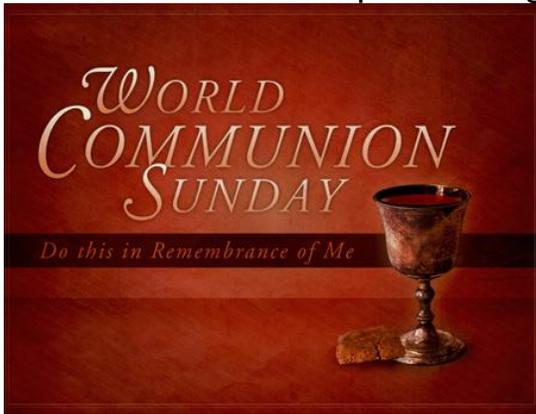


SERMON: October 7, 2018 To Be God's Helper WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY
TEXT: Genesis 2:18-24
SUBJECT: The role of women
THEME: God has called us to be partners together, mutually supporting and caring.
PURPOSE: To guide us to a better understanding of women's roles
PICTURE: People working together



<http://firstallen.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/world-communion-sunday454x348.jpg>

Today is World Communion Sunday – it's when we celebrate our connection with believers all over the world who will gather this day to claim Jesus as their Lord and Savior!

Long before we arose this morning, Christians were gathering in Africa, and Australia, and India, and China, and bowing down before the cross to proclaim their faith. Long after we have left this building today, believers will be gathering in South America and Hawaii to celebrate communion. On this day most churches make an attempt to partake of the Lord's Supper, to remind ourselves of how we are knit together and Who it is that joins us.

There is enough division in the world. We find ways to divide ourselves all of the time. By our politics; by our nationalities; by our skin color; by our favorite sports teams – on this day we want to unite and say, "We are all loved and forgiven by God."

So we will be celebrating communion today – and remembering our brothers and sisters all over the world.

We got into an interesting discussion at our Wednesday afternoon Bible study about the definition of a "Christian Nation". There are currently 17 official "Christian States", the definition of which is "a country which recognizes a Christian denomination as its official religion, usually has a state church, and supports it through government funds and policies." These include Argentina, Costa Rica, Denmark, England, Greece, Lichtenstein, Vatican City, and ten others.

It's interesting that by this definition, the United States is not technically a "Christian Nation". It's one of the reasons we broke away from England, to not be under the authority of King George and his control of the church.

But if we look at the numbers of people who follow Christianity as their primary religion, the United States tops the list with 230 million, followed by Brazil with 180 million (90% of the population, as opposed to the US 70%).

Mexico is next, and then Nigeria and – would you believe it? Russia!

Christianity is the largest religion in the world with 2.1 billion followers, followed by Islam with 1.3 billion and then non-theism or agnosticism with 1.1 billion.

It bothers me when I hear people say that America is the last stronghold for Christianity, because we only make up 9% of the world's Christians! Christianity is growing in Africa and Asia and even in parts of Europe, but it's not growing here.

So on world communion Sunday we take the time to recognize and thank God that He has invited us all to be His family, from all over the world. Here on the altar table we have breads representing different parts of the globe – matzoh and tortilla and grain and pita. We have gluten-free; we have mountain bread. You are welcome to choose whichever you prefer. It's a symbol of how God invites to His table all who love Him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to walk in love and charity with their neighbor.

Our scripture for today is another example of how God calls to us – in the formation of woman. Let's look at it now together:

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

I have some pictures here of why it's not good for a man to be alone – because these kind of things happen:



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<https://cdn.cnn.com/cnnnext/dam/assets/160618093054-stacktoppic-exlarge-169.jpg>

Okay – that is NOT what the Bible is talking about!

When God says in our scripture that “It is not right for the man to be alone”, He wasn’t saying that men are irresponsible and need for women to look after them! What God was saying is that, at our essence, we were created to be in relationship and in community with other people.

We were not meant to be alone. When we have nobody to answer to and nobody to care about, the essence of what it means to be human starts to disappear.

In the movie “Castaway” we see Tom Hanks on the verge of cracking up and losing everything – and in the midst of that loneliness, who is it that keeps him sane?



https://c1.staticflickr.com/3/2331/1809798696_ac166c8493_b.jpg

Wilson! (You might argue that talking to a deflated volleyball and dressing it up might be playing upon the fringes of craziness, but I think it shows the deep, innate need we all have to be connected with others!)

