

Let Us Marry Marriage

Years ago, when I was at our Seminary, one of our professors said this: “Men, you must marry the scriptures.” It was a strange thing for him to say—at least we thought so at first. Then, after we thought about it a little more, it made sense. He was challenging us to think of God’s word as something so important that we were joined to it and it was an inseparable part of who we were.

This morning, I have much the same challenge for you. Let us marry God’s word. And this morning let us marry a specific part of God’s word. Let us marry marriage. Let us learn from God’s word all we can about Marriage—what it is; what it isn’t; what it means to us. We read in the opening words of Mark 10: *“Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ ‘What did Moses command you?’ he replied. They said, ‘Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.’ ‘It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,’ Jesus replied.” (Mark 10:2–5 NIV)*

Isn’t it interesting to see that, as Solomon said, there is nothing new under the sun. It was easy—too easy to get a divorce back then. And much the same is true today. And so there are these Pharisees who come to Jesus. They try to trap him. They ask him a question that seemingly had no right answer. If he goes along with Moses and says that divorce is just fine, then he would be sinning against one of God’s greatest gifts, marriage itself. If he says what the bible says then Jesus is going against one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament.

Notice how Jesus answers. He says that Moses allowed divorce due to the hardness of their hearts. In other words, as a believer surrounded by unbelievers, Moses couldn’t move them to do the right thing based on God’s word. The only thing he could do is minimize the damage the wretched unbelieving men could do. He allowed a divorce *not* for the sake of the men, but to protect women whose husbands hated them.

Now, Jesus could have stopped there in speaking about marriage. But he doesn’t. And we thank him for this, for there are great treasures of truth in the words which follow: *“‘But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’” (Mark 10:5–7 NIV)*

The NIV here uses the word “at.” A slightly better translation would be to use the word “from.” From the moment of creation, before the fall into sin, God created them as male and female. And God continues to make male and female from that time all the way up till today.

Now, see how this already answers some questions for us. We ask the question: when did marriage start? Notice what Jesus says: From the beginning up till now. Marriage is not something that happened as a result of sin. Marriage is not something that humans came up with. God started marriage at the beginning, before sin entered into the world.

The next question we ask flows from the first. Not, just ‘when did it start?’; but *how* did it start? *“‘But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’” (Mark 10:5–7 NIV)* He made us male and female. He made humans in such a way that eventually there is this natural attraction to and appreciation of the opposite gender.

When I was in grade school I used to love girls. Oh yeah, I loved them. They were great, because when you pushed them into the bushes they made this delightful squealing sound. But, that’s about all they seemed to be useful for. And then things changed. I still remember the day that everything changed. Our school was on a class trip. And we were all eating in a restaurant. And I offered Tonya Decker my fries—*my* beloved, treasured fries. And what was her response? She said: “Yuck, I don’t want your germs.” That night I did a whole lot of thinking, trying to figure out why I would give my fries away—and even worse, to a girl. And I still haven’t figured out. But, now at least I know that it’s natural. That is the way God made us. He made mankind. He made us male and female.

Now, this might be an entertaining story. But, what’s the point? We are here this morning to marry marriage. We are here to learn all we can about marriage from God’s word. We are here to understand it and apply it to our lives. Marriage can be boiled down to just six words: One man, One woman, For life.

My brothers and sisters, there are many, many churches today who do not know this simple and profound truth. There was a church years ago which had an organist. The man was an accomplished organist. He on the church council. He was happily married with several children. And the man also had a gay lover. The church was paralyzed. It didn’t know what to do about this situation. Why? Because they didn’t marry God’s word. They didn’t marry this part of God’s word speaking about marriage.

Now, it might be tempting for you to say: ‘there’s a world of difference between *that* church and us.’ But, the distance is far closer than you might think. You see, it wasn’t as if the members of that church one day forgot what marriage was. What happened is that the fathers of the families in that church didn’t share God’s word with their children. What happened

is that they had a faithful pastor who invited them to come to bible study week after week and they continually said 'no.' And then when there was a false-teaching pastor who came into the congregation they honestly did not know what God's word said about marriage. So, they could not refute that pastor when he preached heresy.

