

Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26

“Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth & 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. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30 Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. 31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis 2:18 “And Jehovah God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." 19 Out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. 21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which Jehovah God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 And Adam said: "This is now 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 mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

"Man is Given Marriage"

- We are studying Chapter two of Genesis which is an expanded look at the activities of the Sixth Day of Creation with a focus on the creation of man and woman.

So far we have seen that mankind was given life, distinct from and more glorious than that of the animals. Mankind was given work, being called upon to tend and guard the garden, name the animals & take dominion over all the earth & its creatures.

- Last week we considered how Adam was given woman and now we will look at the gift of marriage!
- We are going to begin with the first marriage in the garden before the fall and we will come to the last marriage here at the Lord's Table later in our service.

At the end of the sixth day God declared that all He had created and made was very good.

And yet here in verse 18 of chapter two we read that it was NOT good for man to be alone & last week we considered how there is much more to mankind than just being a bunch of individuals, we were created in God's Image AND He created us male and female.

Adam and Eve were true historical figures and they were not created as two individuals from the ground in the same way Adam was.

- We also looked at how Paul explained that woman was made from man and not man from women AND how all men since have come from women!

This week we will consider more details about marriage and I want to clarify that I was not saying last week, and will not say this week that only married people are made in the image of God.

- **Each and every human being, from the first two created here in the Garden down through all those who have been born of women since have been made in the image of God.**

As we studied in chapter one, we clearly saw at least three things in men AND women that reflect the image of God:

- **Their ability to love.**
- **Their ability to reason.**
- **Their ability to rule or have autonomy.**

Again we must remember that we only see them today in our fallen state, but that was not the case here at the beginning. When we come to the end of chapter one God not only says that what He has done is good...

- **He says ALL is very good!**

So God creates mankind as man and woman...

He gives them the task of being fruitful and filling the earth and so it should not surprise us that God then announces the importance of marriage. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

- **Mankind was given a task and marriage was going to be a central means of carrying out that task.**

As we saw last week, it would be a reflection of the Trinity here in the creation as the two, both made in God's image, became one flesh. As children were born and sent forth from that relationship it could also be a picture of the Spirit going forth from the Father and the Son. But again, God had given mankind a task and marriage and childbirth were going to be central to that task:

- **They were to be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth & subdue it!**

This is difficult for us to see on this side of the fall, just like trying to picture how they could stand their naked and not be ashamed! Nakedness without shame, childbirth without pain and population growth & development without destruction... ALL things that are difficult for us to imagine but all part of the very good creation that God sees at the end of Day Six!

- **So am I leaving out all of our unmarried folks again today?**

Not at all if we realize that we live on this side of the fall where the struggle to get marriage right can be as difficult as bearing children in labor. Obviously there would have been no widows or divorcees without the fall & Paul explains how the gift of celibacy is now given at times by the Holy Spirit because of the Kingdom work to be done here in our fallen world.

- **And sadly there are times where sin leaves us in some very lonely places of our own making.**

But if marriage was the intended state for men and women and in fact the only righteous means by which God's command to be fruitful and multiply could be carried out, then does it not make married people more special?

- **Again the answer must be NO!**

And the answer is no for two very good reasons...

1) As I have indicated, things are very different after the fall and there are people who are unmarried who are right where God wants them to be! There can also be those who desire to be married who have to wait patiently for God's timing in our fallen world.

2) We must also remember that in a very real way marriage is a temporary state for mankind!

Now I have gotten myself in trouble with all the married folks so let me explain what I mean... First and foremost just as Jesus explained the importance of marriage and how it was a creational ordinance, He also teaches that it is temporary. During the final week of His life the religious leaders challenged Jesus in many ways and the Sadducees who deny the resurrection came to Him with a trick question: They told the story of a woman who married a man with six brothers all of whom she married as they died one after the other as commanded in the Law. Then they ask Jesus, "28 Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

For me, the answer that Jesus gives is quite shocking...

29 "Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven."

Now we know we are not going to be like the angels physically because they do not have bodies and we are going to be living in our resurrection bodies!

➤ So just what does Jesus mean?

Well, looking forward into the eternal state is just as difficult for us as looking back in the perfection of the created order before the fall...

➤ Can any of you imagine standing up here naked without shame or having childbirth without pain?

Well, I find it just as difficult to imagine living in eternity without being married to my lovely bride!

Ah, but what if I could be married to Jesus instead? Sorry, honey but that might change things!

Now before I turn to the teaching where Paul explains all of this, let me mention that I think we must also see the temporary state of marriage in the creation as well... God said they should marry and be fruitful in order to fill the earth... Would the earth at some point be full?

➤ Did God have a number of righteous Saints who would perfectly fill this glorious earth of His in mind?

