

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Iowa East Pastor Conference with Wives

October 21, 2013

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: The older women likewise, (be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience) that they be reverent in behavior not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Titus 2: 1-5.

MARRIAGE

I feel like I just fell out of a time capsule. Since 1975, I have been adjusting to being married and focusing on caring for my husband and children. Now my children are all living their own lives. I am at a time of my life where only my husband needs me so I am still adjusting to marriage, but I do now have more time to look around the world outside. What I see, I don't like! Men and women are living together without marriage vows. If couples are married, many have been divorced and many of those are married again and divorced again. Children are in homes without their fathers in their homes and/or not married to their mothers. What really makes me feel like I fell out of a time capsule is the casual acceptance of homosexuality and same sex marriage. What awkward and disgusting homes for the children!

Several years ago, I saw THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL had daily scripture readings from the Old and New Testaments. Since then I have been reading them every year as part of my daily devotions. As I have been reading the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles these past years, I have come to realize that Christians have been taking for granted that our culture understood the tradition of marriage. Western civilization has been dominated and blessed with the influence of Christians. Marriage can only be understood from Scriptures. Therefore the world can only understand marriage when the Christians live marriage according to God's Word. The culture we live in is not dominated by Christians anymore. What happened to the Christians?

Marriage, as Christians should know it, is based on the creation account in the book of Genesis when God created Man from the dust and made Woman from Adam's rib. And God said this was good! Think about it. How many people do you know believe in the 6 day creation by one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible? It certainly is not advocated on news and talk shows, in our public parks, or in any science information, whether in the schools, books or entertainment. The worst is that there are churches regarded as Christian that do not teach it either. The world depends on the Church to teach what marriage is. The cultures depend on the Christians to set the example. When the kings of Israel and Judah repented and returned to being faithful to God, God told them to rid the land of the perverted. The pagans practiced perverted sexual sins as a way of life and worship. If it feels good, it must be good. This is what has become of our culture as well. Marriage, as God has instituted, has become perverted because churches fail to teach

according to Scripture what marriage is. It is no wonder that their members fail to set the example of marriage and get caught up with selfish desires that destroy marriages.

God instituted marriage as good and beneficial to the family which, of course, is good for the culture as well for the world. Sin destroyed what God made good. The world cannot know what marriage is without knowing the one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

The tree of life with ev'ry good In Eden's holy orchard stood,
And of its fruit so pure and sweet God let the man and woman eat.
Yet in this garden also grew Another tree of which they knew;
Its lovely limbs with fruit adorned Against whose eating God had warned.

The stillness of that sacred grove Was broken as the serpent strove
With tempting voice to Eve beguile And Adam too by sin defile.
O day of sadness when the breath Of fear and darkness, doubt and death,
Its awful poison first displayed Within the world so newly made.

What mercy God showed to our race, A plan of rescue by His grace:
In sending One from woman's seed, The One to fill our greatest need
For on a tree up-lifted high His only Son for sin would die,
Would drink the cup of scorn and dread To crush the ancient serpent's head!

Now from that tree of Jesus' shame Flows life eternal in His name;
For all who trust and will believe, Salvation's living fruit receive.
And of this fruit so pure and sweet The Lord invites the world to eat,
To find within this cross of wood The tree of life with ev'ry good.

Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary #302

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 3:24

The beginning of a Christian home is the husband and wife. Being in love and having desires for one another are good and wonderful, but it just isn't enough to make a Christian home last a lifetime. Like Adam and Eve, every husband and wife experience sadness when the breath of fear and darkness, doubt and death is caused by sin against God and to one another. Christian husbands and wives can only survive by cherishing the Gospel. Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us means to overcome the sadness, fear, darkness, doubt and death in marriage.

The devil has successfully 'glorified' Eve's character for women in this world to embrace. The words 'submit' and 'obedience' are used as evil behavior and degrading for women. The world exploits the woman by charming and encouraging her to admire her mind and body to gain independence from the so called bondage of men. From the Scriptures, it should become

common sense to the Christian that self-centeredness leads to slavery to sin, and sin destroys what is good in life on this earth. When God created the world it was very good. God created good order to fill the earth. It is the self-centeredness of man and woman that has caused sadness, fear, darkness, doubt and death. Self-centeredness poisons.

I have wondered what Adam was thinking while Eve was chatting with the devil. Was Adam admiring her mind and 'independent spirit'? Was Adam distracted admiring her naked body? Or perhaps Adam was hungry? (From my experience, I have found that males don't hear or see very well when they are hungry.) Only God knows and He does not tell us. God does tell us in Scripture that 'submit' and 'obedience' equals good order.

