

Sermon for Proper 22 , Year B

The Text: Genesis 2:18

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to live alone."

At this point in the creation account, God is evaluating and critiquing his own work. Everything else is 'very good' – it serves the purpose for which it was designed. Everything performs its role and function perfectly: the whole universe, all the animals and the light and darkness. But the man (Adam), is seen to be incomplete, and in a sense a failure while he is 'solo'.

When we are alone, it becomes a problem for us. A key message of the Bible is that when people isolate themselves from God, they begin to deteriorate and die. The rot sets in, not only within themselves but also in their relationships with other people.

Another key message of the Bible is that when people live just for themselves, they are living a life-style that is not natural in many ways.

This leads on to a third development. When we isolate ourselves from other races or tribes – such as we saw in South Africa with apartheid - or the more subtle way the aboriginal people have been marginalised in Australia, then we have grave social problems. It isn't a healthy relationship for one race to be superior to others, like the super race Hitler was trying to create. It becomes evil and people suffer.

Jesus suffered the most terrible isolation and loneliness of all. When he took on the complete load of humankind's sin, he was cut off from his Father. Sin does that! It divides and separates people. But the deep love of the Father and Son holds the relationship together, even when death separated the two of them. The deep love binds the Father, Son and Holy Spirit together in unity. God is Love. This loving God reaches out to human beings, to bring people together and bind them to each other too.

God unites his people. In the Church of all ages, the Holy Spirit unites people with Jesus Christ and Christians come together from many different races and cultures. Jesus unites people, not by pretending there are no differences, or by shutting his eyes to evils like our selfishness, but by taking on the evil powers and by suffering and dying on the cross. The evil powers are now "toothless tigers": they can scare us, but they can no longer destroy us.

When Jesus came to earth, some people who had previously been rejected by their religious leaders and society could now have fellowship with God. They had been denied fellowship with the people of their own villages and communities. They had been rejected and isolated. Jesus welcomed these people into the Kingdom of God. And in doing so he made enemies with the strict religious people of his time.

What sort of people could we expect to find in the early Christian congregations? The mentally ill, the disabled, social outcasts, the poor, and people of different races.

In Genesis chapter two we hear how, in the Garden of Eden, Adam becomes deeply unconscious (like under an anaesthetic) and his perfect partner is created. This new human wasn't formed from dust, as Adam was, but there is a closer and a unique relationship between the two. They share the same body in an ingenious way. This new person is a "woman, because she was taken out of man."

When Adam wakes up and sees his partner, he doesn't say, "Ah, here is someone who can do the housework, and satisfy my sexual needs and any other needs I might have." Instead he says, "This one is part of me, my partner. Together we are one, we find fulfilment in each other, we reach out in loving concern for each other."

In Genesis chapter 2, the male and female are equal. Their union is perfect. But after the Fall, sin damaged their relationship, and the struggle to dominate each other begins. There is no longer a shared partnership, but a competition to take control. There is an element of this today in every marriage. It is essential to recognise the partners are different. They complement each other and together make up what it means to be human. The marriage relationship between a wife and her husband is unique and special. In Genesis 2:24 we read:
"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and the two become one flesh."

We will never know or experience what it is like to be in a perfect marriage relationship. Yet even in our less than perfect partnerships, the creative work of God continues to create new generations. The miracle of new life continues through the woman's body. When a couple marry and have children their union is evident in their children. The child is the unity of the parents in a creative and unique way.

We tend to think of ourselves as independent individuals, but this is only partly true. Each person is a unique combination of genes inherited equally from two parents. Such is the amazing variety in God's creative work! The genes we receive have

been passed down through numerous generations. We can never be completely isolated or separated from our parents or ancestors- they are a part of who we are.

Unfortunately, earthly marriages are not perfect and do not always last. And marriage is not for everyone, even though we may desire it to be so. There is, however, a perfect and eternal union that is for everyone and that is a union with Christ. Not even death can break it. In death we shall never be forsaken, rejected or alone, like deserted children. We shall be united with all God's family, in the Father's House. It will be like living in the family home. The Jesus living in us will enable us all to get along perfectly together. We come into the world with nothing, but we take Jesus with us when we leave. Our lives will be fulfilled and complete because of Jesus! Amen!