

February 24, 2021

Sermon Manuscript

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (NIV)

² I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. ³ But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

⁷ A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹² For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

¹³ Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not the

very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, ¹⁵ but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. ¹⁶ If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

1 Timothy 2:8-15 (NIV)

^{2:8} Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. ⁹ I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles* or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

¹¹ A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

[^{3:1} Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task...]

Scripture On The Role Of Women: More Than Meets The Eye? (1 Tim 2:8-15)

Tonight we begin our series of Lenten Wednesday Homilies on “Crowd-Sourced” topics - topics suggested by parishioners. And we had quite a diversity of suggestions, so the approach and focus of these homilies may vary a lot from one Wednesday to the next. Tonight’s focus will definitely be one of biblical study, as we will look at a passage of scripture from Paul’s First Letter to Timothy. There are many passages in the New Testament that concern the role of women in worship or the household or both. This is a sensitive subject, but it is also one of great interest to many. Since I announced on Sunday that we’d be talking on this, I have heard from a number of parishioners who expressed interest.

There are many who believe scripture teaches that women should be subordinate to men, including in marriage. And this is understandable, because if one were to do a quick survey of the New Testament letters that address the role of women, it would seem there are *many* passages that endorse such a patriarchal structure, including the two passages we read tonight. So I certainly respect how Christians could hold this point of view; I have even to some degree adhered to it myself in the past. And by addressing this subject tonight, I am by no means telling anyone what they have to believe. One of the gifts of Anglicanism is that we can respectfully debate and disagree within the safety and grace of our common faith in Jesus Christ.

I will also be honest that in recent years my perspective on the doctrine of the subordination of women within Christianity has shifted. For me, part of this shift was spurred because I could see the bad fruit...

- We've probably all seen it borne out in marriages where a husband actively or passively uses it to control his wife, or disempowers her
- Or conversely, in marriages where a wife may use the theology of subordination of women to actually place spiritual expectations on her husband that are burdensome and again not bearing good fruit.
- And this doctrine has certainly marginalized valuable female voices and perspectives in the Church.

Now this isn't to say that all of the fruit is bad. There may be at least the semblance of good fruit in this hierarchical approach, which provides order, clearly defined roles, which to some can feel good, safe, familiar, and predictable. But should any of these be the goal or expectation of our life in Christ? I'm not sure they are; so what may seem like good fruit may not really be good fruit at all.

However, whenever I see bad fruit on a large scale created by Church doctrine, I am inclined to question why that is. And when we ask the question "why?" there are lots of things to consider-

1. Our personal experience or observations of what's going on in the Church. This is what we just talked about with my own shift in thinking as I saw more bad fruit than good fruit come from teaching about women's subordination
2. Then ,another important thing to consider is Church tradition. We don't want to dismiss or deny that the Church has thought about these scriptures for a long time. That means something. So in this case, for much of its history, the Church has taught the doctrine of men's "headship" and women's subordination to some degree or another.
3. That's to be recognized. I will add however, that we should be careful not to fall into a fundamentalism about church tradition or the church's traditional interpretation of scripture. The church is not God, not all knowing, not without blind spots. The Church's traditions are not infallible, And accordingly its interpretation of scripture is not static, but rather dynamic, which means it can - and sometimes should - change.

So with ALL that being said. I now want to introduce you to the work of scholar Lucy Peppiatt, who is the Principal of Westminster Theological Centre in the UK. and author of quite a few books on the writings of St. Paul. I want to share a little about what she's written about the New Testament teachings on the role of women, and on the end of 1 Timothy 2 in particular, from her book *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women*. While Peppiatt's perspective is just one among many, it is by far the soundest and most consistent I've come across. And I recommend it to anyone who would like to dig more deeply into these questions.

In the book, Peppiatt first of all proposes a paradigm-shifting interpretation of another passage that tends to tie Bible translators and interpreters in knots, and that is 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, which we read today. Typically, this scripture is interpreted to teach that women are subordinate to men and that women should demonstrate this by praying with their heads covered, but Peppiatt makes the case that this was an attitude & practice in the Corinthian Church that Paul is seeking to discourage. And let me explain why.

Most of you know that the New Testament was written in Ancient Greek, which is now a dead language. So we, as modern day English speakers rely on translations. Again, most of you probably already knew this. But what is not so commonly understood is that the original Ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament did not have chapter numbers, verse numbers. There were no spaces between words. No punctuation. Very different from what we might assume. Just take a look at the picture of "what's known as "Papyrus 46", in your bulletin or on the screen. This is probably the oldest parchment of New Testament scripture we have (from the late second century) is just a string of capital Greek letters. You can also see in your bulletin and on the screen the contrast in how the New

Testament manuscripts would have originally been written, versus the spaced-out and punctuated versions we would see in a modern greek new Testament. As you can see, in copying the New Testament manuscripts through the centuries we, as the Church, have had to make lots of guesses about where words begin & end, where punctuation might be appropriate, and make educated guesses about where the biblical writers are moving from one thought or subject to the next.

Well, returning to 1 Corinthians 11, there, the way it's traditionally been translated, Paul seems to completely contradict himself in a matter of just a few verses. Verses 8 & 9 seem to encourage subordination, where Paul writes, “⁸ For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ neither was man created for woman, but woman for man,” but then he seems to say that men and women are mutually and equally dependent upon one another in verse 11, writing, “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.” But, as Lucy Peppiatt reminds us, “First Corinthians” is not actually the first communication between Paul and the Corinthian Church. Instead, we know this letter is actually a letter Paul writes in response to a “lost” letter the Corinthian Church had first written to Paul. So Peppiatt suggests that at certain points in this passage Paul is actually quoting some of the incorrect things the Church in Corinth had written about in their initial (now lost) letter. She suggests that in the verses I’ve put in orange Paul is actually quoting some incorrect things the Corinthian Christians had written.¹ And remembering that the original manuscripts did not have punctuation, spacing, etc, I think you’ll see why Peppiatt’s proposal is so compelling.



How the New Testament manuscripts would've originally been written:
ENAPXHHNOΛΟΓΟCΚΑΙΟΛΟΓΟC

versus

How the Greek New Testaments are presented today:

Εν αρχη ην ο λογος, και ο λογος

¹ Peppiatt calls this approach the “rhetorical perspective”. And her rendering of the NIV’s translation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 according to this perspective is as follows.

² I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. ³ But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved.”

⁶ For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

⁷ A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels.”

¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹² For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

¹³ Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not “the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him,” ¹⁵ but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. ¹⁶ If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

So this would mean that Paul is making a correction in verse 11 to the subordinate Corinthians subordination view quote in verses 8 & 9. But it would also allow that Paul meant something very different in the first part of the passage in regard to a man's "headship", if verses 4 & 5 aren't his view but those of the Corinthians.

And this brings up a second challenge of translation, which is that many Ancient Greek words do not have a 1-to-1 correlation to any English word. For example, famously there are four different Greek words that all end up being translated as 'love' in the English. On the other hand, with some Greek words there may be as many as ten English words it could be translated into. Therefore, every translator of the Bible is also tasked with interpretation, and making often multiple decisions in a single verse, based on what they think the biblical writer is trying to say. And like any pursuit of the truth, this exercise can never be totally free from bias.

After demonstrating why many of the traditional interpretations of the word translated 'head' in verse 3 are problematic - where Paul refers to God being the head of Christ and Christ being the head of man - and therefore man being head of woman - Peppiatt posit that Paul instead is merely affirming that the spiritual strength and stability of the husband is like a cornerstone or headstone of a building in that it has an impact on the strength and stability of every other member of the family - as both Paul and Peter both use that metaphor elsewhere - but not that it supports women's subordination under man. ##

In fact, on the subject of translating words in regard to women, it is a surprise to many - it certainly was to me that there is actually a woman whom Paul mentions as being an Apostle; her name is Junia in Romans 16:7. But about 500 years ago figures like Martin Luther began translating this passage as if Junia was a man; and you can read more in my manuscript footnotes for that crazy story.² And while no one really defends that perspective anymore, it shows how Bible translation is not immune from bias. And this continues even today: just look at how the ESV translators have chosen instead to interpret and translate the words around Junia (in your bulletin or on the screen):

Greet Andronicus and **Junia**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me (ESV).

Contrast this with how the NIV translates it:

Greet Andronicus and **Junia**, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was (NIV).

But most importantly, in order to best determine what a biblical writer was intending to say, we have to seek to understand the context it was written in - what was going on at the time; how the original audience would have heard what is written. For example, you have a passage like the end of Colossians 3, which we looked at two summers ago. It not only addresses wives and husbands, but also slaves. And for years in this country passage was used to justify slavery. When, in fact, a study of Paul's context shows he was modifying a document called a Roman household code, which would've been used to permit Roman men to completely dominate their wives and children and slaves. But Paul was turning that on its head, by inserting the command for husbands and explicitly addressing wives and children and slaves, which elevated their standing because Roman household codes would've only addressed the man. #

² *See the excerpt at the end of this sermon from Scot McKnight's book [Junia Is Not Alone](#).*

So, needless to say, there is much more going on in these passages than meets the eye. And with that we turn to 1 Timothy 2. This passage has been used to justify arguably the most extreme treatment toward women in the Church, as it seems to disallow women from speaking, from teaching, from leading; and it even seems to blame women (specifically Eve) for the Fall of humanity into sin.

