

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Flesh of Our Flesh

Genesis 2:18-24

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Lori A. Cornell

18Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." 19So 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 every living creature, that was its name. 20The 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. 21So 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. 22And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23Then 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."*

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

DIAGNOSIS: Not Good Alone

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Lonely*

We humans are not meant to be alone, and God knows as much. So, by what appears to be a process of elimination, God introduces the man to all kinds of potential companions. But while the man can appreciate the diversity and beauty of these living creatures, neither he nor God is satisfied. It's not until God takes a bit of the man's own self that the man is apparently satisfied. In fact, his exclamation—"this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"—seems to indicate that God has finally succeeded at identifying a fit partner.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Too Close for Comfort*

Adam may have longed for a companion who was a fit partner, but we know how the story continues: Denial, blame, and shame. Eve denies God's command and listens to the serpent, Adam listens to Eve. Adam blames God, Eve blames Adam. Adam and Eve name each other as the cause, and then they hold God accountable for "creating" the problem in the first place. Not only do they lose faith in God's creative abilities, they hold God responsible for their faithless choices.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *The Cost of Flesh*

When you are made of flesh, the cost of judging God is deadly. To paraphrase Bill Cosby, God brought us into this world and God can take us out.

PROGNOSIS: At Last, Flesh of Flesh

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Comfort of Flesh*

But what if, instead of abandoning this flesh altogether, God

chooses instead to inhabit it fully? For that is what God does in Jesus his incarnate Son. (In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh.) But God does not simply inhabit the tender flesh of a baby—though that would be risky enough; God also inhabits that very same flesh when it is judged on the cross and crucified and dies. This God Incarnate is, at last, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. And the very flesh the Son dies in is also the flesh his Father chooses to redeem. This too is our flesh—resurrection flesh.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *The Gift to Flesh*

Now while some may judge this enterprise of Incarnation as pure foolishness, those who view it with the eyes of faith see otherwise. In Jesus, his Son, God names us as children of God, and truly creates a fit partner for us. Wrapped in the very skin we wear, he not only bears the burden of flesh, but who seeks to redeem it from the grave. So, with great relief, satisfaction, and hope we declare: This Jesus is at last bone of our bone; this Jesus is at last our God in person.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Never Alone*

Once such trust takes hold of a human being, her view of the world changes too. Not only does she perceive the goodness of creation as a whole (flora and fauna known by name), but she looks into the eyes of those who most resemble her and sees the creative work of God. In flawed, fragile, beautiful human flesh she sees the opportunity for partnership, for help, and for companionship. At last, in this flesh, she has someone to serve.