

October 4, 2009 EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Proper 22)

THE PSALM AND THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Psalm 128

Lay Minister: 1 Blessed are all who fear the LORD,

People: who walk in his ways.

Lay Minister: 2 You will eat the fruit of your labor;

Women: blessings and prosperity will be yours.

Lay Minister: 3 Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;

Women: your sons will be like olive shoots around your table.

Men: 4 Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD.

Lay Minister: 5 May the LORD bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, 6 and may you live to see your children's children.

People: Peace be upon Israel.

Lay Minister: We begin seeking the blessings of God and to walk in His ways.

People: We begin worshipping the God and Father of us all, in the name of God the Father, and in the name of God the Son, and in the name of God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

Merciful Father, You put children and adults in families, and your children in the family of the church. Help us to live as your children, and help us to live in faith and love in our homes. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our

Lord,

who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Genesis 2: 18–25

page

(Because 'It is not good . . . to be alone,' God creates marriage!)

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." 19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man 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."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. 25 The man and his wife were both naked, and

they felt no shame.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Hebrews 2: 1–13 (14–18) page

(The founder of our salvation is made perfect through suffering.)

1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. 2 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. 5 It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. 6 But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? 7 You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor 8 and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11 Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Mark 10: 2–16 (*Jesus uses a question to teach about marriage and to welcome little children.*)

2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore **what God has joined together, let man not separate.**"

10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

13 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, **"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.** 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

THE SERMON **Discipleship** – Where does living for God Begin? (home before church, but in Father leads to home.)

INTRO - Many of you knew Carol Warren. She was the wife of Pastor Bill Warren of Anchorage Lutheran. For years 8 years Carol was the Director of Lutheran Social Services Alaska. The agency became more focused, more effective in helping people, and grew under her leadership. The city recognized LSSA with special grants and recognition. So did the Anchorage Daily News. LSSA helped the people at risk in Anchorage and Alaska in part because of the able leadership of Carol.

However, many of you don't know that this was not easy work for Carol. In fact, serving the poor and needy was incredibly hard. There were times she wanted to quit. But she did not. As a child of God who knew Jesus' love in her life, as someone who cared for others, Carol did what she might not have chosen to do, because of who she was in Jesus. Carol was a follower of Jesus, a disciple, and Carol's life made a difference.

I. This month we are looking at discipleship. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus. Do you know what our mission statement says. Look at our bulletin, please. "Guided by God's Holy Spirit we will share our Savior Jesus, so that our members, our community and all people live and grow in Biblical Christian faith." Do you know the best way to share Jesus? Even more than with our words, we share Jesus with our lives and actions. One definition of a disciple is someone whose life makes a difference for others, because of Jesus.

II. Today's lesson paints another picture of a disciple of Jesus. It is someone who works to support his family, and families.

A. Listen to the words of Jesus.

1. In verse 9 Jesus says, **what God has joined together, let man not separate.** Jesus is concerned for marriage.

2. In verse 14 Jesus says, "**Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.** Jesus cares for and is concerned for children.

B. A disciple of Jesus will work to support his family and others.

C. I know that families take many different forms.

1. Some here today are single, but we had a mother and father, and know other families. A disciple makes a difference by bringing faith and love to families.

2. Some here today may not have children. But we were children, and we know families with children. We may even be an uncle or aunt. A disciple makes a difference by bringing faith and love to families.

II. A number of years ago the state of Oklahoma did a study on the economics of the state. While the rest of the country was doing well financially, Oklahoma was struggling financially. Do you know what the study showed was one of the main causes for Oklahoma's economic struggles, the high rate of divorce. Oklahoma's rate of divorce was higher even than others states, and the effects of alimony and child support and single parent household was hurting the state. Do you know what else, Oklahoma is

one of the most churched states in the United States. Unfortunately, even though God's children are called to show their discipleship by bringing faith and love to families, we often fail.

A. In fact, look at today's lesson.

1. Jesus told the disciples **what God has joined together, let man not separate.**" Do you know why he said this. Because they were looking for ways to get out of marriage, rather than bringing faith and love to their families.

2. Jesus told his disciples "**Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**" He had to tell them this because Jesus' disciples were keeping the little children away from him.

B. Before you feel like perhaps you have failed this discipleship test, let me assure you that many have.

1. Marriages do not always last.

2. In fact, according to statistics, about 1/4 of those here today were abused in some way as a child. And, I don't mean disciplined. The Bible does talk about corporal punishment in a positive way. But, there is a difference between discipline and abuse, and about 1/4 have been abused. In the rural areas of Alaska, the numbers are significantly higher, unfortunately.

C. Even when God's people have failed, he continues to call them to supporting families through faith and love.

III. Bill and Carol did not have children. But they had nephews and nieces, and they worked to encourage them in faith. There is a reason.

A. First, families are God's plan to help his children. Do you know that Genesis 4:26 is the first recorded act of worship in the Bible. But, God made families in Genesis 1 and 2. God knows that his people

1. God intends for people to live in families so they can help each other in a difficult world.

2. As we live in a tough economy, a time of war, where people are ill, and we have troubles, God intends for husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters to be helpers to one another and to make a difference.

3. In fact, if we look at God's order in creation, actually families support the church before the church supports families. Discipleship starts in the home!

B. Even when our families have not been perfect, we continue to bring faith and love, because Jesus who calls us to support marriage, and love children, died to pay for our sins.

1. You see, Jesus forgives our sins, and calls us to holy lives, to the lives that make a difference, to lives of discipleship.

2. Even when we have failed, we continue to bring faith and love because Jesus forgives us, and Jesus can and does bring renewal to others.

C. And, when people do live alone, God's plan is for his forgiven people, his people who have received his love, to share that faith and forgiveness and love in His family the

church.

CONCLUSION - At the beginning of each spring, I take the battery from my boat, and the battery from my lawnmower, and I charge them. I charge them so I can use them. That is why we are here today. We are being taught, forgiven, encouraged, strengthened so we can go make a difference with our lives of discipleship. We are being strengthened so we can bring faith and love to the families in our congregation, and in our community, and to God's family of church.