

# Church of the Lutheran Confession's Ministry By Mail

*"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Romans 10:17*

## 20th Sunday of Trinity

Volume 67, Number 45



### Print Sermons Online

<http://ministrybymail.clclutheran.org/current.html>

### Audio Sermons

[podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/ministrybymail](https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/ministrybymail)



### Scripture Readings

Genesis 2:18-25; Mark 10:2-16

### Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941)

#625 | #624 | #340 | #313



### Prayer of the Day

*Almighty God, our heavenly Father, You established marriage as a good and gracious gift and revealed Your faithful love in Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for His church: Forgive our selfishness, and renew us through Your Word, that husbands may love and serve their wives, wives may respect and support their husbands, and all Your people may find comfort in the love of their Savior; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*



### Sermon Text

(Ephesians 5:22-33 NKJ) "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

## **Theme**

### **Christ and the Church: God's Pattern for Marriage**

Dear fellow redeemed: Marriage is one of God's greatest earthly blessings. Yet we see almost daily how sinful human beings can corrupt and ruin even this wonderful gift. Some people become so miserable in their marriages that they no longer want to continue together. Others figure out how to get along, but they regard marriage as a burden, a ball and chain to carry through life. More and more people forsake marriage altogether. They simply live with someone as long as they can get along, then move on to someone else.

Our sinful human nature can turn God's blessing into a burden. But that does not mean there is something wrong with God's design. His gift is still good. His plan is still wise. We need to listen to Him and learn how He intends us to live together.

God compares marriage to the relationship between Christ and His church. In doing so, He shows us how beautiful marriage can be and should be. At the same time, marriage helps us appreciate the beauty and intimacy of our relationship with Christ Himself. And so this morning we want to review God's plan for marriage as it's described in Ephesians 5:22-33.

Paul begins by addressing wives. In Ephesians 5:22-24, he describes the husband as the head of the wife and calls the wife to submit to her husband as to the Lord.

To help us understand, Paul points us to Christ. Think about what it means for the church to have Christ as its Head. He is our Savior. He cares for us, leads us in righteousness, and gives us eternal life. There is nothing cruel or oppressive in His leadership. His will is always good, and His care is always faithful. We find comfort and peace in belonging to Him and following Him.

That is the relationship Paul places before us as the pattern for marriage. A wife's submission is an expression of her faith in the Lord and her respect for the order He has established.

Of course, a wife might think that submitting would be easy if her husband were like Christ. But no husband is perfectly like Christ. Every husband is a sinner. Our selfish desires and motives interfere with our responsibility to care for our families.

Nevertheless, God's instructions are not merely a reward for a husband who has already become everything he ought to be. He calls the wife to honor Him in her relationship with the husband He has given her. The husband's shortcomings do not make God's design meaningless.

In Ephesians 5:33, Paul summarizes the wife's calling in terms of respect. Respect matters deeply in marriage. When a wife speaks to her husband with contempt, treats him as though he were another child, or constantly belittles what he does, she wounds their relationship.

Such treatment can encourage resentment and withdrawal rather than the responsible leadership she hopes to see.

Respectful speech helps build a different relationship. Respect does not require pretending that everything is right when something is wrong. It means addressing those things in a way that honors the person God has joined to her.

Then Paul turns to husbands, and the responsibility he places upon them is searching indeed. In Ephesians 5:25–27, Christ’s love for the church becomes the measure of a husband’s love for his wife. Christ gave Himself for His church so that He might cleanse her and make her holy.

What husband can consider that pattern without recognizing how far short he falls? We need God’s forgiveness. We need to look to Christ for guidance and strength to become the husbands He calls us to be.

Throughout the ages, men have abused their position as heads of their households. Some have acted as though their wives were servants whose purpose was to satisfy their wishes. Some have abused their wives physically or emotionally. Such behavior contradicts the very pattern God gives. Look at Christ. His headship is expressed in service. He came to give Himself for others, even to the point of laying down His life. That is the love a husband is called to imitate.

Love is more than doing something nice occasionally. It is more than speaking affectionate words. Love means giving yourself for the good of another person. For a husband, that means attending to his wife’s needs, sharing her burdens, protecting her, listening to her, and seeking her good even when doing so costs him time, comfort, or his own preferences.

Yet the purpose of Christ’s love reaches deeper than an example of kindness. Ephesians 5:26–27 directs our attention to what He accomplished for us. He came to cleanse us from sin, to make us holy, and to bring us into fellowship with God. Paul connects that cleansing with the washing of water joined to the Word.

Here is the heart of the Gospel. Christ did not wait until His church was beautiful before He loved her. He gave Himself for sinners. Through His saving work, He cleanses His people and presents them before God as holy.

Husbands cannot do what Christ alone has done. We cannot redeem our wives or wash away their sins. But His love teaches us to seek their good, including their spiritual good. A husband should encourage his wife in the Word, pray with her and for her, and support her in the work God has given her.

Dr. James Dobson emphasizes that a father’s love for his wife is one of the greatest gifts he can give his children. There is much truth in that thought. Children benefit from seeing their father cherish their mother. They learn something about faithfulness, kindness, and service. They also benefit when their mother receives the help and encouragement she needs.

Paul develops this further in Ephesians 5:28–31. Husband and wife have been joined together as one flesh. Therefore, a husband’s care for his wife is also care for himself. God has united their lives.

Our sinful nature resists that way of thinking. When something goes wrong in a marriage, how quickly we blame the other person! A husband complains that his wife is always nagging. A wife complains that her husband never helps. Each can produce a list of the other's failures while giving much less attention to his or her own.

God's Word calls us to examine ourselves. A husband needs to ask whether he is taking responsibility and loving his wife as he should. A wife needs to ask whether she is speaking and acting with the respect God calls for. Neither can repent for the other. Each can bring his or her own sin before the Lord. That is why Paul keeps directing our eyes to Christ. Our relationship with Him is more than an illustration for marriage. He is our Savior, and we belong to Him.

In Ephesians 5:30–32, Paul speaks of the church's union with Christ as a profound mystery. The Son of God took on our flesh and blood. He entered our life, bore our sin, suffered our death, and rose again. He has made us His own. We are members of His body, cared for by our faithful Head.

The Savior who gave Himself for the church also gave Himself for you. He knows your failures as a husband or wife. He knows the selfish thoughts, the harsh words, the neglected responsibilities, and the times you have withheld love or respect. Those sins are real. But His forgiveness is real as well. He did not shed His blood only for people whose marriages are already happy or whose homes are already peaceful. He shed His blood for sinners. We come to Him with our guilt and receive the cleansing He has won for us.

Then, forgiven by Him, we return to the people He has given us. We can admit that we were wrong. We can ask forgiveness without first demanding that the other person admit an equal fault. We can begin again, trusting His mercy and seeking His strength.

Our earthly marriages remain imperfect. Even in a loving Christian home, there will be disappointments and struggles. Yet God can give us, within that imperfect life, a glimpse of the faithful love that binds Christ and His church together.

And the comfort of that love belongs to every Christian, whether married or unmarried, widowed or living with the grief of a broken marriage. Christ's care for His people does not depend upon the condition of our earthly households. He remains faithful. He will bring His church into the joy of His presence, where sin will no longer wound our fellowship.

So let us look to Him: first for forgiveness, then for wisdom to understand our calling, and for strength to carry it out. Let husbands seek to love and serve their wives. Let wives seek to respect and support their husbands. Let each of us attend to what God has called us to contribute to the life we share.

God's design is good. His grace is greater than our failures. In Christ and His church, we see both the beauty of His plan and the faithful love that will sustain us forever. Amen.

**Pastor David Reim**

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