

Rev. Gregory Gibbons  
Lola Park Lutheran Church  
Redford, MI 48239

Genesis 2:18-24

MARRIAGE IS SOMETHING CREATED AND BLESSED BY GOD

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Is marriage a human arrangement? It certainly has come under discussion over the past few years. There are many who feel that anyone who wants to be married should be married, even if that means changing the traditional definition of marriage being a “lifelong union between one man and one woman.” There are those that feel that the definition should be expanded to include any arrangement including men with men, women with women and even multiple spouses. They will defend that argument by saying that marriage is something that has evolved, just like the human race. Men came from apes up the evolutionary ladder. The early Neanderthals simply clubbed their mates and dragged them back to their caves. Love is something that would come much later. If man is still evolving, then marriage should be evolving as well.

That sounds good to many, if not most of the people in the world today. The theory of evolution or one of many theories of evolution sounds plausible. We hear about all the learned scientists with their many earned doctorates who have proved this beyond the shadow of a doubt. There was one who would disagree. We met him in our Gospel reading. His name is Jesus. He tells us that God created the world and God created man and woman and God instituted marriage for the benefit of man. Jesus just happens to be the very Son of God, God in human form. I would hope that his word would be accepted as true. But we know that will not be the case. The human race has rebelled against God and wants nothing to do with God’s good and gracious will. St. Peter puts it so succinctly: “They deliberately forgot that long ago by God’s Word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.” They deliberately forgot. This was no mere oversight. It was no mistake. People refused to face up to the truth of God’s Word. They exchanged the truth of God for their own lies.

There are reasons why we believe that marriage is an unconditional lifelong union between one man and one woman and that no other definition will suffice. We go back to the very beginning this morning and see that MARRIAGE IS SOMETHING CREATED AND BLESSED BY GOD.

Yes, we go back to the beginning. That means we go back to the Book of Genesis which means “beginning.” We are going to see the beginning of the universe, the beginning of all life, the beginning of the human race, and the beginning of marriage and family. The book of Genesis and what it contains is viewed by many as myth, fable, folklore, and fairytale. I view it as true history because our Lord tells us so. There was no human being present as the universe was created. The best we can come up with is man’s best guess or hypothesis. God said, “I was there. This is what I did.” If we reject the first two chapters of Genesis and the creation story, we will inevitably reject Genesis 3 and the story of the fall of man. We would then also reject God’s promise of a Savior because we really wouldn’t need one if there is no fall into sin. Then we would also have to reject Jesus as that Savior because he believed these things to be true and we needed a perfect Savior. These things are important.

Genesis 1 deals with the creation of the universe. It sums up the creation of man with the words: “In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Genesis 2 now goes into greater detail of how God specifically created man, woman, marriage, and family.

God had formed Adam from the dust of the earth. God breathed into Adam the very breath of life. God then showered his love upon the man. He gave man a living soul. He put man into a beautiful garden. He gave the man something to do by caring for the garden. He gave man the opportunity to love and serve his Creator by refusing to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Finally, he would give man a perfect companion, a helper suitable for him.

It is very interesting to see what God did. He did not simply create man and woman at creation and that was that. He created man first always with the intention of creating woman. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Most of us do not like to be alone. There are hermits who separate themselves from society and live alone someplace far away from other people, but that does not describe most of us. We want companionship. We want other people around us. We want friends and family. That is what God intended.

Adam would see all the animals as they were brought before him. He would name them and see them walk off in pairs, tigers with tigers, elephants with elephants, giraffes with giraffes and so on. He would see that they were all living creatures, but there was nothing similar to him. Man was a unique creature of God, created in God's image. That didn't mean that man looked like God. Rather man had a knowledge of God's good and perfect will. The animals could not meet Adam's need. Only a creative act of God could meet his need.

And so, God would create that very special person for Adam. God would create a helper suitable for him. We see that God is not going to create another being who was like Adam in every way. He would create a companion, an ally, a counterpart, one who would be the completion and fulfillment of the man. The two would fit together like pieces of a puzzle. His strengths would correspond to her weaknesses and her strengths would correspond to his weaknesses. They would be distinctly and differently created, male and female. They were made for each other and no other.