But Peppiatt proposes an alternative understanding of this text, based in part on more recent scholarship, which differs *considerably* from a plain sense reading, mostly because of context, context, context.

As I see it, the biggest problem with any interpretations on this passage from either side of the debate over the role of women comes in the seemingly bizarre verse 15 about women being saved through childbirth.

- This verse seems to have nothing to do with what Paul is talking about in the verses before and after.
- And taken on its face seems to contradict the rest of scripture's teaching on salvation³

But Peppiatt notes there are also plenty of other questions this text raises apart from verse 15. Such as...

1. In verse 12, why does Paul seem to prohibit women from teaching, particularly when he seems to affirm just the opposite in some of his other letters; not only with Junia, but Phoebe,⁴ Priscilla,⁵ and others.
2. And in the same verse, what the English reader can't see is that Paul does not use the typical New Testament word for 'authority', but instead uses a word that never appears anywhere else in the Bible.
3. And then in the end of that paragraph, why does Paul bring Adam & Eve into this? And why does Paul seem to blame Eve for the Fall, when elsewhere in Romans 5 he seems to single out Adam, if anyone.

Well, where the plain-sense reading leads to more questions than answers, it suggests a need for deeper study, which Peppiatt has done. So I am going to attempt to relay that to you, but for more detail you'll want to read her book. #

We need to understand that when Paul writes this letter to Timothy, Timothy is overseeing the Church in Ephesus. And Ephesus was a city where the worship of the Greek goddess Artemis was dominant, because there was a temple to her there. And a number of more recent scholars have begun suggesting that his passage is addressed to women who were recent converts to Christianity from the cult of Artemis. You see, there were many reasons that the worship of Artemis was more significant for women than men. And I will offer four.

1. First, as Artemis was a female deity, women were called dress up in a manner that imitated her, which included braiding their hair and potentially immodest dress (note that Artemis is depicted with an exposed chest with many breasts). This suggests that in verse 9 Paul is encouraging women who'd converted to Christianity to give up dressing in a manner that signified Artemis worship.

³ not to mention, how can one even begin to think about applying this verse in their lives.

⁴ In *Junia Is Not Alone*, Scot McKnight agrees with Reta Finger that "Phoebe was probably the first person to read Romans aloud in public.

⁵ Peppiatt: "Priscilla... is mentioned with her husband, Aquila, in Acs 8:2, 18, 26,; Romans 16:3; 1 Cor 16:9, and 2 Tim 4:19. Four of the six times she is mentioned, she is mentioned first, giving us a clear indication that she is deemed to be the most prominent of the pair. In addition to this we know that she had a crucial role in instructing Apollos in the faith (Acts 18:26)." (!)

2. Second, women in Ephesus were also expected to perform public good deeds and make generous donations out of *eusebia*, a Greek word meaning piety to the Artemis and the gods. However, in verse 10, Paul goes on to encourage “good deeds” with a different motive: the whole end of that verse that reads “appropriate for women who profess worship to God” is essentially one word: *theosebia*. So instead of good deeds of *eusebia*, Paul’s telling them to do good deeds for *theosebia*, for God’s glory.
3. Third, it is well attested⁶ that the legend of Artemis had become linked in Ephesus with a myth about the Egyptian goddess Isis. Isis was the Egyptian goddess of fertility and believed to have power over people’s fate. And the myth about Isis taught that women were the author of men and therefore were superior to men in religious understanding. According to Peppiatt, this may have led to women who were newer converts to Christianity being overconfident about what they knew and asserting themselves accordingly. If so, this would explain why Paul is declaring these women should “learn in quietness and full submission,” because they need to spend time learning the faith before they can teach it. ’re acting like they know the faith. And indeed, the Greek for “I do not permit” in verse 12 is typically used more in the sense of disallowing in a situation rather than prohibiting it for all time. But this would also clarify why Paul then brings up Adam & Eve. Rather, when he notes in verse 13 that “Adam was formed first, then Eve,” he is countering the Isis myth that men came from women. And when Paul then writes that “Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner,” he is not blaming Eve for all human sin, but rather suggesting that women are no less vulnerable to being deceived than men, despite what the myth of Isis may have claimed.
4. Well, this leads us finally to verse 15 and Paul’s seemingly off-the-wall comment about women being saved through child-bearing. A final thing to know about Artemis is that she was believed to be the goddess of childbirth and midwifery.⁷ But rather than looking out for expectant mothers, Artemis was feared, as she was believed to be the one who determined whether a mother in childbirth would live or die, to the extent that she even became known as a “savior” for those giving birth.⁸ And so, imagine if women were taught throughout their lives not to tick off Artemis - or else risk dying in childbirth - imagine these women had believed the gospel and converted to Christ. It is understandable - I think - that they might be vulnerable to weak faith when it came to childbearing and might still want to keep a foot in both religions. So Peppiatt suggests that in verse 15 Paul is encouraging them to trust not in Artemis, but to trust in the Lord - that he is the one who’s protection they should desire and seek when giving birth.
 - a. And then Peppiatt actually suggests that the beginning of 3:1 is completion of Paul’s thought. Remember, there is no punctuation.
 - b. So Paul is saying, “But women will be saved (preserved) through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. (and) Here is a trustworthy saying.” You can trust that.

