Peace to you in Jesus’ name

*Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.*

 Jeremiah 18:3-4

Jeremiah was instructed by the LORD to go to the potter’s house and observe. The LORD had a visual for Jeremiah to learn and then to go out and preach.

Certainly, God is the potter. He is the Creator who has made all things, and poignantly, He fashioned man out of clay. All that God made was good. But sin entered the world and spoiled what God had made. In this case, the pot that is spoiled is, specifically, Israel. The problem is that Israel doesn’t seem to care that they are spoiled and believe that God is somehow “stuck” with them and is indebted to them to make all things well for His people.

God is letting them know that is not the case. It is easy for the potter to mash the soft clay back into a lump and create something new. God can easily do the same with His chosen people. In fact, we see that with the birth of the church, which quickly spread to other nations.

But God is also merciful and faithful. He has His remnant of Israel included in the church; the new vessel He has made. Additionally, toward the end of history, God will work with His people to bring them back into the vessel He has made and in relationship with Him.

Israel, nor any people, have the upper hand. We are all dependent upon the lovingkindness of the Potter.

In Christ’s love

John

 1-23-22

Genesis 2:4-25 (2)

Last week we began our study of this second chapter of Genesis. This is an account of the same creation that took place in chapter 1; but simply from a different perspective; having a slightly different focus. One of the big changes is the reference to God. Throughout chapter 1, the Hebrew word “Elohim” was used which is translated “God”. He is the sole focus as the creator of all things and that creation is by the power of His word. In chapters 2 and 3 He is “Yahweh Elohim” or “LORD God”. He is the same almighty God but we are introduced to His personal covenant name. This shows His intimacy with human-beings as His beloved creation.

We can also see another change in verse 4. In chapter 1 verse 1, chapter 2 verse 1, and here in the beginning of verse 4 we see “*the heavens and the earth*”. At the end of verse 4, the order is reversed to “*earth and heaven*”. The focus is narrowed down to what is taking place on the earth and specifically with mankind and his relationship with God.

God had already caused the plants to spring forth from the ground and He created all the animals before He made Adam. Once God made Adam, He planted a special garden in the land of Eden. Once the garden was ready, God put Adam in it. It was Adam’s job to cultivate and take care of the garden. This is part of his dominion over the earth; dominion requires responsibility.

God brought all the animals to Adam and he gave names to them all. This is also an expression of dominion. Naming something shows some authority over it. But God was also letting the man see that he did not have a suitable companion; someone to complete him and share his life with.

Adam’s realization of this would have made God’s wonderful gift to him all the sweeter. Adam was formed by God out of the dirt of the earth that God created. But God used the flesh and bone of Adam himself to created Eve. Here we have what we call one of the creation ordinances. This is an ordinance, or way of doing things, that God established right at the very beginning; right at creation.

This particular creation ordinance is marriage. And the Bible is very concerned about marriage. Let’s look at what we see here about the joining of a couple. First, the Bible is looking at marriage here. In verse 24 we see the word “wife”. Adam and Eve weren’t simply living together even though they were the only people there. They were married and this in the eyes of God. He made them husband and wife.

This is the beginning of the stable family unit. This is also the beginning of stability for all civilization. We can look around today and see the evidence of this. Satan has engaged in a vicious and sustained attack on the family; and the resulting brokenness is obvious. Our culture not only tolerates people living together outside of marriage, but actively encourages it; even actively discourages the commitment of being wed.

With the kind of pressure that is being exerted by society, it is no wonder that so many young people (and even older ones) live together without being married. We as Christians must be loving and understanding with people who have chosen this way of living. It is not our place to condemn, but we don’t excuse the sin either. Remember Jesus at the well with the Samaritan woman; He did not condemn her for living with a man; but instead gave her the good news of the Gospel.

In verse 24 it tells us that a man is joined to his wife in marriage such that the two become one flesh. The apostle Paul speaks of this as a great mystery. We don’t understand all that this involves. But it is obvious that God intended for marriage to be permanent. Again, an attack of satan against the family is the prevalence of divorce. In Malachi 2:16, the LORD God says, “*For I hate divorce*”. And any of us who have been through a divorce knows why God hates it; it’s because it is so destructive. The pain and problems it causes reaches far beyond the man and woman involved.

Again, the Christian is called to compassion for the people involved. We have to understand that this is a fallen world, which is why Jesus had to come. While not condoning frivolous divorce, we give comfort and gently offer the way to Christ.

The list goes on with what God intended for the marriage covenant. God created a woman for the man, not another man. He made one woman, not two or more. He created a mature woman, not a child. In all these aspects, we see the tremendous attack of satan and the world. Homosexuality is not only declared normal; it is almost to be preferred. The push for the acceptance of polyamory is gaining momentum. There are rumblings of doing away with the crime of child pornography. There is even now tremendous insanity regarding being male or female; the very basis of God’s creation of human-beings.

Once more, as Christians, we are called by God to never accept these things; we are to never compromise with these things. These things are completely against God and we cannot be joined with them. But we are to be compassionate to those who are caught in these lies of satan in the hopes that they will be led to the truth of Jesus Christ and be saved. Our Lord God is not willing that any should perish; we must have that same desire.

The man and the woman were made for God. Although He is entirely content and fulfilled in Himself, He chose to create us so that we could be in awe of His glory and worship Him; so that we could have fellowship with Him forever. We were created to serve God; but also to enjoy Him. Additionally, the man and the woman were made for each other. This is the way God designed us. Adam had everything he needed there in the garden and he had a perfect relationship with God. Still, God said the man needed something else, he needed the woman.

