

## CLINGING TO GOD

### Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12

#### Intro

Who are we?

As individuals; as a church, who are we?

As we move through our opening passage, the first description leaves humanity in a place of subjugation with a value that really isn't all that much. The author quotes another commentator who stated: "what are human beings that God is mindful of them, or mortals that God care for them?"

Can you hear it? That bite? That negativity?

Who are we?

However, as soon as that sentiment is put out there, a new reality reaches out so as to transform us into individuals who are crowned with honor and glory.

How does that 180 degree transformation take place?

By God, through His Jesus, reaching out and bringing that which was broken into Himself, thereby making all things new, making even us worthy to be called sons and daughters of the Most High.

Who are we? Do you recognize that identity? The scripture reads this way.

### **Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12**

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup>He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

5 Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. <sup>6</sup>But someone has testified somewhere, 'What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? <sup>7</sup>You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, <sup>8</sup>subjecting all things under their feet.' Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, <sup>9</sup>but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

10 It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup>For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, <sup>12</sup>saying, 'I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.'

## **Genesis 2:18-24**

### **Intro**

Our second passage seems to have absolutely no connection to the one we just read.

It details the second story (yes, there are two) regarding the creation of man and woman. There is very little connective tissue that binds the first passage to the second, except for... the binding itself. Pay attention to the language that is used at the end of the passage. How are man and woman supposed to be in relationship with one another? Is the description that is given at all similar to the way that God reaches out to us? Do these examples of connectivity at all lead us in how we are to be in relationship with the Almighty? Who are we? How do we live; with one another; with God? Then beyond that, how should we live? The scripture reads this way.

### **Genesis 2:18-24**

18 Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.'<sup>19</sup>So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. <sup>21</sup>So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.'

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

### **"Clinging to God"**

I have been officiated at weddings for over 18 years now. Many of those couples have been of the younger variety (as I have gotten older, some of them have felt quite young ...but that's not because their getting any younger...I'm just getting older!).

However, there have also been quite a few occasions when I have been able to officiate at weddings of individuals who are walking down the aisle quite a bit later in their life, or as the case may be, getting married again.

One of the couples who still stands out in my mind happened to fit into the latter category. Ed and Gladys were both getting married for a second time. They both knew what they wanted in a partner, and they had no problem expressing those opinions to one another or to me.

Try and picture it: young pastor sitting with a more mature couple talking about the vows. I showed them the basic format that I start with and before she could even look at it, Gladys made the declaration, "I'm not saying obey." Words tried to emanate from my mouth stating that she didn't have to worry about that (it's not part of the structure I use), but before I could offer even a syllable, she jumped right back in.

"I love this man and I am going to be married to him the rest of my life. Ed knows that. I know that. God knows that. But obey? No, no, no. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. Pastor Ryan, I'm no fool." Ed, who is looking at the vows, says under his breath, "she is not a fool."

You see why I remember them now? It was like that.

I read the last line of man clinging to his wife and I immediately thought of Ed and Gladys, and not in a negative way. Because while Gladys was never ever ever going to say 'obey' in her wedding vows, she was taking the commitment that she was making very seriously. She had been hurt by betrayal in her previous marriage and it had been close to twenty years since that first marriage ended in divorce.

She was not going to enter into any future marriage lightly but now that she had been led to the right person, she was going to jump in with both feet. "I'm going to be married to him for the rest of my life. God knows that."

She was going to cling to Ed and Ed was going to cling to her. They were going to be connected through the good times and the bad; through the easy and the hard. She was not going to say obey, but she was going to be connected to him for the rest of her days.

Sounds scriptural doesn't it?

That's because it is. We hear it in regards to how we are to live as husband and wife.

And gentlemen, take note of how our scriptural account articulates it.

Yes, the story imagery articulates how woman came from man, but then man is meant to cling to his wife. It's mutual! You hold on to each other because you are called by God to be, again as it says in the passage from Genesis, partners, connected in your support of each other, the world, and in service to God.

