

Marriage Sermon 2/7/2016

This morning we join with thousands of churches across America in honoring the institution of marriage as it was created by God in the beginning.

Hebrews 13: 4a **Let marriage be held in honor among all**

- We agree with the writer of Hebrews when he declares that the God ordained institution of marriage should be honored among all people. After all:
 - God the Father established marriage. (*as the foundation of human society*)
 - The Lord Jesus blessed marriage by performing his first miracle at a wedding feast.
 - God the Holy Spirit honored marriage by using it as the image of Christ's union with his bride, the church when he authored the Scripture.
- When we make this declaration "**Let marriage be held in honor among all!**" You may or may not understand what a radical statement this is!
- In our generation the Biblical model of marriage and family has been abandoned and in its place modern society has adopted what Television so joyfully promotes as the "Modern Family."
- Let's begin with the Biblical definition of Marriage: Find that in Genesis

Genesis 24 **Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

- Very simply: One man leaves behind his biological family and is united to one woman and the two become one flesh.
 - In premarital counseling I call this leave cleave and weave.
- In my lifetime (short) this Biblical standard of marriage which was designed by God to be the firm foundation of Human society has been set aside.
- Let's look at a few statistics that were published regarding the state of marriage:

2011 Huffington Post

- Data released by the U.S. Census Bureau shows married couples have found themselves in a new position: They're no longer the majority
- It's a trend that's been creeping along for decades, but in the 2010 Census, married couples represent 48 percent of all households. That's down from 52 percent in the last Census and, for the first time in U.S. history households led by married couples in the minority.

Check out this Headline explaining the reasons for the decline in marital unions

"Marriage is not good for the working class."

Recently, we've been hearing that fewer and fewer Americans are tying the knot, with the U.S. marriage rate at its lowest point in more than a century. Now, a new study looks at

why one group of Americans -- the working class -- is putting off or forgoing marriage altogether.

Researchers found that working-class men and women cited lack of job security, a lack of resources and low wages as reasons deterring them from tying the knot.

Different article: (Headlines) "Marriage has been delayed."

According to Pew statistics, back in the early 1980s, the median age for marriage was 25 for men and 22 for women. But in 2011, the median ages for first marriages hit all-time highs of 29 for men and 27 for women. The report credits this change to, among other things, the fact that couples no longer feel the need to be married to become parents and the "competition from other lifestyles," like living alone or living with partners. So, there's no need to stress about not getting married

Same Article: "BUT it is not just young people who are boycotting marriage."

- According to the U.S. Census, the number of couples aged 50 and over who simply live together but are not married rose from 1.2 million in 2000 to 2.8 million people in 2010. Whether you're young or old, it is OK -- in some cases, even beneficial -- to never get married

As you can see from these studies the majority of Americans today view traditional heterosexual marriage merely as one of many options.

BUT (listen) The abandoning of Biblical Values isn't limited to the institution of marriage it actually goes to the very core of our identity.

- Nowhere is this more clear than on the social media giant Facebook who now offers 56 options to describe a persons' gender identity.
- On your personal Facebook page you may use 10 of these descriptors to identify yourself.

Agender – for those who don't identify with any gender at all.

Androgynous – for those who have both male and female gender characteristics all the time.

Bigender – for those who identify as male or female at different times.

Gender – fluid, Pangender, Transgender and if you are Native American and desire to be non-gender specific you can identify as "Two-Spirit"

The traditional Man that I am, as I look back over these changes in our society I find myself singing an old Bob Dylan song:

1964 Bob Dylan "Oh the times they are a changing"

- When it comes to the institution of marriage Bob Dylan's words have never been truer.

When the Lord Jesus walked the dusty streets of Galilee he was questioned by his contemporaries about the marriage covenant.

Matthew 19:3 **And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"** 4 **He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,**
5 **and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?** 6 **So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."**

- The Pharisees brought this question to the Lord Jesus, not because they really wanted an answer but because they wanted to test him.
- Their desire was to force him into a position where he would lose credibility among the people.
- (See) Divorce was rampant in Jesus' day and the Pharisees fully expected that His fundamental stand on the issue would cause him to lose popularity.
 - Even then the populous was easily swayed.
- Of course Jesus didn't disappoint them, He took them like any good fundamental preacher back to the Bible and quoted from the book of Genesis.

If we are to truly honor marriage as God has ordained it we must, like Jesus, view the creation story of Genesis as a literal historic narrative.

- Let me say that again because that statement has become very Counter-Cultural in our day.
- Much of the church has gone the way of the culture, yielding to Evolutionary pressures believing that the book of Genesis is simply a blending of moral stories expressing the failures and triumphs that are common to all men.
- When the narrative of Genesis is interpreted as metaphor people are free to abandon the gender roles and marital standards that are set forth in the text.
- In order to **Let marriage be held in honor among all** you need to view the Genesis record as the historic record of God's original blueprint for the wellbeing of man.

Marriage was designed by God for man and women to:

1. Mutually Complete One Another.
2. Multiply a Godly Heritage
3. Mirror His Image

The first 11 chapters of the book of Genesis are foundational to understanding human society and the world in which we live.

1. Mutually complete one another.

Genesis 2:18 **Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."**

- It is important to see that up to this point everything that God created was good. But here, by God's own declaration, we see that something is NOT good. **"It is not good that man should be alone."**

- In the garden, Adam walked with God and as he walked with God, God graciously and methodically revealed the unfinished nature of his creation.
- How did he do that? Let's read on:

Genesis 2: 19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

- Through the exercise of naming all of the animals God revealed Adam's need for a helper.
- All of the animals were created in complimentary pairs. Male and female Lions, Male and female goats, Male and Female peacocks.
- BUT for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- Taken from the side of the man, uniquely fashioned by the hand of God and then returned to the man AS His divinely created helper Adam rightly and joyfully exclaimed, "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh....."
- Or in Hollywood speech. "You complete me!"

This morning we honor God's gift of marriage. Through his divine design he brings two people together to complete each other, to fill each other's gaps. They are stronger as a team than they were as individuals. They are two unique people who God makes one flesh. (AND The Results of that one flesh union is offspring)

2. The second part of God's divine design for marriage is to Multiply a Godly Heritage

Genesis 1: 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- Within the security of the marriage covenant God blessed the man and the woman with the ability to produce offspring, to multiply.
- By God's design a man and his wife dwelling together as one flesh, living in communion with the Living God provides the perfect incubator, the desired atmosphere in which to raise children.

- And God ordained that these children would be a rich reward for the man and his wife.

Psalm 127:3 **Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.**

- God's original plan called for the home to be a sort of "green house" a nurturing center where children grow up and learn to walk with God, a place where character, values and truth are purposefully passed on to the next generation.
- In no other setting does a child learn more about how to live and relate to God than in the home at the feet of his parents.

So marriage was designed to be a covenant where one man and one woman would be joined by God to mutually complete one another. In this covenant God blessed the man and his wife enabling them to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it.

- It was God's design that the earth would be occupied with divine image bearers. That through the procreation of godly children the earth would one day be filled with men and women who reflect the image of their creator. That leads us to our final point:

3. God designed marriage so that men and women would Mirror His Image

Genesis 1:26 **Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**

- In his original creation the first man and his wife were created in the image of God. Uniquely fashioned by the Almighty to display his likeness within this material creation.
 - HOW did our original parents mirror the image of God?
- First by having two persons through the covenant of marriage becoming one flesh. They were able to reflect the plurality in unity that exists within the godhead.
- Secondly the man and his wife served as God's vice regents on the earth when they were given rule and dominion over the physical creation.
- At the very essence of their being the man and his wife were created as intelligent and moral beings, whom God equipped with a mind a heart and a will.
- These faculties made it possible for our first parents to reflect God's holiness which was their primary vocation.

In the beginning the marital union was designed by God to reflect His glory by living in a unified and permanent love relationship, two persons living together as one flesh.

- BUT there was a serpent in the Garden a deceiver who was bent on usurping the dominion of man.

- The first family fell into sin and the image of God was severely tarnished. God's reflection in man became distorted.

The Fall into Sin would bring pain and heartache to the marital union:

- The woman would be driven by a desire to rule over her husband
- The husband would express his dominion by naming the woman like he did with the other animals.
- The sentence of death passed on to every subsequent generation as evidenced by the murder of their son Abel.

It was sin that caused Rebekka to manipulate her husband Isaac into giving the blessing to her favorite son Jacob.

It was sin that drove David away from his wife Michael.

It was sin that drove Solomon to multiply wives and concubines.

It was sin that drove the Pharisees to divorce their wives for any and every reason.

- When the Pharisees argued with Jesus to hold on to easy no fault divorce he declared: **"It was not like this in the beginning!"**

In Our Time the degeneration of God's original design for marriage has reached new lows.

- The divorce rate is actually lower than it was 25 years ago simply because people are refusing to get married.
- As a result of our new view of marriage:
 - (2010) 4.9 million children are being raised by their grandparents that number doubled in 10 years (2000 - 2010)
 - 1 in 3 children is being raised in a home without a father.
 - Among our black families that number is greater; more than 50% of black children are raised without a father.

So I will ask the question "How do we get back to the Garden?"

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, *"We got to get ourselves back to the garden."*

- Can this downward spiral be turned around? Is it possible for our society to return to the Biblical mandate for marriage that I have laid out today?
- Is it possible to restore the image of God to broken and sinful husbands and wives?

Here is my point of view:

- It would be easy to point the finger at our legislators in Washington, even easier to place the blame on the Supreme Court for the immoral laws that they have established from the bench.
- BUT, in truth they are only reflecting the morality of the nation. They are simply displaying the fruit of an unregenerate society.

We don't have the right to look down our nose at those filthy sinners when we ourselves have a huge log in our own eye.

- We can and we should make a statement to support Chick-Filet and Hobby Lobby when they come under fire for promoting Biblical morality.
- There are times when we need to stand together in the public square and be a voice of reason in an unreasonable society.
- We can certainly vote in accord with our values. AND pray for those who are in authority over us!

BUT true and lasting change can only be affected one heart at a time through the proclamation of the Gospel.

Romans 1: 16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

- The life-giving, life-transforming impact of the gospel message through the power of the Holy Spirit is the only true means of spiritual and moral revolution.
- Because ALL of humanity lives in bondage to sin and has no ability to save himself, God, in His infinite love and mercy sent his One and Only Son to pay the sin debt for those who would repent and believe in Jesus Christ.
- It was sin that brought about the destruction of the first marriage.
- It was sin that distorted the image of God among men.

It is repentance of sin and faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that restores the image of God back to redeemed men and women.

In light of the redemption that is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ all who are redeemed can be by the Holy Spirit – **“put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”** (Eph 4:24)

- If you are a believer today YOU have the power to bring transformation. It is in your mouth.
- In your heart:

Romans 10:8 **But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);**

9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