Things in the Bible always go deeper than they appear at first glance and so it is with marriage. In Ephesians 5:22-33, the apostle Paul talks about the marriage relationship. He speaks of wives being submissive to their husbands, while husbands are to love their wives even as Jesus loves the church. In this we see that marriage is a picture of Christ’s relationship with His people, the church.

In this picture, Jesus is the husband and the church is the wife. The wife is to be submissive to the husband as the church is to be submissive to Christ. Husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies. Jesus loves the church and the church is not only the bride of Christ but the body of Christ. Husbands are to love their wives in a self-sacrificial way, putting them ahead of themselves. Look at the sacrifice Jesus made for His church.

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, “*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*.” Paul says this mystery by itself is great, but further, it is a description of the relationship between Christ and His church. Recall that we are all one in Christ and that we are all in Christ. There is a mysterious joining between a husband and wife, and between Jesus and the church.

With all this, there is also a place for singleness. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul discusses marriage and singleness. Singleness can be a gift from God, so that the person can focus their life on the things of God. Each person will know their calling and be comfortable with it. The one who has been blessed with contentment in singleness is no less in the sight of God than those who are married.

While marriage is a very important topic in Genesis 2, there is also the issue of two special trees. These trees are the subject of much discussion and no one has a complete understanding of God’s purpose with them; but, what we do understand is important. Firstly, these are literal trees. They have nothing to do with apples, but they do have fruit. Partaking of the fruit causes an actual change in the one who eats from it. The change is probably brought about more by the act of eating, than by the fruit itself.

One of the trees is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Its name describes what eating from it brings about. God planted this tree right there in the Garden of Eden, but He put a condition on the man. God told the man not to eat from the tree. He also warned the man of the consequences: if he ate, he would die. We all know what happened, but let’s consider the tree itself.

We might wonder, “Why in the world did God put the tree there in the first place, especially since He knew what would happen?” The complete answer to that question will have to wait until we are in the presence of God and He gives us the knowledge. But we have a few ideas.

For one thing, we know that God requires obedience. We also know that God will test us. Scripture tells us in Exodus 16:4, ‘*Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction*.’ So, at least on one level, God was testing Adam to see if he would be obedient. Notice that testing is different from temptation. James 1:13, ‘*Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone*.’

Temptation came later and came from satan. There is a big difference between simply having the tree there and actually trying to get Adam and Eve to disobey God and eat from it. Additionally, God doesn’t tell us everything; He tells us enough. God made all His creation in great wisdom and everything He does is in wisdom and according to His ultimate plan. His ultimate plan involves bringing glory to Himself and goodness to us. Apparently, having this tree in the garden is how God would bring about His plan.

Another question to consider is whether or not Adam and Eve had any concept of good and evil; of right and wrong; without eating from the tree. From the account of God’s interaction with Adam and Eve in the garden, it appears that they did. One of the main reasons for believing this is because there was a covenant between God and Adam. While that word isn’t used here in Genesis 2, it is referred to later in Hosea 6:7, “*But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; There they have dealt treacherously against Me*.” There was definitely a covenant between God and Adam and we call it the Adamic covenant.

Basically, God provided what Adam needed and had fellowship with him; God loved Adam. In return, Adam worked in the garden, exercised proper dominion over God’s creation, and obeyed God. Adam’s obedience was expressed by doing his work, being a good steward of creation, and not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam knew it would be wrong to disobey God. This would have been a head and heart knowledge, not an experiential knowledge. He had only experienced good. Once he disobeyed and ate of the fruit, he actually experienced evil.

One more thing that the Adamic covenant lets us know is that Adam and Eve were not autonomous in the garden; they were still very much subject to God their creator. They didn’t get to just run around and do what ever they wanted. They had work to do and they had limits. Again, we see the effects of sin. The world seeks after autonomy and refuses to be answerable to God. Psalm 2 even talks about the nations raging against the Almighty and wanting to throw off His restraints. Of course, God laughs at them.

Adam and Eve were content to obey God. We can see this later when Eve is actually tempted by satan to eat from the tree. When satan calls it to her attention, it’s as if she had never even considered the tree or looked upon it before. This was their state of innocence; although they understood that it was wrong to disobey God, it wasn’t even in their minds to do so.

The Bible makes it clear that God wants to have fellowship with us. Because He is all-powerful God, He could have made us with no other option but to obey Him and worship Him. But even to us, that somehow sounds hollow. God wants us to have fellowship with Him, but He wants us to want to have fellowship with Him. I think that is a big part of why He allowed evil in the world. In the end, He is looking for those who truly want to be with Him; He is looking for those who truly want to fellowship with Him. Those who turn their back on evil and the world in order to accept Jesus Christ are the ones who want to be, and will be, with Him forever.

Next week, if the Lord is willing, we will look into the tree of life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil seems pervasive and brings much pain to the world. But remember what the Bible is the story of: our redemption. God is good.

Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for Your perfect creation of man and woman; ideally suited for each other by Your wise design. Each bearing the image of God. In marriage, they are the picture of Christ and His church. In singleness, they are the picture of dedication and devotion to God.

In the fall of mankind into sin, that image of God was tarnished in mankind. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, those who are in Christ Jesus are daily remade in His image. Work in us, increase that image and likeness of Jesus in us. And we look forward to that day when we will see Him as He is and be just like Him.

When we consider all You have done on our behalf, even though we deserve nothing but Your terrible wrath; we who have accepted Jesus as Saviour bow before You in adoration. We desire to be obedient to you, but know we will fail if Your Holy Spirit does not strengthen us. We ask for His strength, knowing that we are weak and entirely dependent on You for all that is good.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen