

Greeting to you! The theme for our morning meditation is, 'God creates men and women to be joint heirs of his kingdom. If we look at the account of the creation of human being in Genesis 1, we see God saying: 'Let us make man in our own image in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him male and female he created them.' Three fundamental truths about human beings can be learnt from this passage, namely that God made (and makes) human beings in his own image, that he made (and makes) them male and female, giving them the joyful task of reproducing, and that he gave (and gives) them dominion over the earth and its creatures (John Stott). Thus, right from the very beginning God's design for human beings was both male and female. Both of them shared in the divine image and both were given the authority to rule over the earth. Their resemblance to God and their stewardship of the earth were from the beginning equally shared, since both sexes were equally created by God and like God. Genesis 1 clearly affirms the equality of the sexes. Whatever is essentially human in both male and female reflects that divine image which is equally born by male and female. Male and female are equally called to rule over the earth and co-operate with the creator in the development of the resources for the common good.

However, we need to realize that this equality was distorted by the Fall (Genesis 3). The sentence of God on Adam and Eve's disobedience did affect their relationship with each other. The word to Eve was: 'Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.' in the place of equality and complementarity, one would rule over the other. The domination of woman by man is due to the Fall and was not part of God's design in creation.

While Gen 1 records the equality of the sexes, Gen 2 talks about complementarity. Throughout the act of creation God's standard comment was that 'it is good' however in Gen 2:10 God says it is 'not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper as his partner.' The Hebrew phrase means 'that which corresponds,' 'like his opposite.' The idea that is expressed through this phrase is that the person God was going to create had to be a companion, a helper. That person who would be a partner yet different. Eve would complement Adam. In the last part the narrator says that 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Gen 2:24 NIV). So Genesis 2: 24 implies that a marriage relationship is an exclusive man woman relationship which is acknowledged publicly, is permanent, and is consummated by becoming one flesh.

In the gospel reading some Pharisees come up to Jesus and ask whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife? Jesus first questioned them as to what Moses commanded them. They replied that Moses allowed them to divorce with a certificate of divorce. Jesus replied that the permission to divorce was granted by Moses as a concession because of the hardness of their hearts and their sinfulness. The Rabbis' error in interpretation lay in their understanding of

Deuteronomy 24:1. They convert Moses' permission into a command. Jesus refers to the Mosaic provision as a concession to human sin and was intended to limit its evil effect rather than to take it as indicative of God's approval of divorce. Cranfield says, 'Human conduct which falls short of the absolute command of God is sin and stands under divine judgment. The provision which God's mercy has designed for the limitation of the consequence of man's sin must not be interpreted as divine approval of sinning. When our sinfulness traps us in a position in which all the choices still open to us are evil, we are to choose that which is least evil, asking for God's forgiveness and being comforted by it, but not pretending that evil is good.'

In conclusion we see that God created both male and female to be joint heirs of the kingdom of God he has joined us to respect each other as people who are made in the image of God. In a city where female foeticide is high and crimes against women are rising may we truly show that men and women are joint heirs of the kingdom.

Shalom

Paul Swarup