

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Sunday, October 3, 2021 Sermon

A small child receives an allowance each week to spend as they will. It is a gift. There were chores and then there was an allowance. At least in my day, it's purpose was to begin the process of teaching the boundaries and responsibilities, which we call stewardship. It was not the thing itself, but a tool to teach character, refining and shaping the one who did not know to understand balance and responsibility in life. It was and is an allowance. But allowances can be abused.

“For this reason, God allowed,” Jesus said. It is an allowance. It is because of the hardness of heart that God allows these things. Whether it is marriage, or any of the other institutions that are the foundation of society, we often look for the exception rather than the rule. This kind of thinking takes us down a slope that never seems to stop increasing its slippery slope.

The hardness of the heart. Pharaoh brought ravage against his people because of his hardness of heart. How many wars and calamities have been brought on because of the hardness of heart? In our day, many do not acknowledge that marriage something instituted by God. “In love we see only two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of the generations, which God causes to come and to pass away to His glory, and calls into His kingdom . . . It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love.” But the hardness of hearts is summed up in one of the most pathetic exchange of vows I ever heard, “As long as we both shall love.” Our culture has made allowances. They are against God's created order.

I suppose, on the one hand, this lack of the commitment of marriage has kept people more honest in a very disingenuous way, for now more than half of the babies born are born to unwed parents. We even have new phrases that speak of the infidelity, men referring to their children's mothers as the baby-momma. Sadly, I know too many that have children from multiple partners. Not only for marriage, but for our life of faith, the Lord unites us with Christ. The faithful are called the bride of Christ. This world may tempt us with the idea that, like what marriage has become, where we can pick and choose and, if we fall out of love with Jesus, we can go our own way. But that is not love. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, love does not fail.

I know that for many years, the church was very harsh on those who divorced. But let us see behind the scenes in order to seek to grab hold of what Christ will teach us about fidelity and how it applies to all of us in our everyday life. God created marriage. He called it good. I have often pondered at the greater meaning of what God intended through this foundational institution.

Through marriage, families are merged, perpetuated, and given historic continuity. The child born in wedlock inherits a rich heritage that goes all the way back to Adam and Eve. Stories upon stories build up. I tell you that I have been privileged to hear the stories of our older members. I cherish hearing the individual stories and the way in which our Lord has woven a tapestry of His presence in the lives of others. It is a witness of His ever present support which sustains us as we live this life of faith which we have been given.

Beyond this, these are the foundational building blocks of society upon which every culture is built. Throughout human history, there has always been a bond of marriage, valued and maintained in every culture. If there is no marriage, then it becomes a free-for-all and anarchy. We do well to seek understanding of the difference between the allowance God has granted for our sinfulness and the grace which is to restore us to having a right perspective on

things and doing them the way the Lord has intended. More than this, we see that Jesus told us that He is the bridegroom and we are the bride. Is marriage, as established by God in this age, merely a precursor to the reality in eternity? If so, it pertains to all of the faithful in this age, those married in this world and those who are not. God does not divide, the devil does. Christ is uniting us as His bride to be a fellow heir. We then, so to speak, are the beloved bride of Christ, betrothed to Him through His shed blood in order to redeem us.

What then? We are called into a living, vital, and eternal relationship. Yes, there are the married of this world and, in obedience to Christ, we are to seek what it means to have fidelity in our faithfulness to the faith we have been given. Many of us our more like Gomer to Hosea, playing the prostitute with the things of this world. In this age of feelings, we become caught up in all the devilishness. Christ calls for us to die to these things in order to be resurrected with Him to a new life that is preparing to be with Christ forever.

Obviously divorce has always been an issue. We want what we want in this world. But behind this is the reality of our life of faith which calls for us to live in the righteousness that, through Christ, is made possible by His grace. That grace is to be applied to all of our relationships in this age. It begins with marriage.

For those who have been married decades, you understand that marriage is what sustained your love. It is hard work and takes commitment to the vows spoken before God. Beyond that, it is not about you, but about the One who has called you into this holy institution. It is not a contractual relationship that has an out. The Lord intends that the two become one just as we shall be one with Christ if we are in Him and He in us. Our own person, yet truly united in, through, and by the One through whom all things have their being.

Come as little children, trusting the Heavenly Father, and be guided in the power of the Holy Spirit to live as the Lord intends that we live. Be rid of the arrogance that we adults so quickly adopt and remain with childlike trust as the Lord teaches us all that we need to know.

Even now, the battle of this world rages on, but be comforted by the fact that Christ is bringing all things in subjection to the will of our Heavenly Father. We may not know what we shall be in heaven, but we do know that we are being conformed to the image of Christ. When we think of the gift of marriage, see the successes, speaking in a worldly way, where the two are unique, but also one. They love each other no matter what. The feelings come and go, but the love continues in the blessing of God.

We are, for now, a little lower than the angels, but then, resurrected in and through Christ, we shall ascend to be with Him and shall no longer be lower than the angels. Perhaps this is why Lucifer became angry and rebelled against God. God knows. On a side note, I chafe every time I hear one speaking of another departed, "They are now an angel." No they are not. The word of God tells us otherwise. Be governed by the word and not by the nonsense of this age.

The Lord unites us with Him by faith, through grace, so that we may be forever united with Him in a bond that cannot be broken. You who are married, apply these principles to your own marriage. You who are not, remain with fidelity to the One who has redeemed you knowing that Your eternal life is in His hands. Through all things, remain faithful in a world that is faithless.

We can do things the world's way, or we can look to the Lord who created the perfect way. Will you listen to the One who is the Word made flesh and follow the way He has set before you? May we all be blessed with open hearts, ears, and minds and follow our Lord and Savior into eternity.

