

Order of Worship for October 3, 2021

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Opening Hymn: *“With the Lord Begin Your Task”* – **Hymn #869**

Confession and Forgiveness: p. 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: Unless the LORD builds the house,

C: those who build it labor in vain.

P: Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,

C: the fruit of the womb a reward.

P: Like arrows in the hand of a warrior

C: are the children of one’s youth.

P: Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!

C: He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: Unless the LORD builds the house,

C: those who build it labor in vain.

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy) p. 152-3

Hymn of Praise (*“This Is the Feast”*) p. 155

Salutation p. 156

Prayer of the Day:

P: Merciful Father, Your patience and loving-kindness toward us have no end. Grant that by Your Holy Spirit we may always think and do those things that are pleasing in Your sight; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 2:18–25

R: Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman,

because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 2:1–18

R: Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will. Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, “What is man, that You are mindful of him, or the son of man, that You care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to Him, He left nothing outside His control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him. But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one origin. That is why He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, “I will tell of Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise.” And again, “I will put My trust in Him.” And again, “Behold, I and the children God has given Me.”

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make atoning Sacrifice for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse: (p. 156)

Holy Gospel: Mark 10:2–16

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 10th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord (sung).

P: Pharisees came up and in order to test [Jesus] asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation,

‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

And in the house the disciples asked Jesus again about this matter.

And He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

And they were bringing children to Jesus that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ (sung).

Sermon Hymn: “*Love in Christ is Strong and Living*” - **Hymn #706**

Sermon: “*Male, Female, or What?*” - **Mark 10:2–16**

This is probably for many of you before your time, but a revolutionary show on TV was “All in the Family.” It was about an older couple in New York, Archie and Edith Bunker. They began each show with them singing a song, “Those Were the Days.” The song included the line: “Girls were girls and men were men.” In the 1970’s traditional people bemoaned how men wore long hair and girls dressed in slacks.

In 1998 the rock group “Metallica” covered the Bob Seger song, “Turn the Page,” which includes the lines about being on the road and going into a restaurant:

Yeah, most times you can't hear 'em talk, Other times you can

All the same old clichés, Is it woman? Is it man?

And you always seem outnumbered, You don't dare make a stand

Make your stand.

The reference in the song to comments about being a woman or a man made sense when Seger wrote the song in 1972 (the same time as “All in the Family”), but by 1998 men having long hair was no issue and many men had returned to wearing short hair.

But today Archie’s and Edith’s world has gotten a lot more complicated. It isn’t just a matter of how you look, but what it means today to be “male” and “female. We have known that there are rare cases of people who are physically both male and female. But studies show that other people have different levels of “femaleness” or “maleness” in their hormones. Science shows us that we are in some respects all female until hormones kick in and make males male. But beyond those scientific claims today are all the people who feel that they are deep down a man or woman or both or neither. There is a whole new vocabulary with words like “cis” and “trans,” and a whole new array of personal pronouns to describe that. Here are some statements that people make in light of this:

“Men and women are not different.”

“A man can be trapped in a woman’s body.”

“A person can be both male and female.”
“There are five sexes.”
“Some people are neither male nor female.”
“There are an infinite number of ‘genders’ or ‘gender identities.’”
“You may have an infinite number of genders inside you.”
“People may choose their own gender.”
“Gender is fluid.”
“Gender is purely a social construct.”

So what does it mean to be “male” and “female?”

What can drive that questioning is the emphasis we have in our culture on freedom. I do not want to get into an argument about whether or not we should wear face masks, but realize government edicts that demand wearing them are not questioned in most countries. You do what you are told to do. But in our world there is so much put into what “feels” right to us. So shouldn’t what we feel determine who we are?

In contrast to that we have the words of Genesis about the creation of humans which was quoted by Jesus: “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’”

As we join together for worship it can be easy for us to see what is going on in the world as the evil of this world, which we are not a part of and be satisfied that we are “above” all of that. But when Jesus spoke, he was not speaking to a group of pagans who had very little constraints about sexuality. They felt men were men, and women were women, but that was because they lived in a male dominated world where men could do what they want, have sex with anyone male or female as long as it wasn’t another man’s wife. Jesus was speaking to devout Jews who convinced themselves they were above all that evil. They did not allow any kind of sexual relations except between men and women in marriage, but men were free to have more than one wife and to “throw away” unwanted wives by divorce. In light of that Jesus says bluntly asks them:

“What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.” against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

Jesus was not speaking to the “world out there,” but to the people who claimed to be God’s. They had taken God’s Word which was given to guide people into the loving relationship of marriage and twisted to do what “felt” right to them without having to feel guilty about it.

