

**17<sup>th</sup> November, 2024**  
**26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

### **The Partnership in Christ of Women and Men**

Prov. 31.10-16,23-29  
Psalm 8.1,3-9  
Rom.16.1-7,12-13, 5-16  
Mark 14.3-9

**Key Verse:** “She has done a beautiful thing to me.” – Mark 14:6

Today, we reflect on a beautiful theme that has resonated throughout the history of the Church and continues to shape our faith journey - *the partnership in Christ of women and men*. This is not just a call for cooperation, but a reminder of the God-ordained dignity, gifts, and calling that both women and men bring to the Kingdom of God. From creation, God designed humanity to reflect His image together, in mutual respect, love, and service. Our scripture readings for today highlight how women and men have faithfully served alongside each other, fulfilling unique and powerful roles in the unfolding of God’s purposes. True partnership in Christ is about honouring these roles and allowing our combined strengths to flourish in God’s work. Let us journey through four key reflections on this partnership, using our texts from Proverbs, Psalms, Romans, and Mark to illuminate this call for unity in service.

#### **1. Strength and Wisdom in Partnership – Proverbs 31:10-16, 23-29**

Proverbs 31 presents an inspiring portrait of a woman who serves her family, her community, and God with strength and wisdom. This passage, often referred to as the “Virtuous Woman” or “Woman of Noble Character,” describes a woman who is industrious, compassionate, and wise. She is portrayed as a partner in her household, contributing not only to the home but also to the community. In verse 23, her husband is “respected at the city gate,” an indication that their partnership empowers both of them to fulfil their roles effectively. This is a beautiful model of mutual support in marriage and ministry, showing that partnership in Christ is rooted in respect and appreciation for one another’s strengths. Think of a couple who work side by side in ministry, with each partner bringing unique gifts and strengths. Together, they complement each other, allowing their ministry to flourish. Like the woman in Proverbs 31, they serve with integrity, reflecting the unity God desires in relationships and in the Church. True partnership is not a competition, but a collaboration that honours each person’s contribution and celebrates the ways in which God has equipped each one uniquely. When we work together, we demonstrate the strength of God’s design and fulfil our calling more effectively.

#### **2. Created to Reflect God’s Glory Together – Psalm 8:1, 3-9**

Psalm 8 beautifully captures the worth and dignity that God bestows on humanity. In verses 3-5, we read, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers...what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?” God created men and women in His image, giving both dominion over creation and the privilege of reflecting His

glory. This psalm reminds us that every person, regardless of gender, is valued in God's sight. In partnership, men and women are called to steward God's creation, working together in awe of His majesty and compassion. When we honour each other's roles, we glorify God by showcasing the fullness of His image through our shared work. Think of how a church community comes together for a mission project. Each member - whether a man or a woman - plays a vital role. Some may lead, others may serve behind the scenes, but together they fulfil a common purpose, reflecting God's glory in unity and mutual respect. In a world that often divides and separates, the Church has a calling to demonstrate unity, showing that men and women together, created in the image of God, bring a fuller representation of His love and justice to the world.

#### **4. Partnership in Service to the Church – Romans 16:1-7, 12-13, 15-16**

In Romans 16, we see Paul extending greetings to men and women who have been faithful partners in the ministry. Among these are Phoebe, a deacon; Priscilla, who worked alongside her husband, Aquila; and Junia, who Paul honours as "outstanding among the apostles" (Romans 16:7). Paul's greetings to these women and men highlight the value he placed on their contributions to the early Church. Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, and others are celebrated not because of their gender, but because of their faithful service. Paul's acknowledgment of these women as essential partners in ministry demonstrates the early Church's commitment to inclusive service, where each person's gifts are valued and utilized for God's glory. In many churches today, we see women and men serving together in leadership, teaching, worship, and outreach. They bring diverse perspectives and skills that enrich the church's ministry. When we recognize and celebrate these contributions, we honour the way God designed His Church to function - as a body where every part works in harmony for the good of all. The partnership of women and men in the Church is a testament to God's intention that all who follow Christ, regardless of gender, have a role to play in building His Kingdom.

#### **4. A Heart Devoted to Christ – Mark 14:3-9**

In the Gospel of Mark, we read the story of a woman who anoints Jesus with costly perfume, an act of deep devotion and generosity. While some present rebuke her, Jesus defends her, saying, "She has done a beautiful thing to me" (Mark 14:6). Jesus honours her act of worship, reminding us that true partnership in Christ is marked by a shared devotion to Him. This woman's story illustrates that our devotion to Christ should drive our service and our partnerships. Men and women, when united in love for Christ, are able to serve Him in powerful ways. This woman gave what she had, without seeking recognition, embodying a spirit of humility and dedication that we are all called to imitate. Consider a church where members, inspired by love for Christ, come together in prayer and outreach, with each person contributing according to their gifts and abilities. Their shared devotion and common purpose create a strong foundation for ministry, much like the woman's act of anointing reflected her deep love and dedication. In our service, let us focus not on recognition but on honouring Christ. Our partnerships - whether in ministry, family, or community - become a beautiful offering to God when they are grounded in our shared love for Him.

#### **Conclusion**

The call to partnership in Christ is an invitation to reflect God's design, one where women and men serve side by side, bringing their unique gifts to the work of the Kingdom. Proverbs celebrates the strength and wisdom that each partner brings; Psalm 8 reminds us of our shared worth and purpose; Romans 16 highlights the essential contributions of both women and men in the Church; and Mark 14 shows us that our devotion to Christ is the foundation

of our partnership. Let us commit to honouring each other's contributions and working together in unity. In a world often divided by differences, the Church has the opportunity to model God's inclusive love and partnership. May we serve Christ together with devotion, humility, and joy, reflecting His glory in all we do.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for creating us in Your image, as men and women called to serve You and one another in love and unity. Help us to honour the unique gifts that each person brings to Your Kingdom. Strengthen our partnerships, and may our work together bring glory to You. Let our devotion to Christ be the foundation of our service, and may we reflect Your love to a world in need of unity and compassion. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.