Okay – so getting back to the scripture –

God says that it is not right for the man to be alone, so He is going to make someone for him.

Look at this word right here – HELPMATE. Some translations say HELPER; some say HELPMEET; some say SUITABLE COMPANION.



The word in Hebrew is EZER. It does mean “helper” in a certain sense, but it’s really much more than that. Unfortunately, I have heard this passage mistranslated and turned around to mean something entirely different than what God intended.

This passage has sometimes been used to try to say that women are inferior to men, that they are weaker and not suitable for leadership, that their role is to HELP men in doing what the men are doing.

This is NOT a faithful rendering of this passage. At no point in this entire exchange did God say that women are less than, subservient to, or to be dominated by men. The best translation of the word EZER is COMPANION or even PARTNER.

God uses this word EZER to refer to Himself when He says in the Psalms that He is Israel’s HELP. It’s also in Hosea and other passages, and it is clear in these instances that God is not the submissive one to Israel, but the strength and the deliverance of! God is our ezer!

So the creation of woman here in our scripture is an indication that we are incomplete without each other. Eve was the completion of humanity. Some have said that woman was the pinnacle of God’s creation – after that, He didn’t need to create anymore!

I think this is an important message for us to hear at this time in our world’s history, when we are hearing more and more about the mistreatment of women in our world. In many countries women are still second-class citizens who can be dismissed and even killed at the will of a man. In our own country being female adds complications to life that most men never consider.

As an example, Jackson Katz, a social researcher, recently posed the question to a group of men and a group of women –

“What do you do on a daily basis to avoid being sexually assaulted?”

The men came up with one thing, and the women had 34.

What do you think was the men’s answer?

“I just don’t think about it.”

Whereas women had 34 things that went through their heads – “Always check my back seat before I get in,” “Never get into an elevator with a single man or group of men,” “Have a male voice on my answering machine.”

Our world has messed up what God intended for us to be, and it’s the most vulnerable that pay the price. The women, the children, the elderly, the disabled, the immigrants - the ones that God has called us to care for the most – the world doesn’t care about. It’s up to us as Christians to live out what God intended.

We are to be a family, and families look out for the little ones. Here on World Communion Sunday we take time to remember – to gather together again.

About a month ago we learned in the sermon that to “re-member” is the opposite of “dis-member”. When we remember the Lord’s Last Supper, we are bringing back to our memory our own failures and pain, and remembering that Jesus has said that He will take it all. There is nothing that you have done, there is nothing that has been done to you that will cause Jesus to turn away from you. Whatever your pain, whether self-inflicted or other-inflicted, Jesus says, “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

Not “I MIGHT give you rest”; not “I’ll think about giving you rest, if you live up to My expectations”, but “I WILL give you rest”!

So today, you belong to God. Whatever lies the enemy or the world have told you don’t matter. Jesus has paid the price for all of your sins, and my sins, and invites us to come to His table.

There may be some people that you need to go ask forgive us from this next week, to truly be knit back into the family of Christ. Christ offers us the relationship, but we have to accept it. And part of accepting it means confessing and repairing what we can of what is broken in us.

“As far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with everyone.” That means to be the better person, and offer forgiveness to others. They may not accept it, but that’s not your responsibility; you are only responsible for following Christ.

So in light of all of this, how should we live?

The last question I always ask our Wednesday afternoon group is “What does God have to say to our church this week through this scripture?” It’s not enough just to read the scriptures and to listen to a sermon; we have to take that one step further that deals with relevance.

In light of what we see here today, where is God calling us?

What message of hope and grace do you hear God saying today?

(TAKE ANSWERS)

What I am hearing is that God wants to offer us peace, but we have to let go of the molds that the world has tried to impose upon us. The world wants for us to be define ourselves as Americans first, or Democrats first, or retirees or married or single or any other earthly label.

But the truth is, we are children of God first. We are sinners; we are broken; we are hopeful; we are sometimes confused and sometimes clear.

You belong to God. We belong to each other. And believers all over the world are gathering today to remember that we have been called, not to build our own kingdoms or our own countries, but to build the Kingdom of God on this earth, God being our help.