

22 September 2024
18 Sunday after Pentecost

The Family: Husband and Wife

Malachi 2.13-16

Psalm 127

1 Corinthians 13

Mark 10.2-12

The family is the foundational unit of society, and at the heart of every family is the relationship between husband and wife. This relationship, ordained by God, is a reflection of His covenant love for His people. As we reflect on the Scriptures today, we will explore the theology of family life, the importance of the husband and wife relationship, and how faith plays a central role in sustaining and nurturing a godly family. The passages from Malachi, Psalm 127, 1 Corinthians 13, and Mark provide us with profound insights into these themes.

I. The Covenant of Marriage: A Divine Institution (Malachi 2:13-16) In the book of Malachi, God speaks strongly against the Israelites for their unfaithfulness, particularly in their marriages. The prophet emphasizes that marriage is a covenant before God, not just a social contract. Malachi 2:14 says, "The LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant." The covenant of marriage is sacred because it is ordained by God Himself. It is not merely a legal agreement but a spiritual bond that reflects God's covenant relationship with His people. Just as God is faithful to His covenant with us, so too are husbands and wives called to be faithful to each other. The cross of Jesus Christ is the ultimate demonstration of covenantal love, and it is through the cross that we learn what it means to love and to be faithful in marriage.

The theology of family life begins with understanding that marriage is a divine institution. It is God who joins a man and a woman together, and it is God who sustains their union. This understanding leads us to approach marriage with reverence, recognizing that our relationship with our spouse is a reflection of our relationship with God.

II. Building a Godly Home: The Role of Faith (Psalm 127) Psalm 127 reminds us that "Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain." This Psalm underscores the importance of relying on God to build and sustain our families. A godly family is one that is built on the foundation of faith, where God is at the centre of every decision, every action, and every relationship. Faith is the cornerstone of a strong and lasting marriage. It is through faith that we learn to trust God's plan for our lives, even when challenges arise. A husband and wife who pray together, read Scripture together, and seek God's guidance together will find their relationship strengthened and their home blessed. Psalm 127 also emphasizes the importance of children, who are described as a heritage from the Lord. A family that is grounded in faith will not only experience God's blessings but will also pass on that faith to the next generation.

Consider the story of a couple who faced many trials in their marriage, from financial struggles to health issues. Despite these challenges, they remained committed to each other and to their faith in God. Through prayer and trust in God, they saw their circumstances improve and their love for each other deepen. Their testimony is a powerful reminder that when God is the builder of our homes, no storm can destroy it.

III. Love: The Foundation of Family Life (1 Corinthians 13) In 1 Corinthians 13, often referred to as the "Love Chapter," Paul describes the qualities of true love. This passage is frequently read at weddings, but its relevance extends far beyond the wedding day. It describes the kind of love that should characterize the relationship between husband and wife - a love that is patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud, not dishonouring others, not self-seeking, not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs. The love described in 1 Corinthians 13 is a selfless, sacrificial love - the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. This love is the foundation of a healthy and thriving marriage. It is not based on feelings, which can change, but on a commitment to seek the best for the other person, even at great personal cost. In a world where love is often portrayed as a fleeting emotion, the Bible calls us to a higher standard. The love between a husband and wife should be a reflection of Christ's love for the church - a love that is enduring, forgiving, and unwavering. This kind of love can only be sustained through a deep and abiding faith in God.

IV. The Sanctity of Marriage: Jesus' Teaching (Mark 10:2-12) In Mark 10:2-12, Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees about divorce. In His response, Jesus reaffirms the sanctity of marriage, quoting Genesis: "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." Jesus' teaching emphasizes that marriage is meant to be a lifelong commitment. The union between husband and wife is not to be taken lightly or dissolved at will. The sanctity of marriage is rooted in the fact that it is God who joins the couple together. Divorce, therefore, is not just a legal matter but a spiritual one, with deep implications for the individuals involved and for society as a whole. In our modern world, where the institution of marriage is often undermined, it is crucial for believers to uphold the sanctity of marriage. This means committing to our spouses through thick and thin, seeking reconciliation and forgiveness rather than looking for a way out. It also means teaching the next generation about the sacredness of marriage and the importance of choosing a life partner wisely, with God's guidance.

Conclusion: The family is God's gift to humanity, and the relationship between husband and wife is central to the health and stability of the family unit. As we reflect on the Scriptures today, we are reminded that marriage is a divine covenant, that faith is essential in building a godly home, that love is the foundation of family life, and that marriage is a sacred and lifelong commitment. May we, as husbands and wives, commit to loving and honouring each other as Christ loves the church. May our families be places where God's presence is felt, where faith is nurtured, and where love abounds. And may we always remember that it is God who builds our homes, and without Him, our labour is in vain.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of family and for the sacred bond of marriage. We pray for every husband and wife, that they may be filled with Your

love and strengthened by Your grace. Help us to build our homes on the foundation of faith, trusting in Your wisdom and guidance. Teach us to love selflessly, to forgive readily, and to honour the covenant we have made with our spouses. Bless our families, Lord, and may Your presence always be at the centre of our homes. Comfort and encourage us in our journey, and lead us ever closer to You. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.