We heard last week that, throughout history, women have been treated by men (and by society) as less than human. Athenian women were of inferior status, often guarded by dogs, and in comedy were caricatured as fickle, contentious, and uncultured. In Jesus' day, there actually was a prayer spoken by men in which they thanked God and said: *"Thank you for not making me an unbeliever, a barbarian, a slave, or a woman."*

It's into a culture like this that God's Word speaks powerfully. Without what the Bible says, we'd never have a proper view of what God says to men and women about their equal status with him and about the different ways God has called us to serve him and one another. Because we live in a sinful world, and are sinful ourselves, we're never going to be able to apply perfectly in every situation the principles that God lays down in his Word. But I can tell you this: If we are sensitive to the needs of women, if we are willing to serve them and make sacrifices for them, as Jesus did for us, many of the issues that exist between us will go away.

I've already quoted this verse from the Apostle Paul: *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ep 5:21).* There's a mutual submission that men and women owe each other. It's a willingness to bear each other's burdens, not putting ourselves or our own needs first, not having a domineering attitude, not making laws or rules for one another. Men, if you are married, what a wonderful opportunity you have to serve Jesus in this way. Love and lead your wife after his example. If you are not, then let your dates, your prospective spouses, in short, the women in your life, know what you have to offer them in Jesus. It's his gospel that's already caused a culture shift. We're evidence of that. Let's keep it going, for the sake of his kingdom. Amen.

Ephesians 5:25-30 – *Culture Shift* – 365, 492, 491

02/16/20 – Pastor David M. Kuehl – St. Paul's, Muskego, WI

When I was at the seminary, one of my professors, John Jeske, asked one of my classmates to read Genesis 2:23. God has just created Eve and given her to Adam as his wife. This is Adam's response. My classmate cleared his throat and began to read in a monotone voice: *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..."* Professor Jeske shouted, "Stop! Do you really think that's how Adam spoke? He's never seen a woman. She's gorgeous, she's unclothed, and she's his wife!" He came down around the desk, started jumping up and down (probably why he had the nickname Jumpin' John!), and said, *"THIS IS NOW BONE OF MY BONES AND FLESH OF MY FLESH; SHE SHALL BE CALLED 'WOMAN,' FOR SHE WAS TAKEN OUT OF MAN."*

My friends, I truly believe that, if we men showed that same kind of godly, honest, and enthusiastic joy over the women in our lives, we wouldn't have nearly the gender issues we face today. As we continue our message series, *Culture Shift*, we've reached week three. To date, we've noted *When Children Became People* and *When Women Became Precious*. Today, we spend some time considering *When Men Became Sacrificial*, and we use as the basis for our study the inspired words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5.

What Does the Bible Say to Men?

- 1. It says, "Be submissive to Christ."**
- 2. It says, "Love like Christ."**
- 3. It says, "Lead like Christ."**

1. One of the clearest passages in all Scripture regarding the roles, or callings, of men and women is this: *"I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).* Now, before we can figure out how this applies to men and women, we have to figure out how it applies to God. What do we know about the triune God? Each of the three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is equal, right? Each is eternal, each is all-powerful, each is all-knowing, each is present everywhere. Because each of the persons of the Trinity is God, using the words of the Athanasian Creed, we confess: *"None is before or after; none is greater or inferior" (CW pg. 133).* Each has equal status.

But each person of the triune God doesn't have the same role, the same calling. The Father didn't die on the cross for our sins; nor did the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus did that. That was his role, his purpose. In his ministry we hear Jesus say to his heavenly Father, "I have come to do your will" and "It gives me great joy to do your will." In the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done" (Lk 22:42). In willing submission to his heavenly Father and in amazing love for us, "[Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Php 2:6-8).

Paul introduces this truth about Jesus by urging us, "In your relationship with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Php 2:5). In other words, just as Jesus was willing to live in a role-relationship with his Father, so we are to recognize that we live in a role-relationship with each other. We who are men are to be the shepherd leaders, and the women whom we serve are to support us in our leadership. That's why Paul introduces this whole subject of role-relationships with the reminder: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ep 5:21). And why he says in our text, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Which begs the question, "How do we men of God go about loving the women in our lives?"

2. It doesn't take an expert to see how confused our culture is in this matter. I really believe that most guys don't know what to do anymore. For those of us who are Baby Boomers, are we to love as Ward Cleaver loved June? Are we still expected to pick up the check? Does what my mom taught me still apply? "Always open the door for a girl. Always follow her up and lead her down the stairs, in case she falls. Always walk on the outside of the sidewalk. And make sure you ask her before you kiss her the first time." Is this how we are to show godly love to the ladies in our lives? Paul simply says, "Love them as Jesus loved you." How did Jesus love? John says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love (Jn 13:1). Jesus got down and washed his disciples' dirty, dusty feet. And then Paul leans in and says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8).

Sad to say, we like to think that we did something to deserve God's love, to earn his favor, don't we? Maybe it's the thought that our good points outweigh our bad ones or that we're not as bad as someone else. Each of us has our own way of trying to figure out how to get on God's good side. But none of that works. In fact, the harder we try, the farther we fall. Paul says, "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (Ga 5:4). In other words, the harder we try to get in right with God, the farther away from him we fall, because we're rejecting his grace, turning our backs on his love. God doesn't love us on the basis of how well we measure up. He loves us fully and forever because of Jesus, because of the sacrifice he made for our sins—unconditionally, with no strings attached.

And that's how we go about loving the women in our lives. We love them unconditionally, with no strings attached, not basing our love for them on how well they measure up. We sacrifice for them as Jesus sacrificed—everything—for us. Think of it, my friends. "He has redeemed us, lost and condemned creatures, purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." Why? "All this he did that we should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true." God's will is that we love the women in our lives as he has loved us in Jesus.

3. I don't counsel as much as I used to, since Pastor Bonack has picked up the slack here at St. Paul's. But I do remember a common complaint I heard from women, especially wives, and that's this: "He won't lead. He refuses to lead. He just won't lead." Men, that's sin, and for that we need to repent. God says we are to lead. That's our role, that's our responsibility. Men of God lead. When manly leadership is weak or absent, everyone suffers. Leadership that is godly isn't about power or using or abusing others. Godly leadership is about being first in service and first in sacrifice to others. God doesn't call us to be controllers or kings, dictators or bosses; he calls us to lead, to lead like Boaz in our First Lesson and like Joseph in our Gospel. In short, he calls us to be the head.