

Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honour your father and mother'—this is the first commandment with a promise: 'so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.' And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; not

only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free.

And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

The Unglamorous Ordinary

Thomas Jefferson wrote what is known in scholarly and historical circles as The Jefferson Bible by using a razor and glue to do a 19th century version of cutting and pasting. He cut out most of the miracles mentioned in the gospels, including the resurrection and other passages that portray Jesus as divine. The idea was that Jefferson wanted simply to adopt the *teachings* of Jesus, rather than the whole narrative of the Gospels. According to wikipedia, an online encyclopedia that has gained some respect in recent years, Paul K. Conkin states that "For the teachings of Jesus he concentrated on his milder admonitions (the Sermon on the Mount) and his most memorable parables. What resulted is a reasonably coherent, but at places oddly truncated, biography. If necessary to exclude the miraculous, Jefferson would cut the text even in mid-verse." It seems as though Jefferson may have wanted to focus not on the majestic, but on the ordinary.

Now, I must confess, that if we were from a tradition that suggested cutting and pasting together our own version of events, I would have the opposite goal in mind than Jefferson—I'd want the miraculous and majestic, the

mysterious and divine, and would prefer to cut out some of Paul's words about what Eugene Peterson describes as the "unglamorous ordinary." But this is not who we are, friends. We have an entire collection of faith statements in our tradition known as *The Book of Confessions*, which, over the course of several centuries, has based their declarations on the *whole* of Scripture. So, we are to do the same, which means wrestling with some of the unglamorous ordinary stuff that might make us uncomfortable.

But I think the reason these things make us uncomfortable is because much is lost in translation and in context. Jesus, in his radical inclusion of women in his ministry, overturned the world as he knew it. Some years later, Paul and the apostles did the same thing, by welcoming women into church in the midst of a society that treated women as property with no rights. For Paul to suggest that men should love their wives as they love their own selves would have been unheard of.

It's also worth looking at the Greek word that is often translated as "submit." It is a word that was used to describe the ranking and ordering of military personnel into squadrons. While there is some hierarchy involved, the overarching idea is one of respect and order.

Eugene Peterson translates verse 21 in this way: "Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another." He takes this word that English translates as "submit," and rather than making it a hierarchy, Peterson goes deep with Paul's meaning. Think about those words for a minute "respect," and "reverence." It's easy to feel

like these are lost tenets in our world today, but they are not, friends. Not at all.

It's tempting to stop there, at verse 21, but we must keep going. Some traditions are tempted to stop at verse 24, claiming that the women have to do all of this so called "mutual" revering. But Paul goes on, you see. Paul takes this idea of practicing resurrection right out of the house church doors and right into the homes—in our kitchens and living rooms, in our front and backyards, in our bedrooms and dining rooms. Peterson writes that "Every jot and tittle in the gospel of Jesus Christ is here for *living*, for embodiment in each and every one of *our* bodies, working into the muscle and bone of our ordinary lives." Now it's been a minute since I've read words like "jot and tittle," but I get what Peterson is saying, and how he's interpreting what Paul is saying.

It's easy to believe that we do this practice resurrection thing as a church, at church, and indeed we do. It's also easy to fall into the mistaken idea that the buck stops once you walk out those doors. That's where we get into trouble, and that's why Paul address not just our church relationships, but our familial relationships, our work relationships, our entire lives.

Because here's the thing: If we are going to be Easter People, we have to apply the entire message of the gospel to our everyday lives. There is no sacred and secular, friends. If we believe there is a division between these two and it's the Christian's assignment to specialize in the sacred but just put up with the secular, we are wrong. If we once thought that the ideas and actions available to use every day are arranged in a hierarchy

upwards from unglamorous housework and working for a paycheck to a peak of strategically important kingdom work where we get to do the “real” work of the church, we are wrong. Jesus completely overturns these ideas when he says, “Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven...If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Take a read through Matthew 18 this week to find the source of those searing words.

Remember, we don't get to cut and paste. There's a more modern way of doing this than Jefferson did, and it's called “proof texting,” which basically means we cherry-pick verses to suit our idea of what sacred is and looks like. It is the practice of using isolated, out-of-context quotations from Scripture to establish one's own agenda or disposition. It could be said that doing such a thing is biblical, but it's really not. Any time we see Jesus or Paul or any of the other New Testament writers refer to Old Testament Scriptures, they no doubt have a clear and mature understanding of the *entire* passage.

Cherry-picking verses to make ourselves look or feel better is very adolescent, friends. Focusing only on the majestic kingdom work is also just as pedestrian.

So, we have to wrestle with these passages, but if we look at them from this concept of mutual reverence, I think we get a clearer understanding of how to practice resurrection.

It will come as no surprise to those who know me well that I am not very domestic. I do like to cook, occasionally, but I'm also known to finish cooking, eating dinner, and settling onto the couch while the dishes sit there. I didn't know what "gender roles" were when I was growing up. My mom tried really hard to instill in me a basic life lesson of "cleaning as you go," but it took some, say, thirty-odd years for that one to sink in. We didn't have a brother, so if my sister and I wanted to earn a little extra money we fired up the push mower and mowed our grass. The trash getting taken out falls on both people in my household, but if I'm honest, Ash really does do more of the cleaning than I do. Okay, a LOT more of the cleaning. I mean I try, but we all have our strengths, right? So there's a lot of practical, unglamorous, ordinary mutual reverence that goes on in our household.

And this is twofold. Paul tells husbands to adore their wives. Peterson translates these verses beautifully: Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting. Ash really is one of the most generous people I know, and he definitely gives a lot to me, to his co-workers, and to those he loves. No one is perfect, but I think we have a really good model of how to practice resurrection in our every day lives in these verses.

How can you take this idea of practicing resurrection and apply it to the "ordinary" parts of your life: your home and work, school and friendships? Do you strive to treat all of your co-workers, and your supervisors with respect like you would want to receive? If not, how come? What part of practicing resurrection do you put on the shelf

until it's time for the grand kingdom making work of Sunday or mission or service? Then, if you do this, you have to ask yourself how genuine your service really is, right?

Today, we celebrate World Communion Sunday with Christians across the globe. This is the big stuff. Communion is sacred, holy, and powerful. But it is also made up of common, ordinary things that come from the ground—grapes and grains, bread and juice. Something powerful happens when we come here, friends. The challenge is to take that power, that majesty, that extraordinariness, and apply it to every living aspect of your lives.

We all have relationships and areas of our lives that seem unglamorous and ordinary. But if we live with the light that shines within us, if we radiate the goodness that is the love of Christ, if we love those we live with, work with, and share community with like Christ loves us, then the unglamorous becomes glamorous, and the ordinary becomes extraordinary. Don't rip out the seemingly mundane parts of this living word, friends, because you could be missing some magic if you do. Amen.