

Bone of my Bone...
Genesis 2:18-24, Mark 10:2-16*
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St. Andrew's, Ann Arbor
October 6, 2024

May the God who creates us, redeems us and sustains us be with us now and always.
Amen.
(Please be seated.)
Good Morning.

At the end of this month
—October 31st to be exact,
My spouse Susan and I will celebrate our anniversary.

Last year we couldn't remember if we'd been together for 36 or 37 years.
We did the math and realized it was only 36 years, it just felt like 37.

By way of sermon preparation, early each week, I look to see what the following
Sunday's readings will be. When I investigated this week's, I sighed.

*"And a man
shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh."*

Well not exactly.

Many a preacher
 gets a set of readings like these
 and immediately thinks—
wow this is a Sunday
begging for a sermon about marriage—
but me I think
 just how many people
 does a sermon on marriage possibly exclude?

Everyone who is single,
 everyone who is divorced,
 all the people whose spouse has died,
and for decades and decades, all of us who happened to be LGBTQ.

Thankfully, at least for now, we in the queer community, can be married if we so
choose.

So—if I were to venture into a sermon on marriage, I can now at least offer you some insights from someone who has experienced the perks, benefits, pitfalls and responsibilities of this institution.

So here goes....

First, let's look at the readings.

In Genesis
—the mythical male figure of Adam
is lonely and longing for a compatriot.
Even though
he is sitting
smack in the middle of paradise,
he's looking for a partner,
one with whom
he can validate his purpose and existence.

It seems that even paradise
can be stressful
and he doesn't want to go it alone:
and neither fish nor fowl,
reptile nor cow,
is meeting his need for connection and meaning.

So, God,
apparently new
to the whole ministry of creating the world
and not yet sure
of all that the creatures will need,
God revisits the big bang of creation
and brings forth woman
—a being composed
of the same essence of man.
A being with whom Adam can
plot, plan and partner.

As best as I can tell
there is no record of these two characters
being or ever getting married,
thus they are
the first instance of a domestic partnership
ever recorded.

Marriage with all of its
contractual,
societal
and legal implications
has yet to make its appearance.

Upon seeing Woman—Adam says,
“Ah at last,
bone of my bones,
flesh of my flesh.”

One with whom
there is the hope
of an intimate mutual relationship.
So it is in our ancient scriptural texts, that paint a portrait of a primal longing to be
connected, to not be in this endeavor that is life, alone.

Skip ahead several thousands of years to the words in the Gospel of Mark.
Here—

*Jesus is responding
— to a culture where women/wives
were casually set aside
when they were unable
to produce male heirs
or when
the passionate flames
of the relationship dies down
to burning embers.*

As Jesus makes his point regarding divorce
—we see his desire
for all people
to be treated fairly and humanely.
What he is saying, is somewhat counter-cultural.

In a society when women
were routinely perceived
as second class, and less than,
Jesus says “No.”
It is not right
to just walk away
when we are no longer “lusty-in-love”.

There is more to be honored
and sanctified than a woman’s

capability to issue forth male heirs.
 Jesus speaks against divorce
 to protect a group of people
 living on the edge, existing
 without the rights and privileges
 their male counterparts took for granted.
 Jesus says “no” to this.

So in the twenty-first century—what are we to take away from these two pieces of scripture? We who have accepted both divorce and same sex marriage...Have we moved beyond Holy writ?

Are we totally out of bounds? I think not. I am not someone who interprets scripture literally. I do not think of Adam and Eve as actual people. And I am quite certain that some relationships are destructive and devastating and it is right for them to end and divorce to take place. Sometimes a relationship is so destructive that it is an occasion of sin for it to continue.

So rather than taking all of the words literally, I find myself delving into these passages and marinating in them. Soaking them in and trying to discern their essence rather than each specific ingredient.

What is the essence of this story of Adam and Eve, what is Jesus trying to pound through about marriage to those who are listening? I think each is centered around mutuality. I think they address a burning desire to be known and loved for who we are, as we are. I believe each passage is centered upon a commitment to stay connected through the long-haul. Even if it's hard. If the relationship is built on respect and mutual love, with power shared equally, then I think we see here God's longing and Jesus' teaching that we shall not enter into relationships unadvisedly, or lightly, but reverently and deliberately, and accordance with God's hope that we love one another, as God has loved us.

Adam and Eve, Jesus' followers and disciples along the way, and those of us here and now almost a quarter of the way through the 21st century,

We all long to have companions
 of some stripe
 to help us journey through
 this thing called life.

For it is frequently,
 in relationship, in community,
 in friendship, in partnership,
 in love
 that we are finally able to grasp our goodness,

to comprehend that we are made
in the image and likeness of God.
Gay and straight,
male and female, gender fluid too
married, separated,
celibate and divorced
we are all made in the image and likeness of God.
“Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.” It is in each other, in our connections one to
another that we come to know what is Holy in our world.

Amen.