

Pentecost 13 – August 23, 2015

Text: Ephesians 5:22-33

Theme: Who's the Clay and Who's the Potter?

As a parent or a teacher, did you ever just want to scream, "BECAUSE I SAID SO!!!!"? Maybe you did scream it, but probably to no avail. It never works very well. I have felt like screaming those words in premarital meetings many times when people want to argue with me about having the Epistle which is appointed for today and also for the Rite of Holy Matrimony in their wedding. After 25 years of explaining this Ephesians passage, people still believe what they want to believe and do what they want to do regardless of what I say to them or what God's Word says. Some women read this passage from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesian congregation and say that they refuse to submit to any man. No man is going to tell me what to do!

Some men take Paul's words as a license to behave badly and treat their wives as though they were servants instead of precious gifts from God. And both men and women are wrong.

It all goes back to God's question in Isaiah.

"Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker,

'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of him who formed it,

'He has no understanding'?"

I laugh at all the arguments about what marriage is and what it is not today. Who created marriage? The United States government did not create marriage and so no politician, no judge and no lobbyist or protestor has any right to define marriage. God created marriage. God formed man from the dirt and took one of man's ribs and formed woman and he created the first marriage. So God, the potter, determines how the clay works. In our text from Ephesians, St. Paul is not suggesting a model that we "ought to follow". He is simply telling us how it works when we get our sinful selves out of the way. A woman will have no problem submitting to the man who loves her as Christ loved the Church. To the extent that he fails to love she will fail to submit. Ladies, it is not your choice whether or not to submit to a man unless you choose not to submit to God. You will automatically submit when you love God and your husband loves you as Christ loved the Church. And Gentlemen, if your wives are not submitting, check out how you have been loving. If they love Jesus and are not submitting, then the problem is in your loving. We are commanded to follow the rules that God set in motion and we don't get to judge him when things fall apart because we are not using creation the way he told us to use it.

The Pharisees tried the same nonsense with Jesus that brides sometimes try with me. They were trying to judge Jesus, the potter, according to the rules for the clay, but rules they had created, not God. They complained to Jesus that his disciples do not ceremonially wash their

hands before eating as the Pharisaical Law requires! Jesus turns to them and quotes the prophet Isaiah.

“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” The Pharisees were trying to tell Jesus how he should behave. The clay does not dictate to the potter or judge his behavior, but rather, the potter nurtures and forms the clay in whatever way he deems right. Jesus and his disciples were intentionally up to all kinds of mischief in hope that the Pharisees would see that their multitudinous rules were not from God but from man. Jesus wanted to emphasize that God’s Law is different from man’s law. God’s Law is not given to control us but to free us. In following his law, our lives are given richness and fullness and we are set free from petty rules created by man. The only rules that matter are rules that help us glorify God and live a rich and fulfilling life. Where God is not glorified, Jesus doesn’t pay any attention at all to the rules.

Think for a moment of all the rules people like to add to God’s Law. Just spend an hour reading Facebook and you will be immersed in the shared ignorance of this world. See there really is right and wrong. There really is truth and untruth. Just because you think it up does not make it right or true. We are coming into an election year and this is never more evident than it is at such a time as this. Politicians, pundits and radio talk show hosts say things that are simply wrong. But if they say them long

enough and loud enough, people believe them and do not even bother checking their facts.

Everything can be compared to God's Law and where it does not measure up, toss it out. For instance, I just heard a radio talk show host say that there is no scientific proof that children need breakfast in order to function well and that breakfast eating may lead to childhood obesity so we should get rid of the federally subsidized school breakfast program. Think of God's Law. How are you loving your neighbor by allowing him to go hungry? There maybe a better method for feeding hungry kids but just letting them go hungry? That is sinful. That is wrong. It violates at least the first and fifth commandments and maybe the seventh, eighth and tenth as well.

The potter can do whatever he wants. He controls the clay. He gives us his Law to help us live rich lives while he molds us because he knows exactly what is good for the clay. God controls marriage. Marriage, and all human relationships in general, are far simpler when you allow the potter to pot and strive to get your sinful ideas and ignorance out of the way of the master. When we turn our lives and our relationships over to him, he does incredible things. Don't let the shared ignorance that is rampant in our world mislead you. Stay close to God's Word and listen to him speak to you. Receive his body and blood which gives you the power you need to stand against falsehood and sin.