

October 6, 2024

Texts: Genesis 2:18-24; Hebrews 1:1-4

Title: "Being Alone: A Communion Meditation"

Genesis 2:18 says, "It is not good that the man should be alone." It's not good for people to be alone. There have been a couple of studies out this year that underscore this truth. In a study by the insurance company, CIGNA, showed that nearly half of all Americans report sometimes or always feeling lonely or "left out." This is nearly double the percentage found in a previous survey some years ago. Our nation has more people than ever and more loneliness than ever.

Now why would an insurance company commission such a study? Because of the connection between loneliness and health...getting the right balance of sleep, work, socializing with friends, family, and "me" time...and I would add that one's spirituality (although) they didn't ask on the survey, is also vitally important.

So as I interpret the writer of Genesis, and use some common sense, I can say that it's not good for people to be alone, and so many today have the pain of loneliness as a constant "companion" if you will.

Divorce can leave one alone. Death of a spouse can leave one alone, three out of four married women in this country become widows and for an average of 18 years of her life.

One can feel alone even while surrounded by people if they're not willing or able or comfortable putting themselves out there and to interact with others and to be open about their feelings with others. Many of us have experienced the feeling of

loneliness related to feeling left out of social interactions or perhaps not being a part of the “in” group or whatever you would call them. It’s not good for people to be alone. And yet so many of us are (pause) and it doesn’t have to be that way.

In our loneliness we can feel that there must be something wrong with us. There must have been something we said or something we did. People who are single sometimes deal with guilt and a great deal of subtle pressure, most of it well intentioned, from both family and friends against aloneness. There is that sense, not only of failing one's self, but also of failing others when you’re a single adult. We need to affirm people who are single whatever the reason and if we’re single ourselves, realize that this, like most guilt is not based on truth.

**But the good news of the gospel is that we are not alone.** The old story of Genesis is an attempt to explain how the world was created, the first several chapters in particular. Behind it all is what? ...God’s desire for relationship with His people. “In the beginning...” God created us, created us in God’s image and so we are essentially born with a divine need for relationships...both with God and with others...supportive, encouraging, caring, healing relationships of all kind. We’re not meant to be alone.

Even if we’re introverts, we still need each other. To use the language of the CIGNA survey, we don’t have enough “meaningful interactions with others.”

Now the church can have a profound role in helping us come out of our loneliness and isolation. It’s more than just a time to come on Sunday and think about God and

go home. I feel so sad when people say, I visited such and such a church and left and not a single person spoke to me. Hopefully not said about St John's but I've heard this said so many times and experienced it as a visitor to churches over the years that I know it happens. No meaningful connection. **The church is made for interaction, connection, fellowship, sharing, and serving together.** "Together" is the operative word. The church was the means through which I stepped out of loneliness and into community and communion with God.

This morning we will share in the Lord's Supper also known as "Communion." This particular Sunday is called "World Communion Sunday" of which the point is to understand that we're all in this together, although it's hard to do when we are in separate churches.

But the ultimate meaning of the Lord's Supper is that God has come to us in Christ. **The living Christ is available to you.** "This is my body. This is my blood." These are very intimate expressions and meant to recognize the closeness of God to us. "Take. . . eat. . . drink. God is present. God is with you. You are part of my family. *You are not alone.* Amen.