It can be easy for us to put on a pedestal the homosexuality and emphasis on the freedom to change gender identity, because for so many of us those aren't temptations. I can easily point to how bad people who embrace those things are and make ourselves look good at the same time. That's what the Pharisees were so good at. So can we be.

By comparison do we emphasize lying or gossip or the thoughts we have of jealousy or contempt. Those are things that can easily tempt us. Those are not the kinds of sins we want to point out because "I" become the one who looks bad. "I'm" the evil one.

So what do we do? Do we change what God created? When Jesus said, "God made them male and female," He was quoting the Old Testament. We do not follow the laws of the Old Testament about what to eat, festivals to celebrate, sacrifices, "cleanness" and "uncleanness," and all of that. So why not just accept that we are what we want to be, what we "feel" we are?

I can jump off a cliff and say, "I don't feel like falling," That doesn't keep me from falling. I can dive into deep water without knowing how to swim and say, "I don't feel like sinking," but that won't keep me from drowning. The ideas about basic morality—no lying, no stealing, no cheating, no adultery, no murder, being male and female—are found throughout the world and have been there at least since it was first recorded by history. Those are not optional, up to us to determine, but the way the world was created just as surely as the laws of physics. Why? Because as Jesus reminds us, "But from the beginning of creation." God made this world and us; He ought to know how best for us to live.

So what do we do? Try to live a perfect life following all His commands? Even apart from what God says, people within all cultures and in all times fail to do the good they know they should do and do the evil they know they should not do. Only if we act like the Pharisees spending so much time showing the sins of others so they could look so good can we pretend that we are perfect. But if we live using what we "feel" is good, then we are also just pretending we are okay, when we are not.

That is why we need to remember who was speaking in our lesson and who said, "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'" Jesus doesn't let us off by saying we are okay or saying that we are better than others. No one spoke more in the Bible about the suffering of hell that sinners deserve more than Jesus. Instead Jesus gives us forgiveness. He doesn't say "You're okay," but "Your sins are forgiven." Look at the people Jesus accepted. They were like the woman caught in adultery, the Canaanite woman who asked Jesus to heal her daughter, or the tax collector Zacchaeus. They knew full well they were not "okay." And in that forgiveness they were freed to live not according to what felt "good" to them, but in terms of loving God and others, like Zacchaeus who paid back all those he had cheated.

"God created them male and female." Jesus is affirming that humanity can never be just male or female. It is not humanity unless there are both. He said that in a world in which women were often thought of as property. He is affirming that "maleness" and "femaleness" are good, because He made us that way, and as I saw years ago in a poster around here, "God doesn't make junk." That is also not simple because we live in a world infested with sin. It is

the world that convinces us that we know better than God. It is also a world in which we are tempted to try to control God by making others look worse and us look better. But the answer to that fallen world is not to put it over there and say we don't live in it or to say it is better to just accept it. The answer is to go to the cross of Jesus, let Him forgive us of that sin, then be freed to live with what He has given us as men and women, as tall and short, as Caucasian, Hispanic, African, or Asian. Even though we face the effects of sin which give us disabilities, sickness, and aging, we can rejoice in who we are as the people who have been made and "remade" through forgiveness by God.

Nicene Creed:

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in Your mercy;

C: hear our prayer.

Service of the Sacrament

Preface p. 160

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

P: It is truly good, right, and proper. . .

Sanctus ("*Holy, Holy, Holy*"): p.161

Prayer of Thanksgiving

(Pastor) **C: Amen.**

Lord's Prayer and Words of our Lord p.162

Peace of the Lord and Agnus Dei ("*Lamb of God*") p. 163

Distribution of Holy Communion:

Choir Anthem: "The King of Love" arr. Paul Christiansen (8:30)

Brass Anthem (11)

"Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way" – **Hymn #857**

"I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table" – **Hymn #618**

Dismissal

Song After Communion: "*Thank the Lord*" p. 164

Prayer After Communion:

P: Let us pray... **C: Amen.**

Blessing p.166 (sung)

Closing Hymn: "*How Wide the Love of Christ*" – **Hymn #535**

Postlude