**Equality (Gen 2:15-25)**

We have just heard one of probably the most well-known stories from the Bible, possibly one of the most read as well, as most people manage to get through Genesis and Exodus, but lose interest once they get to Leviticus!

The story of creation is one which is often used to promote the idea of men being superior to women, but I feel that the story of creation is one of equality, companionship, relationships and mutual support.

Let me explain.

The creation story is one of equality as we are told straight away within the first chapter of Genesis that ‘humankind’ was made in Gods image. We are all made to reflect and represent God on earth, neither gender holding more of God’s nature or qualities than the other, and God blessed both female and male equally.

We are told that Eve is created from Adam’s body, they are both part of the whole. Much emphasis is placed on the translation of the Hebrew that says that Eve was made as a ‘helper’ for Adam, but in the Magnificat we hear that ‘God helps His servant Israel’, the very same sentence, however we don’t perceive this as saying that God is ‘lesser’ than Israel.

Matthew Henry born in 1662 was a British Nonconformist and Presbyterian minister and author who was born in Wales but spent much of his life in England.

Perhaps his best-known quotation is about the relationship between women and men, from the story of the creation of Eve, in the Book of Genesis:

The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.

Female and male are both made in the image of God. Women and men, girls and boys are equally valuable in God’s sight. There is no excuse for sexism, discrimination or denigration of the opposite gender.

We know from the work we as Mothers’ Union does around the world that girls still get worse access to education than boys.

For example, the literacy work we do promotes childhood education. Many of the female participants don’t want history to repeat itself and so are ensuring that their girls are gaining an education. We are working to ensure that poverty doesn’t mean inequality by ensuring that girls are able to acquire sanitary products helping them continue their school attendance throughout their period.

Now whilst women and men are equal does that mean that they are the same? Obviously not, they are equal but different.

We should recognise that this model of equality and difference isn’t just confined to women and men.

Even God contains equality and difference within himself. There is equality and difference between the persons of the Trinity. The Bible is clear that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are equal in their eternity, power, status and value.

But it’s also clear that the three divine persons are different and distinct. The Father is not the Son and nor is the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Bible we see the three persons of the Trinity occupying different roles and responsibilities, yet all working together in harmony to save humankind.

Just in case we needed another reminder about equality, we hear in Paul's letter to the Galatians that

‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus.’

In God's eyes, all individuals hold equal worth and value, people experiencing poverty, or homelessness, people in prison, people being abused or even the abusers, we are all members of one body, in Christ.

And finally, I pray that God who loves us, just like we heard in our second reading, ‘will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

God is making everything new!

Amen