

“Life’s Better When We’re Connected”

Pentecost 20, October 6, 2024

Genesis 2:18-24 & Mark 10:2-16

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.
For if they fall, one will lift up the other;
but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.
Again, if two lie together, they keep warm;
but how can one keep warm alone?
And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one.
A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*
Ecclesiastes 4:9

The statesman Daniel Webster met the woman who was to become his first wife when he was a young lawyer. Her name was Grace, and one day Daniel was making himself useful by holding skeins of silk thread for her. Suddenly he stopped and said, "*Grace, we have been engaged in untying knots; let us see if we can tie a knot which will not untie for a lifetime.*" Then he took some ribbon and began to tie a complicated knot in it, which he gave to her to complete--and this the two of them regarded as the ceremony of their engagement. After they were both gone, a little box of his marked "Precious Documents" was opened. In it were the letters from this early courting of Grace. And that knot - never untied.

Never untied. Has a nice ring to it. Also has a difficult ring to it. God is in the business of tying things together. And God's intention is clearly that what is tied together, is never untied.

God begins tying things together. In the first lesson from Genesis there are two bondings. The first is the man with nature: "And the Lord God...brought every animal to the man to see what he would call them..." The first uniting is the man with his environment, with nature. But that bond with creation has suffered due to the way we have treated the planet.

Then God does it again. God brings woman to the man and the most intimate tying together takes place: "*and they become one flesh.*"

Our reading ends just before Adam and Eve were divorced. You didn't know that Adam and Eve were divorced? Oh! Not from each other, but from God. And the cause

of this divorce? The unity they had with God was broken when they decided they would be in charge of their own lives instead of letting their lives be tied together with the will of God.

Adam and Eve were together until death parted them. There was a knot that was never untied. And that was good news. But it was also bad news, in a way. For not only were Adam and Eve united in one flesh, which was good, but they were also united in their disobedience. They ate the forbidden fruit together. Even as they were bound together, the sin pulled them apart from God. And it has been that way ever since. God putting things together, people pulling things apart, and God working to put things back together again.

We can see Jesus continuing the tying together work of God when he says, "*Let the children come to me...*" In ancient times, children often were treated like property. They had few protections from those who would treat them badly. But Jesus came into the world for ones such as these children and is at work tying them together with his heart.

"*Let the children come to me...*" would also be nice to have engraved over the door of a church, for it speaks of the way God desires to mend the tears in the relationships between God and all God's children, of any age and any circumstance. But even in places like a church, bonds can be broken instead of restored.

A weird and amazing thing took place during a certain Sunday worship service (not Lutheran, by the way). The main pastor was away speaking someplace. He was away speaking at other churches fairly often, and this was evidently a bone of contention for many of the members. The guest preacher finished his main message but then transitioned into what could only be called a coup d'état. While the congregation sat there, those who supported the "guest" preacher – those who didn't like that the main man gone so much – were trying to put the church into this guest preacher's control.

And the takeover was being acted out right in front of everyone! The scene was made more interesting by the fact that the absent pastor had a number of followers, too, including the guy who happened to be working in the sound booth that morning. And he turned off the power to all the microphones. So "Pastor Takeover" had to shout all the more loudly to get his point across. It was an absolute circus.

Now a circus is usually entertaining to a child. But if a lonely, hurting, disconnected, separated child of God had finally been led by the Spirit to "come home" that

particular morning, I don't think that they would have sensed "let the little children come to me and do not stop them..." in operation.

One can only hope that if a lost child of God did show up that particular day, they did eventually find a sense of God's welcome in some other place, instead of the scandalous separating spirit that was at work that day.

At every level I can think of, people are usually busy pulling apart the knots that God intended to keep tied together. There is only one bond that I can think of that we have not and never will be able to untie. That is the bond of reconciliation that was forged by Christ in his death on the cross and in his resurrection.

And the unbreakable bond that Christ restored between us and the heart of the Father is what we celebrate every time we gather on the day he was raised from the dead.

Daniel Webster married Grace by saying, *"Let us see if we can tie a knot which will not untie for a lifetime."*

Every day, the God of grace decides to stay married to us, and in Christ says to us all, *"Watch as I tie a knot that will connect us, and which will not untie for eternity."*

Amen.