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Genesis 2:18

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. I Corinthians 11:3

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.....

....giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

that He might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or an such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

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.

Ephesians 5:1, 2, 20-32

Only Christians understand the joy and comfort of submission and obedience. Christ, our Lord Jesus lived it for our sake, so we can have eternal life. The New Testament over and over lists how Christians can battle sin while we live in our sinful flesh, live in this world, and against the devil. Christians are to love. Luther simply puts from Scriptures how to fear, love, and trust in God and to love one another in the meanings to the commandments. Reading Luther’s small and large catechism, the Christian husband and wife are reminded to humble themselves before God as His dear children and learn to humbly love one another. The Christian wife is the Christian husband’s neighbor. The Christian husband is the Christian wife’s neighbor. More than that, the Christian wife owns her husband and her husband owns his wife.

“But from the beginning of creation, God ‘made them male and female.

‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ‘and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

“Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Mark 10:6-9

Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. I Corinthians 7: 2-4

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.

Ephesians 5:33

Jesus reminds us that what comes from our hearts is sin. When people spend a lot of time together they quite often find fault with one another. This does not exclude husband and wife just because they love and desire one another. I suspect what causes problems and troubles marriage is communication. Communication is very important, but communicating out of one’s heart is not always beneficial. It is best to discipline one’s heart before one speaks. Parents expect their children to ‘not talk back’ because it is disrespectful. Discussing and accusing are two different things. Discussing is beneficial. Accusing is unloving. Jesus discussed with sinners in love and they had often loved Him for it more than not. The Devil accuses which only hurts and destroys and causes distrust.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theft, false witness, blasphemies. Matthew 15:19

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37

“Do not speak evil of one another, brethren (husband and wife). He (husband or wife) speaks evil of a brother (spouse) and judges his brother (spouse), speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another? James 4:11-12

If your brother (spouse) sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. Matthew 18:15

Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
I Corinthians 13:7

Love covers over a multitude of sins. I Peter 4:8

The Christian wife must remember to drown the old Adam daily. She is washed clean of her sins. She is a child of God. A Christian wife needs to remember that her Christian husband is also a child of God washed of his sins. A vow was made for better or worse. Jesus tells us how to make the better of the worse as Luther explains:

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We should pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

The husband and wife are poor miserable sinners. The Christian husband and wife are washed clean of their sins through Baptism and are God's children. The Christian husband and wife are nourished, strengthened and comforted in the Church where the Word and Sacraments are given rightly. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is life and salvation. This makes the Christian home. One cannot know love if one does not know Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. That is true love. When the Christian husband and wife know Jesus in the Scriptures; love, understanding, forgiveness, patience, and wisdom abounds for each other. As poor miserable sinners, Christian husbands and wives get distracted by their sinful flesh, the world, and the devil. They fail to fear, love, and trust in God above all things and love their neighbor (spouse) as themselves. When the Christian husband and wife faithfully read the Scriptures, remember their baptism, attend Divine Services, repent of their sins and receive the forgiveness of sins in the Word and Lord's Supper, they are given the strength and power to love, to understand, to forgive, to be patient and bear one another burdens. The Christian marriage and home depends on this and is not ashamed or burdened. The marriage is glorified as the Church is glorified in Christ!

Lord, thou hast called both man and wife
To live as one on earth,
To serve each other in this life
And thereby give us birth;
The two become in flesh but one,
Man to the woman clinging.

May husband as our Savior laid
His life down for His bride
And took the load that on her weighed
On Him when once He died
Give to his wife his strength and life
And see her pure and spotless.

May wife as, the church, receive
The gifts our Lord hath giv'n
That we no more for sin need grieve
But look to joy in heav'n
Seek from her man a tender hand
For guidance in affliction.

Lord God, our Maker, hear us now,
As we on Thee rely,
This pair with every gift endow
Who for Thy grace now cry!
For Thou hast giv' the gift of heav'n
In Jesus Christ, our Savior!

Through one man, Adam, we were dead
And walked in darkest night
By one man, Jesus, we are led
Into Thy righteous light.
Thy Son made flesh, makes pure and fresh
What died and was decaying.