Because this sense of clinging to one another is not from one spouse to another, it is from God to us, and if we respond to the leading of God's Holy Spirit, from us to God. The God who has created us is a God of relationality and relationship.

Think about how God has revealed Himself: as trinity. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Regardless of the language that is used, what we are able to hear through this Divine mystery is that the very nature of God is relational.

That's not just the nature of God, though. That sense of connectivity was created to be in our own lives as well. In our marital relationships, our parenting and parental relationships, our friendships, our connection to the Divine.

All throughout scripture, and we have heard two of those examples here this morning, God talks about how we were created to live. We were created to cling to one another. Not because we are being forced, and so much more than because we want to because at some level it makes us feel good.

Instead, it is because we need to, because we are able to feel that internal call of the Holy Spirit to move toward who we were created to be. We were created to be connected to one another.

Said another way, cling to one another.

And hearing that, I hope you realize that I am not referring to the modern connotation of cling, because most of us try and get rid of that in our lives.

Static cling: hand me a dryer sheet.

Clothes that are too clingy: I need to lose a few pounds, or get something that fits me better.

Clingy people: I'll take a no thank you helping. That is not what I am referring to.

What I am speaking about is clinging in a healthy way, a way that acknowledges the importance of the other person so that you are able to support them and they are able to support you.

Again, I'm not talking co-dependency here. I'm speaking about a healthy support that is able to hold the other accountable when something is not going well; that is able to empower, when the world begins to lean upon us in negative ways; that is able to celebrate and mourn alongside when the real joys and concerns of life manifest themselves.

This level of commitment is meant to exist here in this temporal realm, and we are also called to live out in our relationship with the Divine. As has been mentioned in a few different ways over the last few weeks, we need to be connected, we need to be in relationship, we need to reorient so as to cling to God.

This level of connection does not mean that everything in your life then become hunky-dory, with not a problem to your name.

Instead, this level of connection empowers you to stand when you couldn't do so on your own, step forward when all you wanted to do is retreat, and even slow down when the world screams at us that we aren't doing enough.

In so many ways, that is what the sacrament of communion is able to remind us of: God's level of commitment to humanity the world over. This is my body broken for you; this is my blood shed for you. Do these things in remembrance of me. Remember; never forget; be connected and in relationship to me. Using the language of Genesis, we need to cling to God.

So how do we get there?

Well, that was the question that kept running around in my head when I got to this point in the sermon. The answer, I believe, begins in admitting to ourselves, to those whom we are in relationship with, with God when we have done everything but cling (in healthy ways) to each other. We need to make that admission with the desire to actually begin anew, beginning anew with God as the central piece of your relationships as you move forward. You've got to acknowledge where things are broken. That acknowledgement invites God in.

Once God begins to enter in, just begins, then you need to take those steps of actually clinging to God. Yes, there are the religious ways to step in that direction: getting into God's Word; ask people to pray with you and for you; actually commit to serving as you have been feeling that call in Your life. Yes, there are those.

But more than that, how about stepping out of your own head and actually caring for others: love God, love neighbor, love self. Step into that reality in the ways that make sense for the gifts you have been blessed with. Cling to God! He has been there for all of us for all time. Cling to Him and never let go.

When it comes to your relationships in this temporal space and time, once God has been welcomed in after confession, acknowledge to your spouse, your kids, your friends your desire to create a connection that is deeper. You have got to be vulnerable for as frightening as they may be, it is the only step that allows us to be the sort of support that God has created us to be; to be supported in the way that God always intended it to be. Be committed to each other, and as Gladys so readily showed, jump in with both feet in a way that is truly committed.

God has called for us to cling to Him, to each other. Let us allow this day to be the day where that call is heard and responded to.

#### **After Sermon Prayer**

God, You have called and are leading us to cling to one another, to cling to You. Work in and through us so that we might be able to recognize those areas where we are falling short of that goal, and then grant us the wisdom and the strength to begin to make the commitment, or as the case may be, recommitment, so that we are able to be that support for another as they support us. Lord, let it be so. Amen.