**Colossians 3:12-15**

Well now, that’s the passage of scripture that John and Kassandra chose for us to read as we celebrate their marriage. I wonder what it says to them?

It isn’t a passage that’s directly about marriage. It’s addressed to a church, about what it means to be church. The implication of reading it today is that being married is a way of being church. It implies that being church and being married means being compassionate and kind and humble and gentle and patient and accepting and forgiving and peaceful and thankful. It means being those things to one another, and to other people, and to God.

Those of us who are married know that sometimes it’s tempting to be none of those things to our spouse. It’s important not to be too depressed about that fact. It’s part of being human. The good news is that it’s possible to grow in compassion and humbleness and so on. Marriage gives you lots of chance to grow in humbleness because you discover things about yourself that you didn’t really want to know. It gives you lots of chance to grow in compassion and acceptance because you discover the dynamics of why your spouse is the way he or she is, and that makes it easier to be compassionate and accepting. Being married, like being church, gives us chance to show those qualities to one another.

Being married, like being church, gives us lots of chance to show those qualities to other people. In the Old Testament, when a man got married he was entitled to excuse himself from conscription for a year so he had time to settle into being married. You need that when you marry. Yet marriage can mean you so enjoy being with each other that you shut yourself off from other people. If you are people of compassion and kindness and love, you can’t shut yourself off like that. When God invented marriage in Genesis, marriage related to the fulfilling of his purpose in the world. Marriage wasn’t invented for the sake of the people themselves. Marriage is a little church. The church doesn’t exist for itself. It exists for God and for the sake of God’s purpose and for the people who are outside it at the moment. So a question for you to think about is how you’re to be a little church in relation to the world as well as to one another.

Being married, like being church, means being thankful to God. Because you’re a little church, you will be involved in worship together. Our passage of scripture ended up with an exhortation to be thankful, and it goes on to talk about Christ’s message living in you and about you teaching one another and about you singing. When it speaks of thankfulness, it’s not talking about a mere attitude of thankfulness in your hearts, because in the Bible, thankfulness in heart alone doesn’t really count. Thankfulness has to glorify God, and therefore it has to be expressed outwardly. The first thing my wife and I do when we wake up is pray (well, it’s after I make the tea, but that’s because I’m British, so you can ignore that bit). We give thanks to God, we talk to God about the day, and we read some scripture. And the last thing we do before going to sleep is give thanks to God as we look back over the day, give praise, and pray for protection.

Today we are all involved in planting a little church, a church that’s going to grow in John and Kassandra’s home. We pray for you that God makes it a church characterized by patience and love and forgiveness for one another. We pray for you that God may make it a church characterized by compassion and kindness and love for people outside it. And we pray for you that God may make it a church characterized by thankfulness to God each morning and each evening. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.