

**Love and Respect**  
**Ephesians 5:22-33**  
**August 25, 2024**

As I asked in the bulletin last week: “What statement in the marriage vows raises the most contention?” It is the first part of the first verse of the text for the sermon today. *Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your husband . . .*” Yes, “wives, submit to your husbands.” In our individualistic world we live in here in the U.S. it seems to be a tough nut to swallow. That word “submit” holds somewhat of a bad connotation. It seems imply that a bride’s life is not her own and that someone, her husband has it in his hands.

When I was growing up we always had lots of livestock. It was our responsibility to take care of them the best way possible, in a way that would be best for them. They were to center stage. We and my brothers were to make sure they were taken care of, fed and having a place to get out of the wind etc. It was what brought us to Missouri from Nebraska when my Dad almost lost his life in a blizzard that ended up killing 100 of 130 head of yearling cattle.

The Lord led him to a corner post that he knew so that he was able to follow the fence back home. He then decided to sell the farm and move some place where blizzards wouldn’t be a problem. That move set in motion a life for me that led me to where I am today.

As kids we submitted to the rules of our family. It was engrained in us to take care of the livestock first and when we saw where someone didn’t have that same care for their livestock, it would touch our hearts and get us to thinking how our livestock should be glad they had us taking care of them.

When I go into these verses with a couple that is planning to get married, I haven’t had any who weren’t willing to use the marriage vows for their wedding. I know when you see marriages on TV many of them come up with marriage vows of their own. Yet, when it is only humans involved, what challenges are there in marriages?

I know you have probably heard that there is just as much divorce among “Christians” as there is among those who aren’t. What they haven’t looked into, is the Christians that were included in the survey. Were they Christians that just said they were Christians? You know some of them. They are the ones who say they are Christians but haven’t stepped foot in the Lord’s house except for Christmas and Easter if even that for years, maybe since Mom and Dad took them to Sunday school. If the

study took into account only Christian couples who were in church and Bible Study on a regular basis and looked at their rate of divorce, there would be a difference and probably a great difference.

That isn't to say Christians don't get divorced. Yes, some get involved with another that isn't who they thought they were and find out later, after getting married, that the person they are married to doesn't want to be married or isn't sticking to the vows they had made. Yes, there even may have been some of the blame on your own part but yes, Jesus came for that sin as well.

The thing of it is, we have this passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He is wanting them to have a marriage, a great marriage that has an order about it that will be best for those who are married, who are taking the vows of marriage. He wants marriages to be the best and the best way to look at it is the relationship that Christ has with the Church.

It is interesting that Paul sees it as a mystery. If he who is writing this sees it as a mystery in his day, can it be any different today? Yes, the people of Ephesus may have been like the people of today. There were many who weren't believers who didn't see marriage for what it should be either. Oh, Paul writes it is talking about Christ and the Church as the Church is the bride of Christ and yet he wants to equate marriage with that special relationship, the relationship where a husband, the head of the wife would go so far for her that he would even die for her because she is so precious to him.

We have various marriage accounts in the Bible. We have marriage feasts lasting many days as Jesus' first recorded miracle is the one where He turned water in some large clay containers into the best wine. Yes, his mom knew that He could handle this problem of no more wine. She knew He could come to the rescue to finish off the celebration. He did and the wedding, I guess finished in fine fashion.

Yes, there are some men who want what a woman has but don't want to have the rest of it. They lust for a woman but where is the love he is supposed to have, to display? It is not there and sorry to say women will let in to them and not wait for the husband who will not look to himself first but to her, not livestock but a woman whom he should cherish, wanting her to be the best she can be.

Paul writes of presenting the church, the wife to himself in spender, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Yes, she may have some wrinkles after a while but how do you see her, your wife? Just as beautiful or maybe even more in many ways than when

you first married her. Yes, you want the best for her and are at a loss when she has to deal with attacks on her life that you can do nothing about.

Paul makes mention of a man leaving father and mother and the two becoming one flesh. He sees it like the Church, the wife of Jesus becoming one with her. Yes, Christ lives in the Church as He lives in each of us who are believers, the Church. He lives in us through His Holy Spirit, given in us through our baptisms, through the water and the Word.

He lives in us. Yes, we know we don't always live up to who He is in us. No, we don't always treat our spouses the way we are supposed to. We may look at our situation and think they don't deserve our love or respect. We want to point the finger and point their faults and not our own. We as scriptures says only look at the speck in their eye and not the log in our own. Yes, we can all do better when it comes to that relationship.

Paul pointed to man and wife but what about Christ and the Church? He came through for her and continues to come through for her. He lived the perfect life for her, giving up Himself for her on that cross, dying so that she would be sanctified, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word so that she should be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she, the Church might be holy and without blemish.

Made holy. Yes, Jesus shed His blood and gave His body unto death so that we might be holy and without blemish before God the Father who sent Jesus to this earth to do what He did so that we would be the perfect bride.

You may say to yourself that you are anything but a perfect bride. On our own we don't have the wedding clothes to come to the wedding. No our so called good works are like filthy rags before God. We need Jesus to clothe us with His white robe of righteousness. No one can enter into our heavenly home without it.

So many would say, like Paul said about the relationship between Christ and His Church that it is a mystery. They would say how could it be different than the world that we would say is created by God. The world around us says you can't get something for nothing, meaning a person has to do something in order for you to get ahead, to appease God.

Think about every other religion other than Christianity. We think of those who in the Old Testament offered their children in the fire. Today there are those who don't offer their children in the fire but offer them to the abortionist to tear limb from limb or to

a pill that kills as well. Life that is supposed to be in the hands of the one who has bought each of us and everyone is being robbed of those who are His.

You may be thinking how can they be His, when they are headed to hell unless the Holy Spirit changes their hearts. Just because they keep rejecting what is theirs in Christ, does not mean that Jesus didn't go to the cross for them and the whole world. Did His shed blood cover their sins as well as yours? Yes it did, yes it does and yet like a gift given that is never opened, they are blind to that fact. They need the Holy Spirit to open their eyes and especially their hearts to who Jesus is and what He has done for them.

They are like a lot of men today who want to act like there is a marriage certificate but don't want to be married. The Lord is blessing their lives and yet they don't see who is providing all the "good" stuff for them.

Yes, the world may see all the "good" things in the world but how many attribute it to the Lord? It is like the Lord is seeing how much rope it is going to take for them to hang themselves or to get them to see that no matter how much they have, it will not replace who He should be in their lives. All we have to do is to see how so many have all they could want in this world but does it make them happy, content? No, they seem to have more problems than all of us combined. They turn to drugs or sex or power at any cost to fill up their longing but that can only be had in Christ.

I could say they have the wrong idea and yet how many here don't spend the time we should in God's Word for us? How many think other things are more important than coming together in Bible Study? How many pews are empty or not filled with members who seem to think it is more important to look to their own desires, wants and commitments than to the commitment they made to the Lord when they were confirmed?

We can say we are Christians and yes, we are and yet what happened to our respect for Jesus and what He has done and continues to do for us? Yes, we are poor miserable sinners in need of forgiveness and the commitment to Him as a wife to her husband to submit to the yoke that is easy, the burden that is light.

Love and respect, the love of Christ and the respect for Him and what He has done is the reason we submit to Him and His way for us. It, in many ways, may still be a little mystery even though we know it is true. May His Holy Spirit, who lives in us, help us to submit fully to Him and His will for us.