

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
February 14, 2010**

Christian Love and Marriage Sunday

Let's Keep Marriage a "Holy Estate"

- 1. It is a divine institution**
- 2. It involves a human commitment**

Hymns: 506 – 505 – 502 – 490

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Genesis 2:18-24 - The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Gen 1:28 - God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."

People have made many comments about marriage down through time. Listen to some quotes that some have said:

- "Marriage is like a violin. It doesn't work without the strings. And when the music stops, the strings are still attached."
- "Marriage begins when you sink into his arms and ends with your arms in the sink."
- "Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and half shut afterwards." (Martin Luther)
- "By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you will become very happy; if you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher, and that is also good." (Socrates)
- Sign in wallpaper and paint store: "Husbands choosing colors must have note from wives."

It seems as though marriage isn't always what it's cracked up to be, in some people's opinions!

Consider also the role of marriage counseling in a pastor's ministry. A young man studying to be a pastor can be certain that marriage counseling will most likely be most of his counseling cases. Couple this with the fact that an average wedding in the United States (excluding multi-million dollar weddings) is over \$20,000. That brings up the question: Why would anyone get married? It seems like nothing but a hassle!

Today, let's be encouraged to "**Keep Marriage a "Holy Estate!"**" Let's focus on the first marriage in Genesis 1 and 2, and learn two truths about it:

- 1. It is a divine institution**
- 2. It involves a human commitment**

Before we look at Scripture to learn these lessons today, however, let's note a couple things about the single life on this Valentine's Day. We certainly would not depress or burden worshipers here today who are unmarried for one reason or another. Perhaps there are some who have chosen the single life due to their own preference. 1 Corinthians 7 says, "*Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*" It is perfectly acceptable for a person to choose the single life.

Others here may have wished and hoped for married life but God has not granted it yet. This is no fault of their own, and we certainly wouldn't want to open wounds by talking about marriage this morning. If this is your situation, we pray along with you that God would grant you every good blessing in the future that he knows is right for you.

Still others may have had a marriage partner pass away and is no longer with us in the world. Again, this message is not intended to open up old wounds, but to rejoice that God granted you blessings while you were married.

1 – With that said, we read in Genesis 2, "*The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'* Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found."

This is a remarkable statement! God had made his new world with great care. Yet he looked down at his nearly-completed work and declared that something was "not good." This is odd, for time after time we hear that his evaluation was "good" – Absolutely perfect! But with man this was not the case.

The problem was that man was alone. It's a bit funny that the Hebrew word for "alone" is BUD. When we speak of our "bud" in English, we usually mean our friend, our buddy. In the first world, Adam was BUD. He was his own "bud." And God sees this as a bad situation. He was lacking something because God made man to be a social creature. You might have times you like to be alone, but in the big picture of life if you had no contact with any other humans, you would be missing something.

God decided to make a companion for man. He chose to provide this in the form of a "helper." The man should have a supporter and assistant. God wanted to show Adam this for himself. So he caused all the animals to pass by Adam one day, and gives him the privilege of naming the animals. As it says in our reading, it soon became evident that the "helper" and mate would not come from the animal kingdom. God would need to do something special to fill Adam's need!

We read, "*So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.'*" God created a woman and presented her to the man. It's interesting that God did not use a foot bone, so that this

individual would be stepped all over by Adam. He did not use a skull bone so this person would rule over him. He created woman from a rib. She was created from his side as a partner that he would love and protect.

She was also described as “suitable” for Adam. The sense behind this word is that she was like Adam in the way God created her, yet was conspicuously different. She was no clone, yet she suited him well as a match. **Here we see the first blessing God grants in marriage: Companionship.**

We also see that roles for the husband and wife were evident already in the first paradise. The woman is called man’s “suitable helper.” She is created from the man. She is brought and presented to the man. And she is named for the man. Nothing in this picture demeans her as an inferior creation, but we clearly see an order of creation and a headship in the first perfect marriage.

God also fulfilled the man’s need for a companion in a way that Adam may not have imagined. We read, “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*” The verb “be united” is a vivid word in Hebrew. Literally, it’s the word for “stick to.” It’s used of your tongue and the roof of your mouth when your thirst is great. The man is to be united (stick to, cling to, cleave to) his wife. The two will become one flesh. We undoubtedly see a reference here to the second blessing that God gives in marriage: Sexual happiness. This blessing is nothing dirty or shameful, but is a blessing rightfully given to husband and wife. **What blessings we see in how marriage has been divinely instituted!**

For us today, it’s important to recognize that this pattern for marriage is still in effect. Marriage is not a manmade

institution that man has invented. Therefore, God’s rules for it are still in effect. Marriage still involves one man and one woman (God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve). It still involves God joining the two parties as one and showering them with his blessings.

