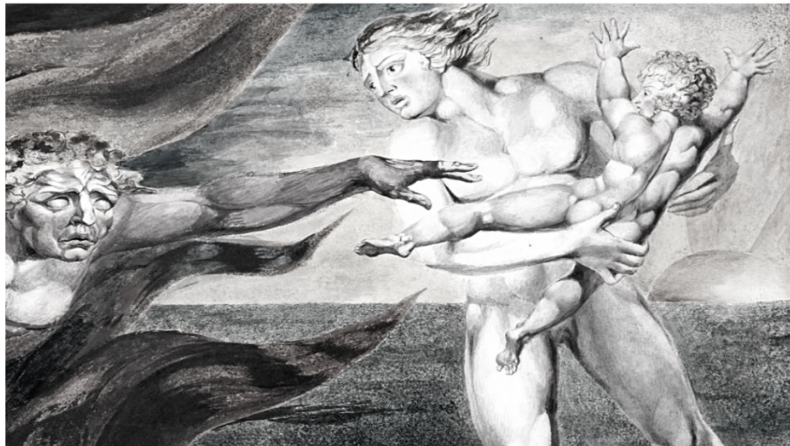




TUESDAY  
JULY 12  
7PM

*What is a  
Woman?*

Wine, Women, & Psalms



ST. BENEDICT'S  
ANGLICAN CHURCH

*Belong. Believe. Become.*



# What Is A Woman?

## I. A Question For The Times.

A. Famously, a recent supreme court justice nominee engaged in the following exchange with a sitting US Senator during her senate confirmation hearing. The Senator asked,

1. *“Can you provide a definition for the word ‘woman’?” “Can I provide a definition?” the nominee replied. “No. I can’t.” “You can’t?” the Senator replied. “Not in this context,” said the nominee. “I’m not a biologist.”*

B. Of course, cultural moments like this don’t happen in a vacuum. This has led to the release of an online documentary created by the folks at Newswire, entitled: “What is a Woman?” And various other articles, podcasts, and the like.

C. At the same time, high school and college athletics have been wrestling with the transgender dilemma- biological men identifying as women competing in and- in most cases- dominating women’s swimming, skateboarding, and track (to name a few).

D. To add to the swelling confusion around human biology, the term *birthing people* as a substitute for *mothers* and *motherhood* is being culturally mainstreamed by high-ranking politicians, academics, and celebrities; it's even a category on the governmental CDC’s website in the palace of ‘pregnant mothers,’ ‘mothers,’ and ‘moms.’

E. In a recent interview with the *Atlantic* magazine, Louise Melling, the deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), was asked,

1. *“Why do you believe it's important to shift our language around gender and pregnancy?” To which Shelling replied, “First of all, if we’re talking about “pregnant people,” that language says to people—to transgender men and to nonbinary people—“we see you.” It should do a fair amount of work to*

*help address discrimination. If we talk about “pregnant people,” it’s a reminder to all of us to catch ourselves when we’re sitting in the waiting room at the GYN that we’re not going to stare at the man who’s there. We’re not going to be disconcerted...”*

2. She continued, *“It is the reality that not only women seek abortions. It is not only women who are birthing. It is not only women who are seeking mammography and pap smears, and other care. And recognizing that does real work.”*

F. The interviewer responds, saying, *“Others see this kind of language (birthing people) as exclusionary because it erases women and mothers as a worthy category of identity.”*

1. She’s making a critical point: is ‘woman’ a worthy category of identity? Note, she views ‘woman’ as an identity, not an essential reality of being. There is a stark difference between identity and being- a very important difference that I hope to touch on later.
2. So the question isn’t merely “What is a woman?” but also, “Is there any value or necessity of retaining the reality of woman?”

G. I didn’t open this evening’s discussion with these examples to jump-start political debate or lob a molotov cocktail into the current culture wars.

H. My intent was to capture a sense of the present cultural moment, a moment in which, we struggle to answer the most basic of questions. I think it’s extremely telling that in thinking through this talk, I actually needed to google “can a biological man have a baby?” The answer, from all of my research, by the way, is no (although the majority of articles answer ‘yes.’ Needless to say, “what is a woman” is a question that we as Christians can, should, and must answer- from scripture, from history, and as human beings made in God’s image.