So Lucy Peppiatt suggests that there were women in the church at Ephesus whose faith remained impacted by their past devotion to Artemis, both in remaining influenced by those heretical teachings and inhibited by fear that Artemis would seek vengeance upon them during childbirth.

Therefore, Paul’s instructions here are not to be read as binding upon women for all time, but only in that particular situation in the first century Church in Ephesus.

⁶ Heyob, Sharon Kelly (1975). The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World. Brill, p. 72-73.

⁷ Artemis was the virgin daughter of Leto and Zeus who oversaw the 9 day birth of her brother apollo

⁸ More specifically, Artemis was believed to be able to either deliver a mother and child safely or to dispatch a mercy killing for the mother if the labor was too long and painful

So this is my answer to the question of how best to interpret and understand 1 Timothy 2. I've given you more than enough to chew on for tonight. And I appreciate yall for hanging in there with me. If you would like to review what I've shared or dive deeper into some footnotes, the manuscript is available on our website and there are a few printed copies in the back tonight. And if you'd like to discuss it further, please don't hesitate to reach out or post a question or comment in the Facebook comments. Amen.

Excerpts from [*Junia Is Not Alone*](#) by Scot McKnight

Junia... appears innocently enough in Romans 16:7 alongside her husband, Andronicus... In some translations her name is changed to a male name, and in some translations her status as an apostle is called into question...

*The conclusions of Eldon J. Epp, in his outstanding little book *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, will be sketched as my own because I agree with him. His conclusions are: 1. Junia was a woman. 2. There is no evidence that any man had the name "Junias." 3. Junia is a not, as some have argued, a contracted name of Junianus. 4. "Among the apostles" means Junia herself was an apostle and not simply that the apostles thought she was a good egg.*

[As Reta Finger has contended, Phoebe was probably the first person to read Romans aloud in public.]

How Junia Got a Sex Change...

In the subsequent history of the church, a new kind of logic about women began to dominate. The logic was simple: the person in Romans 16:7 is an apostle, and apostles can't be women, so Junia cannot have been a woman.

It happened, or can be illustrated, in Greek by changing the accent in an originally unaccented text from Jun-I-an to JuniAn. This change in accent led to the male name, JuniaS, the Anglicized form...All early translations of the New Testament into other languages listed Junia as a woman.

Martin Luther played a decisive role in turning Junia into a man.... Luther gave to the German name Juniam a masculine article (den Juniam [today, den Junias]). Then he said, "Andronicus and Junias were famous apostles" and were "men of note among the apostles." ...Prior to him by two centuries, back in the 13th or early 14th century, Aegidius or Giles of Rome called Junia a male. Luther didn't invent the change, but his influence made it significant.

The Greek New Testaments that Christians have used and pastors have studied and students are told to master are composite texts. They are not the "original" New Testament. They are "composite" texts where one word was taken from one manuscript and another word from another manuscript.... No Greek New Testament had anything but Junia, a woman's name, until Nestle's edition in 1927... In 1927, in the 13th edition of his composite Greek New Testament, Eberhard Nestle silenced Junia and gave birth to a

new Christian man named Junias. How did Nestle do this? In 1927, Nestle put Junias in the text with a hat tip in the footnotes to other Greek New Testaments that had the female Junia.

When Kurt Aland, the 20th century's most famous New Testament textual scholar, became the editor of that famous Greek New Testament by Nestle, he carried on Nestle's text—until the 1979 edition of Aland's text, (when) Junia was simply erased from the footnote.

Junia has been raised from the dead. She's back in the text, in all the texts. As if to compensate for their past sins, the editors of those composite Greek New Testaments have killed off the non-existent Junias... Junia has come back to life, and she is now in the text. Junias has disappeared (except in some translations), and we have again an "A" rating.

Chrysostom, probably in about 344 AD, "... Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle.