



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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October 22, 2006

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 2:18-24

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Genesis 2:18-24

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 139b

Second Lesson: Hebrews 2:9-11

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

Marriage: It's A Good Thing

I haven't watched the show except maybe bits and pieces when I clicked by it a number of years ago, but from what I am told and from the parities of it that I have seen, Martha Stewart likes to say things are "a good thing." I thought about it one day as I was mowing our yard and getting annoyed by the pine cones that the mower kept hitting—I thought to myself, "I suppose this is the kind of thing Martha Stewart would pick up and make a centerpiece out of or maybe a spare waste basket for the guest room and then look at it when it is done and say, 'Pine cones—it's a good thing.'" To me they were just annoying.

But when you think about good things, doesn't your mind go back to the creation of the world from what you know in Genesis 1? God created this and he saw that it was good. God created that and he saw that it was good. It was a good thing. God saw all that he had created and he said that it was very good. So maybe Martha is stealing from God, huh?

As we consider these words from Genesis 2 that I just read to you, we learn about where marriage came from and we are left with no other conclusion than to say, "Marriage—it's a good thing." We see it is a good gift from a loving God, and we see it is a good commitment that God leads us to make.

When you read in Genesis 1 and 2, have you noticed how Genesis 1 gives you the whole big picture? If you get your NIV Bible opened and look at it you will notice that in Chapter 1 there are these ANDs that stick out to the side of the page and the rest of the type is indented farther. It gives you each day of creation. Every one of those ANDs is the next day. If you want to go to the third day, count down to the third AND and then you will figure out what was created on the third day. It gives you all six days and then it says on the seventh day, God rested, at the start of Chapter 2. But then it goes back to and it zeroes in on one aspect of God's creation. It talks about his creation of man and woman. Along with that, in what we just read, it gives us where he gives the gift of the institution of marriage. He zooms in on what is really important. "I have given you the big picture, now let's focus on the only things I created in my image, the only things I created by not saying 'let there be' and there was"—everything else was "let there be" and there was. But you remember, God took the dust of the ground and formed it into the shape of a man, breathed the breath of life into it and there you had Adam. Then we read about how he created Eve, right?

You are probably familiar with God saying, *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him"* (Genesis 2:18). Were you surprised? Did you remember that paragraph in-between? Did you expect the next thing you hear would be, *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* (Genesis 2:21). That part you remember, right? Did you remember the naming of the animals in-between? Doesn't it sound kind of goofy like it doesn't belong? "I will make a helper suitable for him. Okay, go name the animals." It doesn't seem to fit. It seems like someone took it and stuck it in a place where it doesn't belong.

But here is how God reminds us that this is a gift—not something he forced upon mankind, but a gift he gives by first of all demonstrating the need for this gift. God knew it was not good for the man to be alone. But he first showed Adam that he was alone. Adam names all the animals. I guess he wasn't just a grunting caveman like we have been led to believe. He names all the animals. He is smart enough to know what they should be named. He doesn't just call them "Ugh" and "Uh." He gives them each names. But as he names them all, Adam is no dummy, he is intelligent, he sees that all the animals are male and female and he is just Adam. Puppies are cute and giraffes have long necks but none of them are going to work as a helper suitable for Adam.

At the start of the next paragraph, God sums up why he had Adam name all the animals, right? *But for Adam no suitable helper was found* (Genesis 2:20). He shows the man that there is a need and then in his grace, he meets that need—not by forcing it, but by showing him the need. So he causes the man to fall into a deep sleep, creates woman, and you see Adam's reaction. You see God talk about what a blessing this is. *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh* (Genesis 2:24). It also talks about the blessings that God gives within marriage.

We see here that marriage is a gift that came from God. It is not a human custom. It is not a piece of paper. You hear people say that from time to time. No! They are wrong. Just tell them they are wrong. We don't like to tell people they are wrong. Tell them they are wrong, but then show them from God what is right. It is not a human custom. It is not a piece of paper. It is not something that the government made up or society made up. It is something that God gave to his world as a beautiful gift. If you look at the back of your bulletin again, notice what chapter we are in?—Genesis 2, which is right before Genesis 3, right? Do you remember what happened in Genesis 3?—the fall into sin. When the world was perfect, there was marriage. Before there was sin, there was marriage. If there never would have been sin, there would still be marriage. It is a perfect gift that God gave to a perfect world. I have no clue, and neither do you, what marriage would be like without sin because that is the only way we have known it. I have no clue what it would be like to always put your spouse ahead of yourself and have your spouse always put you ahead of them. We don't do it. We are sinners. We don't even always view it as a good gift. We might fall prey at times to what society says—it's a human custom. We might fall prey to some of society's ideas that this marriage thing just isn't right. "You really ought to live together and take the blessings of marriage before you make the commitment so that way you will know whether or not it will work." As a child, did you take the fire and burn your hand so that you would know

that your parents said not to? And then after you did it, did you say, “Boy am I dumb. I should have just listened to my parents.” If God tells us, “Here is how it is and here is how you are to use it,” do we really have to find out that God knows more than we do by testing him on it and seeing whether or not he really knows what he is talking about?

Our God is an incredible God of grace. In his grace, he gave this as a perfect blessing. The problem is that you and I don't always use it as a blessing. You and I don't treasure our spouses as ourselves. You and I don't view marriage as an incredible gift of God. We might be corrupted by the thoughts of our society. We might view sex not just as the one flesh of the sexual union belonging in marriage. We might view it as something that is for everyone. We may sin against God in all of these ways when it comes to marriage and more, but our God is a God of gift giving. He gave us the gift of marriage and he gives us the gift of a Savior who dies for every last one of those foolish sins that you and I commit.

He was perfect in our place so his perfection covers the times that we don't put our spouses ahead of ourselves. Or instead of saying, “Since I love you, I will do this for you,” we end up saying, “If you really do love me, you will do this for me.” We get it so backwards so often and yet our God still loved us enough to take away our sins. When we recognize this truth and we recognize what marriage really is—that it is this good gift that came to a perfect world—then we who are forgiven in Christ turn away from the world and turn to our God and say, “God, how can I thank you for what you have done for my salvation within my marriage? How can I serve you better?” Then we see what God tells us to do, and we seek to do it because we want to thank God that he has taken away all of the foolish sins that we commit. As we examine what God says about marriage, one of the things we see is that he tells us that it is a good commitment and it is a lifelong commitment.

I think it is interesting how God tells the story of the creation of Adam and Eve. Can you picture how Hollywood would tell this in a movie? Can't you just see the cameras spinning around Adam and Eve as they first see each other and the reaction on their faces when they zoom into that? They would have some far off look because that is how they always depict everyone without sin, isn't it? Then they would start whatever, talking to each other, running to each other, but the focus would entirely be on who they were and what their reactions were. God only gives us one reaction, and that is Adam's, right? *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, for she was taken out of man"* (Genesis 2:23). That is the only reaction we see. There had to be a lot more than that, but that is the one that God wants us to know. Why? Why doesn't he tell us every last thing that they were thinking as they saw each other? Why doesn't he tell us every last thing they said when they first talked to each other?—probably because it is all about God. It's not all about Adam and Eve. When Adam says, *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"* (Genesis 2:23), he is teaching us something about God's will for marriage. “This incredible commitment” is what Adam really states. Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh— isn't he saying how important his wife is to him? His commitment to say that “she is a part of me and she is as important to me as anything that is in my body”—this exaltation that God had given him an incredible gift and his profession that he is going to treat her as

such; the commitment to always treat her as though she is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh—as I said a little bit ago, that is where we often fall short.

But this commitment, treat them as your very own, *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife* (Genesis 2:24)—that you leave behind one family in marriage and you are making a commitment now first of all to your spouse; this commitment to spend your life together, not as long as you both shall love but as long as you both shall live; this commitment to view each other as the most important thing other than God in your lives. This is the commitment that God calls us to make. We don't always succeed. We fail, but those sins where we have failed are covered by Christ also. And where we have failed now God calls us to live in a way that thanks him by following his will in whatever position in life we find ourselves at now. To serve God the best way we can now in whatever we are—that is what we all seek to do. If he has put us in these family situations, than that is how we seek to serve him—by being the best parent, child, spouse, grandparent, grandchild that we can be in showing love to one another.

This is God's will for us in Christ. Not only is it God's will for us in Christ—when God got done with creation he looked at even marriage and said, "It's a very good thing."