Lord Jesus, who hast cleansed Thy Bride,
And washed her in Thy blood,
Grant that this man and wife confide
In Thee for every good.
Lord, Grant this pair Thy love to share
Till death shall part them. Amen. Text: Mark Preus, 2004

Married with Children

When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they experienced shame, doubt, fear, and the death of their relationship with their heavenly Father. When Cain killed his brother Abel, Adam and Eve experienced shame, doubt, fear, and death. What pain Adam and Eve's disobedience has produced for their children. Death means no life! Eve had hope for eternal life because God gave them hope of a Savior from sin before He exiled them from the Garden of Eden. Now Eve knows that Cain is not the Savior. Adam and Eve obviously taught their children about this hope of eternal life. Otherwise, how could Abel know how to humble himself in thanksgiving to God in the hope of eternal life? Perhaps Cain thought he was the Savior. Cain certainly thought he was above the law and worthy of God's approval as much as his brother. Cain was a very selfish and self-righteous man. Eve thanked God for giving her Seth as a replacement for Cain. She was still hoping to see her Savior from sin. According to Scripture, Seth believed and taught God's promise of a Savior from sin so that at least one of Seth's sons believed and taught the same so that it went on generation after generation until Noah and his 3 sons.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:5

God warned the Christians to not let their sons marry daughters from families of the wicked. But, oh, those daughters were so beautiful! Who knows what they thought beauty was in those times. But God made clear it matters that mothers are Christians for the continuation of the preaching and teaching of God's Word. Without the preaching and teaching of salvation from sin through Christ all man is lost in eternal death. It is very foolish to expect a woman to submit and respect her Christian husband if the wife is not a Christian. It is very foolish to expect children to embrace and treasure God's Word when their mother is not a Christian. God also has made clear that the wicked culture will overcome and tempt Christians away from faith in Christ as their Savior if the children do not heed God's Word. When one pleases oneself and ignore God's Word there is sorrow, shame, fear, doubt, and death.

When God decided to destroy the world, He remembered His promise to Adam and Eve. Noah embraced God's promise of a Savior from sin. Noah benefited from his father's teaching about God's love for him and his family. God was determined to destroy sin. While Noah was building the Ark, he preached why he was building it. For about 100 years Noah preached and built. Only Noah's wife, sons, and their wives believed God's Word. Only Noah and his wife, sons and their wives were saved by the ark while God washed the earth of sin. And so the preaching and teaching of God's Word, the promise of a Savior from sin, continued because God is faithful.

A Christian wife and mother will submit and respect her Christian husband for the benefit of their children. The Christian wife and mother are compared to the Church. The Church submits and respects Jesus, the bridegroom. The Bride depends on her Bridegroom to protect and provide for her. When the wife and mother trusts and obeys her husband knowing that his head is Christ, she has freedom and order to securely manage the home. The children

learn this freedom and are secure in the home. When the Church fails to submit and respect Jesus, she misleads the children of God into sin. The Church cannot manage the children of God without the authority of Jesus which is her protection against the wrath of God. Jesus purchased this protection for her. The Church cannot have a loving relationship with the children of God without the forgiveness of sins. Without the forgiveness of sins, there is no life and salvation. The Church, the bride, becomes barren. There will only be sadness, sorrow, doubt, fear, and eternal death for the children. The Christian wife and mother can only understand how to manage the home wisely when she sees Christ as her husband's head. Then the Christian wife and mother can truly nurture the family as the faithful Bride nurtures God's children. It is when the husband as well as the wife that refuses to acknowledge Christ as the head of the husband is when there is abuse that lead to more sorrow, fear, doubt, sadness and death. The Christian wife and mother see it not as a burden but as honor to serve her family for their well-being.

What makes my heart ache for the children today is that it is the norm for them to be in day-care from infancy until they enter school. It is harmful enough that the schools have taken time away from the Christian family as it is. There are always unfortunate circumstances when mothers need to be away from their children during this precious time of the children's lives, but it was considered unfortunate. Now day-cares are the norm. It is not natural for a child after 9 months in the womb to be separated from his mother. It is not good for a mother to leave her child to others for his care. Jesus washed His disciple's feet. What does this say to a child when his mother is more worried about her career and income than nurturing her own child? Nurturing seems to be thought as providing lots of stuff for the children instead of providing values in what is right and wrong. Providing values of right and wrong according to God's Word from infancy should not be a burden to Christian parents. The world's idea of nurture destroys the family. Women are encouraged to admire their minds and bodies to gain independence from the so called bondage of men and their children. It only leads to greed and teaches the children self-centeredness. This self-centeredness leads to slavery to sin, and sin destroys what is good in life on this earth. It only brings sadness, sorrow, doubt, fear, and death.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

"but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth or rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also".

