

October 5 & 9– Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin
The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Dear Friends in Christ

Today the media attention for many is on the Green Bay Packer game going on right now in London. As I was greeting people entering church several of you even told me the current score. Last week was different, wasn't it? Many of us watched TV as Hurricane Ian tore up the southwest coast of Florida. Even solid, well-built structures were ripped apart by the force of that vicious category 4 storm. How interesting that Jesus in the gospel lesson this morning tells us that when we build our spiritual houses on his words, they will be able to withstand even category 4 storms sent by Satan. That truly fits well with our special theme this month: the Christian and the 6th Commandment. **Or special focus today is on a Christian couple after the wedding.** In our Scripture readings we have heard about the blessings that God gives through marriage. All four portions of Scripture today urge us to:

BUILD YOUR HOME ON THE ONLY SOLID FOUNDATION!

1. In our Genesis reading this morning we heard about the establishing of the institution of marriage when God formed Eve and brought her to Adam. God wasn't announcing a new discovery when he said *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”* In God's great design of his creation he made Adam and Eve to be partners suitable for each other. He made them male and female so that they would complement and complete each other. He made them to be companions to satisfy each other's emotional needs.

Companionship is the first great blessing that God gives to married couples. A husband and wife are to be each other's best friends. When an unmarried couple is dating it is pretty easy to be best of friends, spending lots of time together. And when they aren't together, they are looking forward to the next date. God wants a married couple to retain that same eagerness to spend time together to continue after the wedding. It isn't wrong for a husband or wife to have good friends outside of their marriage. But those friendships should always be secondary. As the years roll by it can be challenging to not let someone else become your confidant, your go-to person for sharing thoughts and ideas.

So, spouses, keep nurturing that interest in each other. Part of companionship is learning and responding to the desires and needs of your spouse. Husbands, it might mean that you learn some things about fabrics and threads, about home decorating and make up, even learning how to bake your wife's favorite dessert. You might even purposely go to the Hallmark channel. Wives, it just might be good to get your hands greasy as you help with auto maintenance and an hour or two in the deer stand just might reveal renewed appreciation for the majesty of God's creation.

Spouses, make an effort to listen and learn as you interact with your better half. Having children will provide one area of shared common interest, but make sure that you have your together time, apart from the children. Give your parents grandparent time, so that you have some time to focus on just each other. Be vulnerable with each other as you share your deepest fears and joys, your hopes and dreams.

This is the companionship that Adam and Eve enjoyed perfectly up until they sinned. This companionship is God's blessing to a husband wife. When we nurture and enjoy this companionship we are building our marriages, our homes and the only solid foundation.

2. The portion of the two psalms which we read this morning reminds us that the second great blessing that God gives through marriage is children. *Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.* ¹ *Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him.* ² *You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and*

prosperity will be yours. ³ Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. ⁴ Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the LORD.

What an important reminder King Solomon has for us in these verses! Raising children can be exhausting and expensive. But Scripture reminds us that they are wonderful blessings from God. They are worth putting in our greatest effort, time and guidance. Children whose lives are built on God's words will be a blessing to their parents and to their society and community. The fall into sin brought sorrow and disappointment into the family and frustration and failure into our work. Nevertheless, family and work are still blessings from God and much evidence still remains that supports the Creator's verdict, "It is very good."

Solomon talked about the grapevine and the olive tree. These are the two most important agricultural plants for the Israelites. The vine was symbol of fertility and blessing. The wine that came from the vine produced joy. The vine needed to be carefully nurtured and cared for. The vine and its branches serves as a symbol of the relationship of Israel to the Lord. They also are representative of how God wants a married couple to view children. As the vintner cares for the vine, so parents should care for their children.

The olive tree was a symbol of long life and productivity. Children are compared to the shoots springing directly from the tree, which is their parent. They receive their lives from parents and carry on their life and work. As children are a blessing to their parents, so also God-fearing children are a blessing on the nation. As the family goes, so goes the nation. The blessing of a nation starts with the godliness in the hearts of parents. Such parents fear God and obey his commandments. Their strength flows to the children through the contentment and peace that come from this strength. From solid families strength flows to the nation. From solid, godly families come workers who will build up the nation, parents who will raise godly children, and children who are our hope for the future. Without such families the future is dark. From such families the nation and the church find strength.

Receive your children as blessings from God and nurture them to be blessings to others in their lives. Following this guidance will be building your marriage on the solid foundation which will be able to withstand the assaults of the world and Satan.

3. The third blessing that God gives to married couples is the gift of sexual happiness. Sometimes we call this chastity. Paul was very direct with the Corinthians. He gives human beings sexual desires and wants husband and wife to bring sexually enjoyment and happiness to his/her spouse. Sexual activity between a spouses connects them both physically and emotionally. This is the deepest bond that two people can know. Spouse are not to deprive each other of sexual relations, except by the agreement of both and then only for a short time. When spouses deprive each other of sexual relations, sexual desires are no satisfied and Satan eagerly steps in to offer other solutions to sexual desires. Spouses are to learn to know each other's bodies well and strive to bring happiness and joy to each other.

It is interesting that Paul, who was not married, has so much to say to marred people. The Holy Spirit guided his words also as he talks to single people, to widows and divorcees. He says that it is a great blessing if a person is able to remain single and keep their sexual desires under control. This persons focus and energy can be turned toward serving others and sharing the gospel.

It is important for each Christians to know what blessings God gives to married couples. This gives us guidance for our prayer life as well as information to share with couples when we see the Lord's blessings not used as he intended.

The 6th Commandment has not been kept perfectly by any married couple. How thankful we are that Jesus' redemption provides forgiveness for every sin and righteousness to every believer. He is the motivation for us to received and rightly use the blessings that he gives after the wedding.