

Trinity Church
June 14, 2008

Marriage: Alexi Valencia/Beth Rommel
Colossians 3:12-17, Mark 10:6-9, 13-16

A Sermon Preached by The Rev. James C. Ransom

*Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.
(Col. 3:17)*

Alexi, be on your guard — they are all here! Dee Chapline, Helen Wolf, your Beth, a sprinkling of Lemieux girls and a few Mullens. Put them all together and you get more than Lutherville neighborhood friends, more than the women's division of a renowned horseshoe pitching league; they are also a Trinity Sunday School class and the loudest voices in the children's choir. Together they have taken every role in the Christmas pageant from the Virgin Mary to the three Kings, and spoken their lines in verse. They have been baptized, confirmed, youth grouped, acolyted, ushered, pilgrimed. Alexi, these girls have bonded. They are formidable. They are extraordinary women and they have big plans for you. To take a line from my favorite and, I think, best-looking Country-Western singer, Shania Twain: "She's not just a pretty face. She's got what it takes. She's the mother of the human race." And she, your Beth, Alexi, has come home to Trinity to be married.

Standing with her Alexi, Beth is surrounded and uplifted by a lifetime of encounters with our Lord, Jesus Christ. She has heard his voice; she knows his words; she has felt his Holy Spirit; she trusts in the community of faith that cherishes her here. She has come with you asking for God's blessing as the two of you become together the new creation into which God's love is calling you.

Quoting the Book Genesis, Jesus speaks clearly about marriage in the tenth chapter of Mark's Gospel that Dee read for us. Jesus says: In all things that have brought you to this day, in fact, from the beginning of creation itself, God has intended that you should become, in Christ and through one another, a new creation. The attraction and love you feel for one another contains within it God's yearning for you to be made entirely new. "For this reason," Jesus continues, "a man shall leave his father and mother," a woman shall leave her kin and friends, and they shall become husband and wife — "the two shall become one flesh." Something altogether new. Something altogether blessed by God.

I think that is why immediately after this short passage about marriage, Mark records that they were bringing children to Jesus so that he might bless them. It's not that you two are childish, far from it, but today, in your vows, you are newborns in marriage, infants in the new life you are about to begin.

The disciples, of course, rejected the children and prevented them from coming to Jesus. There are so many people here who are so close to the two of you, that we could easily do the same thing. We say things like, "You must remain our children. You must be what we love about you. You must remain close to us. You must continue to do what we expect. You will surely be the kind of married couple that we have dreamed so long that you would be. We don't want Jesus to take you up in his arms and bless you, because that blessing, that seal of God's love upon you, finally sets you free to live way beyond our expectations, to become what God intends for you to be in Christ Jesus."

Likewise, you could say, "Hey, I want to be married, but I don't want to be blessed by God. I will be who I have always been. I will carry with me into marriage my old life and my old ways. I want to be married, but I don't want to be a new creation. I don't want to be blessed." Do not be afraid. Come into the arms of Christ. Let him take you up and bless you and make you new.

So, putting aside our bonds of affection, we, with full hearts, give you both up into the arms of Jesus so that he can bless you. You are God's chosen ones; you are holy and beloved; so put on your new life: compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, just as Christ has forgiven you. Above all, put on the blessing. Adorn yourselves with love that bonds you together in perfect harmony with Christ. There you will find your true self. There you will find peace.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.