Matthew 6: 19-21

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6: 33

When mothers are at home with their children day after day, night after night, all day and all night, she is building a trusting and secure relationship within the whole family. It is not slavery. It is the responsibility of Christian parents in nurturing a Christian family. This responsibility is a privilege God has given. This responsibility is serving God in loving our

neighbor as our selves. The Christian wife and mother lives and sets an example of what trust is. She depends, trusts, and is content with what her husband gives her to manage the home. Even out in the world businesses depend on managers for the benefit of the business. Children learn this from their mother at a very impressionable age. The relationship between the children and the father depends on their mother's relationship with their father. My husband would often complain that the children would assume their father would know about something in their lives if they told me about it and it went the other way around as well. To the children mom and dad are one and the same. As annoying as it can be at times, it is actually the strength of our family relationship. The children's values depend on the values of their parents. The values are one and the same. This relationship is stunted if not destroyed if Christian fathers and Christian mothers do not emphasize cherishing the everyday nurturing for their children. The children learn confidence when their mother is there for them when they are discovering light, moving, voices, smiles, noises, talking, growing, walking, food, and the list goes on. The children learn confidence when their father depends and trust their mother to care for them. Most of all, it is important for the mother to be with her small children discovering Jesus. When the children learn to talk about Jesus at a young age with their parents and their siblings, they are likely to talk about Jesus with their parents when they are older. I am depending on my children to comfort me with Jesus in my old age and facing death. When that precious relationship of trust is built, and when the children venture off their independent way, they will go willingly and confidently go to the safety of their relationship with their parents in times of need.

“Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6

The materialistic mindset is that the children need stuff as a good relationship. So where are the children? They are not in Church Sunday mornings. The children are taking care of their stuff. Stuff is what they need instead of a good relationship with their parents and Jesus?

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

And having food and clothing with these we shall be content.
But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into

many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. I Timothy 6:8-9

The strength of the Christian home is not dependent on the culture. It is dependent on the home treasuring God's Word. I'm afraid that many Christians have taken for granted and depended on a Christian culture to raise Christian children. The American culture boasted of her priorities: Family, Church, and Community. Now it is Community/Church then Family, whatever that is! Our culture has been convinced that the family for its well-being should be dependent on institutions to nurture the family. With that line of thinking, many Christian parents have abdicated their responsibility to teach their children to treasure God's Word and God's love for them to others. Understandably, Christian parents would entrust and depend on Church workers and their influence to instill in their children to treasure God's Word and God's love for them. But look around. Where are the children? There are less people attending church now than there were when I was a child. Where did the children go? Why are they not in church with their children? Most did not learn to treasure God's Word and God's love for them at home where their parents treasured God's Word. The children learned the parents treasured something else instead. Christian parents have failed to talk theology and help their children to apply God's Word to their daily lives in their homes. When Jesus doesn't appear as one of the family, the children won't regard Jesus at all.

When our heavenly Father gives gifts, He expects to be thanked. Not only should we give thanks to Him, but our heavenly Father wants us to fear, love and trust Him and love our neighbor as ourselves. This should not be so surprising. Don't mothers and fathers want their children to be thankful to them and fear, love, and trust them and their children to love one another as themselves? Our heavenly Father expects His children to reflect this love by their service in serving Him and others. Parents also expect the same from their children for themselves. But it is not likely to happen if the parents are not thankful to our heavenly Father for the children He has given them. And it is not likely the children will reflect love for their parents or God if the parents are not humbled and thankful before God for the opportunity, privilege and honor to serve their Heavenly Father. When parents nurture their children in God's Word, the parents are serving God and He is pleased.

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3: 16

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:17.

There is no such thing as a perfect husband, wife, father, mother, son or daughter. Only our heavenly Father and His Son, our Lord and Brother, Jesus Christ is. The Christian family is where there are least 2 gathered. Jesus is there as the Head. Jesus is part of the family. When Christian parents treasure God's Word and God's love for them, they treasure their children made in the image of God. The children are God's gift to the parents. When God gives the gifts of children to Christian husband and wife, God wants the Christian parents to baptize and teach their children the Good News from Jesus. This makes a better culture. This is a great comfort and not a burden.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 19: 19-20.

When the Christian parents teach their children in the home and also treasure taking their children to church as God's gift to them, then the children will more likely go out into the world treasuring God's Word and God's love for them and, also, treasure going to church as God's gift to them. The children are given treasures and weapons to battle and overcome their sinful flesh, the devil, and the world. The Christian parents need to set the example, teach and nurture their children. The Christian family home is like a rescue boat that on a regular basis travel to the Church where the Word and Sacraments are given rightly. The Church, like the ark did for Noah and his family, feeds us, keeps, and gives us strength in the forgiveness of sins. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is life everlasting. This is the light that the Christian family shines to the world! This makes a better culture!

God's Word is our great heritage,
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way;
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure,
Throughout all generations.

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