



## “The Secret of Life: 5. Sacred Connections”

Texts: Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37

*a sermon by Kevin Fleming*

**August 4, 2019**

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

The more I spend time with the Bible, the more I am amazed by it. There are great, over-arching themes in the Scriptures that reveal themselves. There’s a lot going on today in worship, so I’ll not spell out all of the details, but let me show you what I mean.

Go all the way back - “in the beginning.” According to the second story of creation - in chapter 2 of Genesis - the older of the two creation stories - God first created the man, planted a garden, and placed the man in the garden. Then, as the story goes, in Robert Alter’s translation, “God said, ‘It is not good that the human should be alone; I will make him a sustainer beside him.’” So, God created the animals, but none were the sustainer the human needed. Therefore, as the story goes, God created woman. “It is not good that the human should be alone...”

When God met up with Abraham, God made a promise. “Go forth from your land and your birthplace and your father’s house to the land I will show you. And I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing.” “I will make you a great nation.” “It is not good that the human should be alone...”

Centuries later, the people God had made a great nation were held as slaves in the land of Egypt. Again, God speaks to a fellow named Moses and says, “I indeed have seen the abuse of My people that is in Egypt and its outcry because of its taskmasters. I have heard, for I know its pain. And I have come down to rescue it from the hand of Egypt and to bring it up from that land to a goodly and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey...And now, go that I may send you to Pharaoh, and bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt.” “My people...” “I will make of you a great nation...” “It is not good that the human should be alone.”

Many centuries after that, an itinerant rabbi from the blue-collar, back-water town of Nazareth - a fellow named Jesus - began gathering people together and telling them about who God is and what God intends for us all. He surrounded himself with a small group of disciples, while even more followed him outside of that group. He gathered crowds of thousands and fed them physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Years after his death and resurrection, one we know only as the author of The First Letter of Peter, wrote:

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, God’s own people,  
in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him  
who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.  
Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy.”

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.” “My people...” “I will make of you a great nation...” “It is not good that the human should be alone.”

From a community of two, to a community of thousands, to a community of millions, God builds sacred connections. God’s overarching concern is for the community of God’s people. In that oft-quoted verse from John’s gospel, “God so loved the world,” not just this person or that person, not just these people or those people. God seems to be trying to tell us that we were created - and our life is what it was meant to be - when we are connected to others. “It is not good that the human should be alone.”

The early church took that idea much to heart.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

It sounds suspicious to us. Some might even call it “socialism” or “communism.” That is to miss the point. The community set a standard for living out the gospel. Those with whom they shared connection were more important than themselves. The need of the other was supreme. Walter Brueggemann, in his book *Money and Possessions*, reminds us that all of these behaviors ran counter to the imperial world that surrounded the early community. Sharing of their money, sitting at table with people who were from different classes, appealing to God in prayer instead of the power of the empire or the emperor, building friendships instead of antagonistic relationships - this is the counter-cultural way of God’s people - then and now.

“It is not good that the human should be alone.”

It seems almost inconceivable to us today - in a world in which we have instant communication of every kind - but loneliness is a real problem today. People are disconnected from real contact in ways that are so profound that mental health experts tell us we are on the cusp of something we have not seen before. Depression, anxiety disorders, fear, stress - and much more - are on the rise - and are being tied to lives of loneliness and isolation.

It is clearly seen in the horrific actions yesterday in El Paso and Dayton. There are those who are so disgusted and angry about being connected to those they consider their “lesser,” that they are perfectly content to take their lives. Fueled by unprecedented hatred and bigotry from the leaders of this country, the fracturing and breaking of the sacred connections with which God created us has become acceptable - even to the point that it is impossible to pass laws to protect the innocent of our country. In the mangled minds of those filled with hatred and fear, the taking of life on a mass scale is heroic and laudable. And those in authority are fearful of these degenerate and depraved individuals, so they do nothing.

But, here we are: the people of God, bound together in the bonds of the Spirit, living in community and celebrating our sacred connections. This morning, we welcomed a new member into the household of God, through the waters of baptism. A little child, who knows nothing of God, Jesus, the Bible, the Church, or anything of our faith, by the pure grace of a loving God, is numbered among God’s people and is made a part of this congregation and the church universal. And we promised to be there for her, to teach her, to care for her, to love her, and to surround her with a community that will, in a few short years, stand with her when she makes her own affirmation of faith. She will never know isolation, loneliness, or the feeling of being disconnected from the household of God, or from God.

In a few moments, we will gather at the Table of the Lord. We will bread the bread and pour the cup and together share in the feast of the people of God. But, we believe, in a manner more profound - and, in fact, quite mysterious - all the people of God from ages past join us at the Table. The Communion of Saints - the unbreakable bond uniting the people of God - cannot be severed by time or space. They surround us here. We are eternally joined to them.

And in the most sacred of all connections, we are forever joined to God. "In life and in death, we belong to God," we say in our Brief Statement of Faith. "Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord," Saint Paul continues to tell us. I'll tell you again what I've told you for years: the greatest word in all of Scripture is *Emmanuel*. "God is with us." The most sacred of all connections and the source from which all other connections flow.

It has been my experience that those who know these sacred connections - who live in their power and peace - are among the happiest and most contented people I have ever known. They celebrate their relationships and their interdependence. They draw energy and life from those sacred connections.

"It is not good that the human should be alone."

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all."

Joined together. United. Bound together in the bonds of the Spirit. Give thanks to God for these sacred connections. For now and evermore. Amen.



First  
Presbyterian  
Church

609 South East Second Street  
Evansville, IN 47713  
(812) 423-6297  
[www.firstpresevansville.com](http://www.firstpresevansville.com)

First Presbyterian Church  
is a partner congregation with  
the Covenant Network  
of Presbyterians.