I think that He did and still does which could be related to what is referred to as the fullness of the Gentiles or all Israel being saved. [that might require another whole series of sermons] For this morning I just want us to see that in an unfallen state there would have come a time to stop having children and I think that is what Jesus is alluding to in His answer to the Sadducees.

➤ They were missing the forest because of all the trees.

So let's turn to the Apostle Paul where we learn that marriage is indeed about much more than just child-bearing. His teaching on marriage comes in the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians after He has laid the foundation of our salvation in Jesus and called us to be a united body and to resist the wisdom of the world... Then Paul writes this:

5:14 "Therefore [God] says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." 15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God."

➤ Those are the instructions that apply to each and every one of us: Young and old; male and female, married or unmarried.

We are all to realize what the will of the Lord is, learning to trust the Spirit and not the seductions of the world.

- We are to worship together and encourage one another and we are to submit to one another in the fear of God!

After this Paul gives specific examples for wives & husbands, for children and fathers, for employees and employers. He begins with those who are married which fits well with our lesson today:

5:22 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

Let’s stop and ponder the parallels that Paul uses here: The wife is to submit because the husband is the head as we learned last week: Man was created first and then woman. Man is not the boss nor the tyrant: He is the head! What kind of head? Like Jesus!

- IF a married woman loves Jesus then she will submit to her husband in the same way that we as a Church submit to Jesus.
- But what if my husband does not act like Jesus some will ask...

Were there times that Abraham did not act like Jesus? And yet as we saw last week, Sarah calling him lord is the example set forth for woman today.

- A woman showing proper submission to her husband does not validate his bad behavior...
- It affirms her faith in Jesus!

But don’t worry ladies, Paul is going to be MUCH tougher on the husbands...

5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify & cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy & without blemish.”

- So let us think again about the parallels:

The husband is to be like Jesus, not in terms of ruling but in terms of loving!

- Jesus gave Himself for His Bride the Church: Have you given yourself for your wife?

Jesus did so to sanctify and cleanse His Bride the Church... Has this been your goal in your marriage or have you just been the one to point out all the faults and shortcomings that your bride has?

- Perhaps it might be good for some of us to follow our Lord’s example and wash our wife’s feet some evening as we discuss how well we are doing in this area!

So Paul continues: 28 “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.”

Men, please notice that the Apostle did NOT say we must first love ourselves so we can then love our wives better! Paul’s point is that just as we so easily look after our needs and comfort, we should learn to put the needs and comfort of our wife first!

- The flesh says ‘me first’ but the Spirit says love your wife first!

Is it wrong for a man to enjoy sports, to have a night out with the boys or play a round of golf to relax and get away from everything at the office?

No it is not because none of those things are sinful...

- He just has to make sure he has his wife's joyful permission AFTER all her needs and comforts have been met!
- Wow, that is a tough standard you might complain, but who ever said being a soldier in God's army was a cakewalk?

AND, Paul is not finished with either husbands or wives yet and he is going to take us back to our text...

29 "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.
30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

I think that we can rightly argue that as Eve was brought forth from the side of Adam, so the Bride of Christ was brought forth from the side of Jesus as He gave His life for Her on the cross.

- So is Paul focusing here on the marriage or on the Church?

Well Paul goes on to tell us and I think it reveals the mind of God when it comes to the institution of marriage: 32 "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

So as we have often taught, the Apostle Paul is telling husbands and wives that they must follow God's command in their marriage because they are giving the world a picture of the great love Jesus has for His Bride the Church!

Next week we will turn to the trees of the Garden and begin our transition into chapter three of the Book of Beginnings.

- As we do we will begin to learn just how much damage was done to God's Good Creation by man's fall.

It has greatly affected the gifts of life, work and women, as well as the gardens, rivers and treasures that we have learned about here in Chapter two, but we do not despair because in Jesus all of these are set right again... John begins his Gospel account by declaring: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Matthew tells us how Jesus served as the example that Paul uses in Ephesians 5: "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." And we know from John 10:10 that His life is given to us who were fallen in Adam: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

While the work of man became futile under the curse of sin the Son came doing the work of His Father and promising that His disciples would do those works and even greater works as we do today!

And while sin & divorce & death wrack havoc on our marriages today we are called to follow the example of Jesus who loves His Bride the Church.

Earlier in Ephesians Paul shares wisdom that I believe is the best marriage counseling that can be given:

Ephesians 3:29 "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."

- That is how we are to practically work out our salvation in the area of marriage!

As we now come toward the end of our study of chapter two we have seen man given life, work and marriage: All of which were glorious before the fall and all of which will be glorious in the New Heavens and New Earth that Jesus brings forth: John is given this glorious picture in the Book of Revelation and we see a special emphasis on our marriage to the Lamb:

Revelation 21:1 “1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." 9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”

- May we be those who let that light so shine in our life, our work and in our marriages!

Communion Meditation: Revelation 19:

“4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God.””