Does that picture look familiar? You might say to yourself: I have married marriage. I know what the bible says about marriage. I still remember what I was taught in catechism class. But, if you aren't in God's word, you are on the same path as that other congregation I mentioned. The only difference is that they arrived there sooner than you. If you aren't reading God's word at home and learning from your pastor in bible study, you are foolish. For Fox News, CNN and Glenn Beck and NPR cannot teach you this. Only God's word can.

Let me speak clearly: When your pastor invites you to learn what God's word says, and you choose other things for yourselves and for your family, you open the door for marriage to be torn apart. But, it also happens in other ways too. It happens in how we speak about marriage. A couple of weeks ago we had the wedding rehearsal for Tony Hamilton and his new wife, Keri. And after it was all done, I remember telling Tony to enjoy his last night of freedom. Because tomorrow it was all over.

What is hideous way for me to speak about marriage. Here I was, speaking about marriage as if it were a curse to endure, instead of a blessing to enjoy. And we wonder why Christian men and women decide to live together before they are married. When we paint this sort of picture with our words, what conclusion do they arrive at? They conclude that marriage is something you enter into only when you have no other choices. We say things like this and then we are shocked when young men don't want to get married and young women despise children. We've taught them with our very own words that marriage and the gifts which come along with marriage, children—we've taught them that they are all things to endure, not enjoy.

I speak the words I am speaking deliberately. And I hope that they hurt you. For, for too long we have deluded ourselves into thinking that we have married marriage. We haven't. We have married our own laziness. We have married the world's view of marriage. But, we haven't married marriage.

Our sin is real. But, my brothers and sisters, I want you to know that Christ's forgiveness is also real. Here in these words, Jesus tells us: *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one* (Mark 10:7-9 NIV)

So there is male and female. They *leave* their father and mother. They *weave* their lives together. And finally, they *believe*. They humbly trust that children are a gift from God, not a curse. As I read these words, I cannot help but think of the wedding at Cana. What Jesus does there at that wedding in Cana is a small glimpse into what he does in the rest of our lives. In John 2, we learn of a groom who messed up. He didn't have enough wine. It was about to be a huge, embarrassing disaster. But then, when the time was just right, Jesus provided for that groom far more than he could have asked for or imagined.

Isn't that a wonderful window into what Jesus does with marriage and our Christian lives. We sin and Jesus graciously forgives us. We are afraid and Jesus provides for us. We are lazy and skip out of bible classes. And Jesus wakes us up to see that in bible class and in our devotions at home—that is where we find joy and peace and consolation. We follow the path of the world and put marriage down. And Jesus comes along and lifts it up. He shows us what it really, truly is. It is one man, one woman, for life. It is the foundation for the church's future. It is the expression of the church's present.

Finally then, please let me conclude with a story. There was a man named Abraham. He had a wife named Sarah. He grew old with this woman he loved. And even though she was ten years younger than he was, she died before him. And Moses records for us this very beautiful picture, showing us just how much Abraham loved her. Abraham lived in tents. He had no house or land. But, when Sarah died, he went to the people of the land to buy land to bury his wife. The man who owned the cave started out with an offer. And without any bargaining or haggling he bought the land. And he buried his wife. This story has been handed down to generation after generation of Christian to teach us two, important lessons: Look at how married Abraham was to Sarah—Look at his love! And the second is just as important: Look at how married he was to God's word. For he believed that his children would own that land. And he believed that one of those children would be the Messiah.

When we hear words like that, how can we not? How can we not marry God's word? How can we not sit down with our pastor on Sunday mornings and with our families in the evenings and rejoice in this truth. Let us ever and always marry marriage by marrying God's word. Amen.