Today we observe many aberrations of the estate of marriage. Homosexuality has become viewed by many in our times as perfectly acceptable. Living together without being rightfully married has been viewed as perfectly acceptable by many. Fornication and sexual immorality has been deemed as:

- Growing up
- “Sowing your wild oats”
- A valid test run for marriage
- Fun that “everyone does”

This is probably the biggest abuse of God’s blessing of marriage today. More people are sexually active and actually living together without marriage than ever before in our country. We have more pornography than ever to tempt hearts to lust. There are more and new diseases that are being spread by sexually active people going against God’s rules for chastity. When you go against God’s rules, you’re just looking for trouble! The Maker’s rules are still in effect!

Today we should also recognize that marriage is still a blessing as a divine institution. Some people in unhappy marriages might debate that today! The book of Proverbs tells us, “*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.*” (*Proverbs 18:22*) This is still true! How wrong we would be to view our marriage as anything but a blessing.

2 – Our reading gives us another angle to view the estate of marriage from today. So far we’ve been looking at

marriage through God's eyes as his divine institution. We also see what marriage is like from man's perspective in Scripture. The Bible tells us that marriage involves a human commitment as well.

Verse 24 said, *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife..."* Marriage involves a **serious promise**. It is a leaving of your former family that you grew up in and the committed beginning of a new family. Oh, how the devil can worm his way into a new home and turn the married partners back toward their own home in discontentment. Many a pastor has had difficulty helping a young couple with their problems because in-laws are too involved in their situation and life.

Scripture also teaches us that marriage involves **permanence in this life**. Romans 7:2 tells us, *"By law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage."* Jesus said in Matthew 6, *"What God has joined together, let no one separate."* A young couple considering marriage needs to soberly consider this. "You only get married once" is the proper way to think, going into your wedding day. This is why the wedding vow states: "For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part." Unfortunately, many today think:

- "Till I get bored and want to move on"
- "Till times get too tough"
- "Till something better comes along"
- "Till I feel you're not making me happy"

The Bible does allow for divorce for two reasons: Adultery and malicious desertion. How sad it is when unscriptural reasons like "irreconcilable differences" is cited as a reason to get a divorce! How sad

when a couple who fights a lot decide to divorce instead of learning how to talk to each other like Christians.

Since God has given this blessing as a permanent establishment, it's good for us to talk about nurturing your marriage relationship. God has wise words for married couples in this regard. Proverbs 21 says, *"Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife."* Wives, are you ill-tempered? Do you build up your husband and your marriage or do you drag him down? Are you the positive helper and supporter that God has created you to be? How sad that would be if you did not nurture your marriage relationship. This is part of your human commitment.

And husbands, 1 Peter 3 says, *"Husbands... be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."* Ephesians 5 adds, *"Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."* Husbands, have you been nurturing your relationship with your wife? Do you show her the attention she deserves only on Valentine's Day? Or even then? Has it been a while since you have told her she is a beautiful, amazing blessing in your life that God has given you? This is part of your human commitment to her.

This is all the more important when we see that God compares his love for us with a husband's love for his wife. God loved us enough to sacrifice for us. He gave his Son Jesus to be our Savior and die on the cross for our sins. He made a commitment to us. What love! What an example to Christian men today. What an inspiration this is for husbands and wives to grow closer to their Savior and to each other with each passing day? May God forgive us for the

times we have not nurtured our marriages and give us the resolve to change!

We see one other way a human commitment is involved. In Genesis 1:28 it says, “*God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’*” **This points out the third blessing that God gives in a marriage, the gift of children.**

How does the world look at children? You often hear people making statements like:

- We don’t want to be tied down with a family.
- We want to have fun instead of raising kids.
- My friend’s kids turned out so bad we don’t want any.
- Children are too expensive!
- The world is so evil I don’t want to put any children into it.
- The world is too overpopulated

This is not the way the Bible speaks of children! Psalm 127 says, “*Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.*” Scripture speaks of children as a blessings!

Now think of the human commitment that married couples must make with their children. They will remember Ephesians 6 says, “*Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*” That is the primary responsibility of the parents. How often does the father in your household have home devotions in your home? How important that is! Do you know that the Small Catechism Martin Luther wrote was for fathers to use in

teaching their children, and not so much for pastors to have a class at church? Don’t let your opportunity to train your child in God’s Word pass by! And think of the commitment to be a Christian role model in all you say and do as your children observe you. What an important privilege!

May you never stop being a Christian parent. Keep asking, “What TV shows do my children watch? What music do they listen to? What movies do they go to? Who are their closest friends? Who are their heroes?” Strive to be the best parent you can be with the ability God has given you!

Finally, as I look out here today I’d imagine that many of you came as the product from what we might term a “stable” marriage and family unit. If so, would you trade it for something? Or if you didn’t come from such a stable family unit and had the chance to grow up in it, would you take that opportunity? Most certainly! What a valuable gift!

So today, let’s honor marriage as a holy estate. It is a divine institution that involves a human commitment. Speak up about what a blessing this gift of God is. Nurture your marriage regularly for its health. And may God bless us all through the holy estate of marriage. Amen.