- I. But my interest tonight is not only to answer what a woman is, but to explore *womanhood* itself (beyond the material and biological) - to touch upon what is the essential nature, beauty, and distinctly wonderful about a woman.
  - J. In my opinion, these present battles of language and questions couched in mere biological categories are a ruse- distracting us from the real danger: *a culture losing its classical understanding of Biblical Womanhood.*
- II. What is a Woman? No, What is Womanhood?
- A. Spoiler Alert: A woman is a biological adult female.
  - B. But what is *femaleness*? What makes a woman *essentially a woman*? What distinguishes the female from the male? What unique aspect does a woman fulfill as the female image-bearer, and how is she to do this as a covenant child of God?
- III. Terminology.
- A. Race.
    1. Scripture tells us that God created the human race in his image (Imago Dei): Male and Female, he created them, and humanity is subordinated to their Creator's covenant will.
    2. So there is ONE HUMAN RACE, not RACES;
      - a) The Bible speaks of the ONE HUMAN RACE having different colors, and *ethnicities* “26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27)

## B. Ethnicity.

1. There is ONE RACE, united in one blood, in MANY ETHNICITIES: “we all bleed red, no matter the color of skin.”
2. The Bible teaches sin as the cause for ethnic divisions, men separating from men along ethnic lines (Nations, Tribes)- setting up false superiority of one race over another (Japanese and Koren, or Hutu genocide of the Tutsi)

C. Man/Humankind = Adam. Sometimes refers to a man, as opposed to a woman. The term also refers to humankind, comprised of male and female (Gen 1:26-27).

D. Woman = opposite of man, female human, wife married to the man (*wimmin*, *wifmin* = adult female)

E. Gender (noun & verb forms) .

1. Notice the root in words like generous, generate, genealogy, progenate, genes, and genitals. What does the greek root gen mean?

a) Root= \*genə-, also \*gen-, meaning "to give birth, to beget, to produce life”

2. Gender means the manner in which you generate (life) determined by your genitals. A man generates with his genitals, and he becomes a father. A woman generates with her genitals, and she becomes a mother. But this basic divine distinction is under attack!

## IV. Modern Use of Sex and Gender Terminology.

A. It wasn't until the 1920's that the term sex began being used in scientific and medical journals as a referent to male or female

B. ‘Gender’ was first introduced in a 1982 American Psychological Society article title.

1. Since then, Gender has been displaced by the term sex. Gender today is the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse people.
- V. Gender defines how you participate in begetting life (a human is either male or female).
- A. Gender isn't fluid or subjective but is defined by the human form (theology of the body) as CREATED (Divine intention)
  - B. A man cannot become a father unless a woman has become a woman and vice versa. But in the modern world, we have lost sight of this through an enemy who is hell-bent on eliminating gender distinction (the image of God).
  - C. Why? Because in the gender distinction, we discover the eternal mystery of God revealed and our destiny to participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Eph 5)
- VI. Male and Female He Made Them (Genesis).
- A. Trinitarian Ontology: unity, distinction, equality, purpose (life/love)
  - B. (1:26-31) *“So God created man in his own image.”*
    1. Created with unity of being, diversity, equality, value, and shared purpose.
  - C. (2:15-22) *“It is not good for the man to be alone.”*
    1. Man as a subject in relation to the other. Man finds and understands himself in the corresponding other, which is why marriage is the most fundamental expression of the call to communion, the place of self-giving.
  - D. (2:23) *“Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”*
    1. This one corresponds to and is made for me, and I for her

2. The spousal meaning of the body, the human body in its male and female form, is a gift to be given
3. The conscious experience of the human body as a gift and sign of God's love, and in turn, sharing this love with one another in and through their bodies, their masculinity, and femininity.
4. The self-giving of self is the means of upholding a Woman's dignity: as opposed to objectified lust. The Spousal gift fundamentally changes the way in which a woman exists "for" the man. So a husband can commit adultery in his heart when he objectifies her for his carnal satisfaction.

E. (2:24) *"That is why a man leaves his father and mother."*

F. (2:25) *"They were not ashamed."*

1. Not Ashamed = integrity, completeness, happiness through the communion of persons. Completely without shame because being naked in front of the other person posed no threat to the dignity of the other. This was a nakedness without being objectified by the other.

G. (3:1-7) *"And they knew that they were naked."*

1. Shared fall, shattered Union.
  - a) Both the male and female fall, yet with different consequences.
  - b) Union is impaired, both becoming conscious of nakedness, vulnerable to the worst of the other, and ashamed.
  - c) No longer a perfect communion of persons (because of sin)

H. (3:8-19) *"Where are you?"*



1. All were judged and received ONE punishment (the serpent, the man, and the woman)

a) (3:14) The Serpent = he would move on his belly

b) (17-19) The Man = the ground will not readily yield its fruit

c) (16) The Woman = increased pain in childbirth

**I. Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you (Gen 3:16b).**

	Punishment Pronounced	Explanation of Condition
3:15 The Serpent	15a And I will put enmity between your seed and her seed	15b He will strike your head while you strike at his heel
3:17-19 The man	17a Cursed is the ground because of you	17b in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
3:16 The Woman	16a I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain, you shall bring forth children.	16b You shall desire your husband, but he shall rule over you: <i>Frustrated and imperfect marital union.</i>



1. Three Contemporary Views on the woman's punishment for the fall:
  - a) The woman's desire will not be her own but subject to the will of the husband. She cannot do what she wishes, because her husband rules her like a tyrant;
  - b) The woman will an immense longing, yearning, and psychological on the husband (dependent desire)
  - c) Recent view, By superimposing the meaning for desire in Gen 4:7, the woman's desire his to control her husband, and he must master her if he can. (*Susan Foh, 1975, formal articulation of this view in response to the new feminism of the time*). Song of Soloman 7:10-11 is a better fit for the context.
2. Note how the judgments pronounced to the man and the woman revolve around propagation and seed. Both involve pain/toil, and both affect the bringing forth of life, human and otherwise.
3. The context doesn't speak of a woman's desire to rule the man but of the continuation of life in the face of death: (16a) *I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain, you shall bring forth children.*
4. It makes sense to retain this same idea as context for (16b) as well: *Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.*
5. Consider, if "the desire" of 16b is the desire of the woman to dominate her husband, then the sentence is no longer a punishment for the woman??? Wouldn't it be a punishment for the man? (Yet, man's judgment isn't mentioned until v. 17)
6. The 'Desire' factor is not a part of the judgment, but an explanation of conditions and relationships as they will exist after the fall!

## J. Conclusion.

1. The text does not sustain an interpretation that one aspect of a woman's judgment is that she will desire to dominate and control man- 16b is not a second judgment but an explanation and description of conditions that will exist after the fall.

Yet you will still desire *[as you did before the fall, though now tainted by sin]* your husband, and he will still rule *[as he did before the Fall, though now tainted by sin]* over you.

2. The alienation, broken intimacy, and pain in childbirth resulting from the Fall will not be allowed to annul that desire NOR abrogate the command to be fruitful (Gen 1:17).
3. The contention that "sin has corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband" is unquestionably true! But it is a natural consequence of SIN, not a result of God's JUDGMENT on the woman (Gen 3:16).
4. Just as the sin-corrupted headship of the husband is not a part of the divine judgment upon the man but a consequence of sin, so the sin-corrupted submission of the wife is not a part of the judgment, it is the result of sin.
5. This offers clarity to St. Paul's exhortations in Eph 5:22-33.

K. (3:20) *"The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living."*

## L. Woman is the Glory of Man

1. (1 Cor 11:7-9) *For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.*

2. Paul is telling us that woman is the archetype of the entire human race; she reveals what it means to be human! (This helps us better understand Ephesians 5).
3. God is the bridegroom, and humanity is the bride. This is why we speak of the church in female terms. This is why Mary is the penultimate type of the church.
4. The bridegroom gives the seed; it's the bride who opens to conceive the seed, bear life, and bring it forth.
5. To be human means to open ourselves to receive divine love, for life, and nourishment.

## VII. Womanhood Personified

### A. Woman in Song of Solomon.

1. The woman (Shulamite) often pursues the man whom she loves, often instigates intimacy, and is far more talkative of the pair ;)
2. Though an allegory of Christ's love for his church and the church for her Christ, the Song of Songs celebrates spousal sexuality, bypassing cultural norms of its time (and still in some cultures today) and insisting on the right of the woman to love another of her own choosing; the man likewise enjoys the right as well.
3. The Shulamite is the only unmediated voice in scripture, not narrated. Her presence dominates the book.
4. She exults in her power and influence over her lover.
5. She wisely advises the young daughters of Jerusalem not to rush into love but rather wait for the right moment- a moment that she enjoys finding again and again. (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4)

## B. Woman in Proverbs.

1. The roles of father and mother are equal in Proverbs; the father, as well as the mother, are honored as sources of instruction and teaching (1:8)
2. Female characters include the mother, noble wife, queen, gossip, adultress, the strange or foreign woman, *Woman Folly* and *Woman Wisdom*.

## C. The Wise and Foolish Woman.

1. *(Prov 1:20-33) Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;*
2. She exemplifies a synopsis of the positive roles played by wives and mothers in Israelite society.
3. *Woman Wisdom* addresses both *men and women*, combining a menacing strength and a soft goodness.
4. She is the opposite of *Woman Folly*, who is a loud, brash woman, sloppy in bearing yet brazenly attractive
  - a) *(9:13-17) The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" And to him who lacks sense, she says, "Stolen water is sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*
5. Her lifestyle and home entice the simple to the realm of the dead; following her will lead slowly not only to sexual seduction but seduction to alien religions.
6. *Woman Folly* presents a dangerous threat to family, society, and God's covenant.

#### D. Proverbs 31.

1. The book ends with an acrostic poem giving a glimpse into a successful, working marriage, emphasizing the critical role of the wife.
2. The speaker is not the woman, for such a woman of high praise would never speak of herself in such a manner; it is written by one who has observed this marriage over a period of time (husband?)
3. This marriage is:
  - a) Of two individuals, each permitting the other to excel according to his or her abilities;
  - b) The partners then bring back to their marriage and family the results of their industry;
  - c) They share the joys of daily endeavors;
4. It is a poem about life, happiness, confidence in the future, industry, and respect.
5. Clues of what the man and wife contribute to the marriage:
  - a) The husband publicly praises his wife, again and again;
  - b) The wife's industry makes the husband's life one in which he can excel as a magistrate at the city gate;
  - c) Their marriage shows a partnership of diverse equals, one in which the wife invests in real estate without seeking her husband's input, sanction or approval (31:16);
  - d) Each exhibit integrity and trustworthiness, but the wife is singled out as the depository of her husband's whole confidence and trust (31:11);

- e) His praise seems to make her thrive and she decides to do even more
- f) She directs her handmaids early in the day and provides good breakfast for all her employees;
- g) This woman enjoys work, and the whole family profits by her industry;
- h) She sews bed linens and clothes in the richest of all colors, purple (31:22)
- i) This truly remarkable woman, MUST be honored publicly, and the Book of Proverbs ends with giving her a place at the city gate, perhaps alongside her husband (31:23, 31);
- j) This woman behaves in such a way that all know that she is a woman who fears YHWH.
- k) Such excellent character can only come from a firm faith:  
*A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised (31:30).*

E. Why does the book of Proverbs end with a poem emphasizing a wise woman pointing toward the qualities of an ideal wife?

1. Perhaps because the goal of Wisdom literature is to live a life well-lived, and part of having a well-lived life is having a happy marriage.

F. The noble wife of Proverbs 31 is herself a model of Woman Wisdom: she is a believable, confident, and real woman contributing to the needs of her community and thoroughly enjoying the life she lives.

## VIII. Virgins, Unmarried, Widows, and Motherhood (1 Corinthians 7)

A. The Apostle Paul speaks only of two biblical relationships, the UNMARRIED or solitary life (unmarried or widowed), singleness bound to the Lord Jesus Christ in celibacy, AND MARRIAGE.

B. (1 Cor 7:8-9) To the Unmarried, Virgins, and Widowed.

1. *8 To the unmarried and widows, I say that it is best for them to remain as I am. 9 But if they do not have self-control, let them get married. For it is better to marry than to burn with sexual desire.* Remain bound to the Lord if you have the grace to remain without sexual sin. Otherwise, seek marriage.

2. To The Virgins (Females):

a) (28-29) To remain unmarried is not a sin: *28 But if you marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face difficult circumstances, and I am trying to spare you such problems. 29 And I say this, brothers and sisters:*

b) (34-45) Unmarried for ‘notable and constant service to the Lord’: *34 An unmarried woman or a virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, to be holy both in body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the things of the world, how to please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place a limitation on you, but so that without distraction, you may give notable and constant service to the Lord.*

C. Women who don’t physically become mothers through childbearing are called to embrace motherhood.

1. Extending the definition beyond the biological;
2. The body communicates spiritual realities;
3. Every woman has a womb, and breasts to nurture a child; her body proclaims motherhood (physically);
4. Not every woman is called at the physical level to be a mother, but every woman is called at the spiritual level to motherhood (so are all men called to Fatherhood);

a) ‘Mother’ Teresa;



b) We call priests Father (many who have taken a religious vow);

(1) Both living out the spiritual calling of Father and Motherhood;

5. Motherhood is the deepest call of what it means to be a woman.

#### D. The Female Body Reveals Heaven.

1. If Christmas is real, then a woman's womb is the most sacred sign of heaven on earth: the dwelling place of God on earth! Men would do well to remember that in the presence of the woman, we are standing on holy ground, her body revealing the mystery of the incarnation, God with man, Heaven on Earth.
2. This is why Satan, from the very beginning, has aimed all of his hatred toward the woman and her ability to produce a child
  - a) Gen 3:1 *He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"*
3. Satan, from the very beginning, is trying to destroy the sign and the very means from which comes the eternal life-giving love of God: *(Rev 12:1-4) And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, ready to devour her child as soon as she gave birth.*
4. He wants to devour her offspring! The Dragon wants to devour the child in the womb even immediately after being born!
5. The Dragon wants to turn the womb of life into a tomb of death.
6. *(Rev 12:5-6) And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place for her to be nourished for 1,260 days.*