

**PENTECOST:
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 22

October 4, 2009

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalm 8

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Mark 10:2-16

Welcome to the Family

There's an old saying, "You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family!" I'm pretty sure I heard my mother mutter this once or twice during my defiant teenage years. As a pastor I hear this sentiment echoed subliminally in other statements: "He's never home with the kids... She's always nagging about something... My parents just don't understand... My kids are driving me crazy... Momma, he hit me..."

These frustrations are common in families. In fact, I think they are constitutive of family. I've been married for over twelve years now and my wife will attest to the truth that living with someone is difficult! It exponentially gets more difficult with each additional person – the lines under parents eyes bear witness to this fact. So, why do we do it? Why do we structure our lives in this pattern of familial relationships?

Each passage from this week's readings deals with relationships. In Genesis 2, we see how the original woman and man related to each other as well as how they related to God and all the living creatures on earth and in the sky. In Mark, we hear about marriage and children. In Hebrews we read about siblings. Psalm 8 sings of the majesty of God and how that majesty relates to humanity. Each instance highlights community and relationship – family if you will.

So, in wisdom and majesty, God created humanity with an innate need for community. This may sound strange in a society that values the individual above all else. Yet, there is within each one of us the need for relationship – the need for someone else to validate our existence.

Mutual love and companionship gives meaning to our lives and meaning to the world in which we live. This does not mean that all relationships will be perfect. Nor does it mean that they will never fail. It does, however, mean that YOU are important. You are important for everyone around you. Likewise, everyone around you is important, too! Maybe this is the origin of that crazy saying Jesus liked so much, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. K. Jason Coker, an ordained minister with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and pastor of Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Connecticut. Visit www.wiltonbaptist.org to learn more about the ministries of Wilton Baptist Church.

+ + +

This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Puerto Rico –

With thanks for God's love and mercy, for the success of prison ministry and training workshops for chaplains in needy areas, and for a deeper relationship with the Catholic Church through *Lectio Divina*, and with prayers that the new Bible House office will become a place of meeting and agreement for Puerto Rico's entire religious leadership; **Dominican Republic** – With thanks to God for more than 200 conversions through *Faith Comes By Hearing*, and with prayers for the *They Will Listen to God* project, for even closer relations with the churches and para-church agencies, and for a special project concerning a law enshrining the reading of Bible verses in teaching institutions every day during the flag-raising ceremony; **French Antilles** – With thanks to God for the success of work in the fields of AIDS and domestic violence and for this year's celebration of 20 years of Bible Society mission in this region, and with prayers that the Bible Society's activities will open up new opportunities for the Scriptures, and with prayers for staff as they research and develop Scripture booklets for school children, and for the Antillean Creole Bible translation.

Activity Corner: "Welcome to the Family of God" Montage

Supplies needed: Bible; poster board; old magazines; scissors; glue or paste; marker; family photos (optional).

Across the top of the poster board, write "Welcome to the Family of God," and across the bottom write: *Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." (Mark 10:14b)* Invite everyone to create a montage by looking through magazines for pictures of children (youth and adults, too!), people of various races and ethnic backgrounds, and people who appear to have physical or mental challenges. The aim is to communicate the message that all people are welcome and are members of God's family. Encourage children, especially, to participate. Display the montage throughout the week where you gather for family devotions. As an option, add photos of your own family members.

Psalm 8 is a wonderful song of praise, celebrating God's Name in all the earth. Verse 2 especially speaks of praise offered by children. Read the psalm responsively, with adults reading the odd-numbered verses, and children and youth reading the even-numbered verses. Conclude by singing "Jesus Loves the Little Children," or "This Is My Father's World," or "God Is So Good," or any of your favorite praise songs.