

October 18, 2009
Pentecost 20

"The Hand of God in Marriage"

GENESIS 2:18-25

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.²¹ 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.²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.²³ 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."²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Did you hear about the family in Colorado that constructed a large Mylar weather balloon in their backyard? Somehow, the ropes were not tied down properly. The large saucer shaped balloon floated up in the air and across the Colorado plains. The news reported that a six year old boy was possibly in a little compartment underneath that balloon. There was such a feeling of helplessness as the balloon floated through the sky? Who would rescue the boy before the balloon crashed to the ground, or became entangled in power lines, or rose in the sky to an altitude where he would freeze to death. When the balloon finally landed there was no little boy inside. He had been hiding in a box in the attic of their garage. It was falsely reported by his brothers that he may have been in the balloon.

As we think of that balloon hopelessly floating through the air with a little boy possibly aboard, we think of how many families across our country are floating through life no longer tethered to God's plan for husbands and wives that is set forth here in the words just read to you from Genesis 2. A sixteen year old honor student in Chicago is beaten to death by gang members on his way home from school because he happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Look at the gang problems we have in our community because of the break down of the fabric of society, the family.

There are two prevailing views on marriage. One view says that marriage developed in the minds of human beings through the process of evolution. Such a view proposes that marriage is totally flexible and able to develop into different forms, including the union of two people of the same sex. The other view says that the hand of God formed marriage. This morning we are taking the position that marriage comes from the hand of God as a blessing he gives people. The more we see the hand of God in marriage, the more we will appreciate that marriage is truly a blessing from God.

The Lord provides the gift of marriage

In his infinite wisdom the Lord could have created Adam and Eve together simultaneously, from the dust of the ground. Instead, he creates Adam first. Then he creates Eve and brings her to the man. God wanted Adam to see the need and value of companionship with the woman that he made from the rib of man. The Lord reveals his thoughts to us on this subject when it says, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Notice the Lord says it is not good for the man to be alone. After everything God created it says, "And God saw that it was good." With Adam, the Lord's work was not complete until he brought him a helper who was suitable for him.

God's plan was to provide a suitable helper for Adam. Please do not misunderstand the word "helper." This does not mean the man sits around while the wife does all the work in the family. Her role is not that of junior partner or apprentice. Look at this word "helper" as it refers to God in Psalm 46 where it says, "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in time of trouble." As we sing in the hymn, "Our God our help in ages past..." God's plan was to help Adam by providing a helper who was suitable. This word could also be translated "match." Here is the Lord coming to the aid and rescue of man by sending him someone who would be a helper for him, a helper who was suitable, a perfect match. The woman respects her man as he God given head, and the man loves his woman as much as Christ loved the church.

Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were extraordinary dancers because they complemented each other. Of course Fred Astaire would always lead as they danced together. Someone once commented on what a great dancer Fred Astaire was. A woman said in response, "Yes, but Ginger Rogers did everything he did, only she did it in high heels and backwards." Hers was a lot tougher assignment! Their dance together was beautiful. Adam would lead and then Eve would follow as his counterpart. In a perfect world, the man would always lead in a way that makes the woman look better. In an imperfect world the Christian man longs to love his wife as Christ loves the church. That's the leadership we need today.

It might seem strange that in this important section about marriage, we are introduced to Adam naming the animals. And yet this is not strange at all because the Lord wanted Adam to see the design he had for the animals and also the design he had for marriage. "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." Look at all the animals brought to Adam, amazing animals that still fascinate us to this day. See the giraffe with its long neck, the elephant with its trunk, the dog with its bark, the cat with its meow. Little children enjoy reading books with animals and making animal sounds, and adults are just as fascinated as they watch the Animal Planet. Adam names the animals and he sees how carefully God has designed them. The Lord God who designed the animals is the Lord God who will provide the perfect companion for Adam.

Our text tells us in a most touching way how the Lord God made the woman for the man. "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. " With

the rib that was taken from the man, the Lord God made a woman. The Hebrew word here actually means "built" or "constructed." The careful construction from the rib shows the importance of the companion the Lord was providing. Even in a world, plagued by sin, the man still needs to see the woman as carefully constructed companion given to him by the Lord. The words of the 18th century Bible commentator Matthew Henry have become well known and often quoted, "Not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

The Lord constructed the woman for the man while Adam was in a deep sleep and then he brought her to the man. There are no suggestions from Adam on how she should be designed. He is sound asleep through this whole process. We don't hear him asking for someone about 5' 6,115 pounds, brown hair, dark eyes, soothing sounding voice, rather muscular, but not too muscular. He leaves the design of the woman to the Lord. And then it says that the Lord brought her to the man. See the father walking his daughter down the aisle and giving her away to her future husband. See God bringing Eve to Adam and saying, "Here is the suitable companion I have designed for you." Husbands, look at the woman the Lord has given you, and trust they she has been designed by the Lord to be the helper the Lord has provided for you. Every time you enter into a marriage relationship you enter into something made in heaven by the hand of God. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."

We respect and cherish the gift of marriage

How does Adam respond to this very special gift the Lord is giving to him?

"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.'" He doesn't just say this is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. He says, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." This word now in the original Hebrew is a word of wonder and amazement. Today we would say "Wow!" The way the words are placed together it is like a love poem or love song that he sings to this beautiful person the Lord has given to him.

If your marriage is tethered to God's Word and what he says about marriage, then you will not lose the "Wow" in your marriage. You will always appreciate the unique plan the Lord has for you as a husband and for you as a wife. You want the "Wow!" you felt when your wife walked down the aisle to be with you every day in your married life. Adam calls her woman, because she was taken from the man. The Hebrew word for man is "Ish" and the Hebrew word for woman is "Ishah." I like what Martin Luther said in his lectures on Genesis, "Whatever he has, his wife has and possesses in its entirety."

Now listen to how the Lord wants generations of people to continue to treasure this gift of marriage and not lose the "WOW" in their marriage. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." The Lord wants a man to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and become one with her. You leave the nest of living with your mom and dad and start a new nest with your wife. Making this new nest together is not always easy. The key to any marriage is

always commitment, leaving and then cleaving. A Christian man and woman were having a tough time in their marriage as their careers blossomed and they drew apart from each other. They both felt like leaving the nest they had made with each other. But then they decided because they were Christians they would stick it out and work at their marriage. I still remember them saying, "From that commitment to each developed a romance and love greater than anything we had ever experienced together in our marriage."

his portion of Genesis concludes with these words. "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." In God's perfect world, Adam and Eve suffered no shame from impure thoughts, or angry words, or failing to love as they should. Later they would suffer shame after they sinned and God would cover them with animal skins. We suffer shame when we think of the sinful thoughts that enter our hearts and minds before we are married and even after we are married. Oh, how we need Jesus to wash us clean and make us his beloved bride for this life and for all eternity. In Jesus we have the joy of forgiveness and the strength to appreciate the hand of God that gives us the blessing of marriage. Tether your marriage to God's plan here in Genesis and he will richly bless you and your family. Amen.