Already before the fall into sin, there were roles. Man was going to be the head of the family with the woman as the helper. Both would be equal in their standing before God, but both would have a different role in marriage. We see in today's world the problems that arise when man and woman reject the roles that God had given to them at Creation. Many men will not accept the responsibility that comes from being the head of the family. They do not support their wives and children with their love or their gifts. Many women insist that they will be the head of the family and take their husband out of his God-given role. Should we be surprised that divorce and other problems will surely follow?

God would cause Adam to fall into a deep sleep. God would then take one of the ribs from Adam and fashion it into a woman. Many a pastor in a wedding service has remarked upon the wisdom of God doing so. He did not make woman from man's head to rule over him nor from man's feet to be trampled upon by him, nor of other dust to be independent of him, but rather out of his side to stand at his side equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him and near his heart to be loved by him.

The giving of the rib can also signify man's sacrifice of himself for his bride. All that is his is hers and all that is hers is his. Both bride and bridegroom have made an exchange. We are reminded of God's great exchange as our Savior Jesus Christ, the bridegroom, took the sin of his bride, the Church. He took our sins and we, in exchange, received his holiness.

When Adam awoke, he was overjoyed. God had brought her to the man. Adam didn't look around and ask God to try again, perhaps someone a little taller and blonder. He saw the most beautiful creature he could imagine, and she was his wife, his companion, his partner, his best friend. She was the one who would complete his life. She would be

called “woman,” because she was taken out of man. She does not differ from him in essence or substance, but in gender. Male and female dogs or cats or kangaroos or lions are all of the same kind, and they differ from all other creatures. They differ from each other only in the matter of gender. That is no mere coincidence.

Companionship is the first and the primary purpose of marriage. Marriage is intended to be “until death do us part.” Sadly, we know that there are many sinful things that break that. Our Lord Jesus said, “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law of divorce.” Marriage is hard work. Anyone can get married. Staying married is much more difficult. We know our own hearts. We know our selfish inclinations to always want to have our own way. We know how easy it is to speak and how difficult it is to listen to someone else. We know that we would much rather receive than give. Marriage is all about giving. Most marriages break up because one or both people weren’t getting what they wanted. They didn’t want to give. They wanted the other to do the giving. Many do not look for the most important things in a spouse. They do not look for the spiritual attributes that are so necessary. They do not see the need to pray, to worship together, to forgive one another as Christ forgave us.

A second blessing of marriage is having children. Certainly, every marriage will not necessarily produce children as when senior citizens who have lost their first spouse to death have the blessing of companionship given to them once again. It does seem self-evident that only a man and a woman can produce a child. Children are God’s blessing to us. Sadly, once again the world does not see things that way. The world looks to prevent the birth of children and if necessary, terminate the life of an unborn child through the horrible act of abortion. Once again, we look at the precious words of our Savior: “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Marriage forms a new family unit.

The union of man and wife is so complete that the two become one flesh. In the physical joining together of man and wife in the sexual act, the love for one another is expressed. That sexual act which can and does produce children is something pleasurable and is the highest act of love. Because we are sexual creatures and God made us sexual creatures, we will desire this blessing. But it is only a blessing in marriage. Anything else defiles that precious gift of God. That is why it is called adultery which means to make something impure. We do not want to limit the “one flesh” to merely the sexual act. It also means becoming one in goals, in interests and pursuits. It means doing what is best for the two of you and for your family rather than merely getting your own way. It means making the necessary sacrifices to live the life worthy of your calling, whether that is as a husband or as a wife.

There is so much that can be said about love, sex, and marriage. The world is all too happy to share its wisdom and insights through television, movies, books and magazines. It will tell you that marriage is outdated and that the traditional definition of a lifelong union between one man and one woman needs to be changed. Marriage is still God’s institution, established for all of mankind and for the good of mankind. May God keep us faithful to his Word! AMEN.