**GOD’S WORD FOR SINGLES (#1)**

***Using Your Gift From God***

Statistically, nine out of ten people get married sometime in their life. Therefore, God has much to say to those who are married. But that is not to say that God is silent to those who are single. In fact, the God of all comfort gives comforting words to those who are not married. At Northwest we have a number of young adults who are in this category and therefore I want to say something from God’s heart to yours. Most of you have finished your education and have jobs and careers. Many of you have a desire to be married but have not yet found Cinderella or Prince Charming. There are even some who have become widows or widowers and are now again alone in life. We also cannot forget those who have fallen to the curse of our society and our now divorced. Whether you were the innocent one who scripturally put away your unfaithful mate, or the guilty one now trying to restore your life for God, we must also address your situation too. To all of you let me say as we begin, God loves you passionately, and so do all of us in this fellowship. Let me say it again:

You. Are. Loved!

May I point you to the Bible to show you a number of precious souls who lived their lives “*well pleasing in His sight*” even though they were unmarried. The two obvious ones we all immediately point to are Paul and Jesus. Our Lord was in His 30’s when He died, proving once and for all man can live holy, overcoming the temptations of lust and loneliness. What comfort it is to remember our great High Priest can “*sympathize with our temptations*” (Heb. 4:15). Think about it, it was this very Man who spoke the words of God in Genesis 2:18, “*It is not good that man should be alone… for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife*.” And yet it was this same Jesus who said about His relationship with God, “*I always do those things that please Him*” (Jn. 8:29). He said that as a single man.

Paul also stands out in our minds as a faithful Christian who served God in his generation as a single man. He probably lived twice as long as Jesus, being martyred in his 60’s. It was this very man who wrote the most eloquent description of marriage in the Bible in Ephesians 5:22-33. And yet, it was this same man who said to Christians living through “*the present distress*” that “*I wish that all men were even as myself*” (referring to being single). Let’s study that text now in I Corinthians 7.

Paul began this chapter by talking about the intimate duties of husband and wife. Sexual desires are God-given, even necessary, if there is to be procreation. But after discussing this he turned to singles, urging them to use their “gift” from God for His glory. The single man Paul said these words:

*7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own* ***gift from God****, one in this manner and another in that.
8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;*

*9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

Please highlight in your Bible, then underscore for emphasis, that Paul called this life of singleness as “*his own gift from God*.” He was referring to the fact that there were those who could live celibate lives by exercising self-control and not burn with passion. By God’s grace they could control their passions for the opposite sex and live a self-controlled (i.e. God-controlled) life as a single. Would that be easy? With the vast majority of humans, the answer is NO! But, was it possible? The answer has to be YES! Paul did. And God has called others to do it too.

Some have found themselves single AGAIN after having been married. If the cause of their singleness was due to their infidelity to their mate and they were divorced for the cause of fornication, Jesus tells them this:

*11 But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: 12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”*

The point our Lord is making is one of the hardest commands in the Bible. To purposefully make yourself a eunuch “*for the kingdom of heaven’s sake*” is pointing out that your desire to live *holy* must outweigh your desire to live *happy*. You must sacrifice greatly to give up the pleasures of marriage in order to be a kingdom citizen and go to heaven when you die. Even single you can “*make your calling and election sure*” and have “*an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord*” (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

It might well be that you, like Paul, will “*remain in the same calling in which he was called*” (I Cor. 7:20). He added for emphasis, “*Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called*.” The context is “the present distress,” which was a persecution of the saints: “*such* [i.e. the married] *will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you*” – vs. 28. In that situation singleness was better than marriage. Paul said that in his singleness he had become “*Christ’s slave*” (vs. 22). That led him to say these powerful words to those who were single like him:

“*He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord... The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband…  and that you may serve the Lord without distraction”* (vs. 32-35).

Tomorrow I want to discuss what this means to you who are single.

Until then, go in peace, and use whatever your present calling, whether married or single, as a gift from God to be of service to His glory. – Rick