

**Marriage: God's Good Gift to Mankind**  
**Genesis 2:18-24**

**October 6, 2024 (Pen. 20-B)**

**St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom**

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

*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. 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.*

*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." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18-24 NIV84)*

Dear friends, fellow believers in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior:

"This isn't good." When the LORD God made that observation on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation, it surprises us. Wasn't everything God had made to this point not just good, but perfect? Surely it was. But after God had made the plants and vegetation, the animals in all varieties, and man himself, God observed: "It is not good for the man to be alone." The final thing he would create would be very good: a "helper suitable for him."

In a loving way the Lord led the man to see the need for a suitable helper when he told him to name the animals he brought to him. So the man named the rabbit, the horse, the elephant, the dog—but even a dog couldn't quite be man's best friend. Then the Lord put the man to sleep, did some surgery, took one of his ribs and formed woman, and after man woke up and named this new creature "woman," the Lord performed the first marriage. And so it was at the end of the sixth day, that "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen. 1:31a).

Let us see how it is still true today that **Marriage Is God's Good Gift to Mankind**.

First, we learn from this reading that marriage provides *complementary companionship*. Not "compliment" as in saying nice things, "You look pretty in that dress; you're so handsome"—though that is helpful in marriage too—but "complement" as in fitting exactly together. The Lord said that with the word "suitable." The Lord didn't just make another human being so the man could talk and hang out with another person, but a woman who is equal and at the same time different. God designed the woman with different body parts so that together they could have children. Not only are man and woman biologically different, but also psychologically different—they have different thought processes, different strengths and weaknesses. What man lacks, a woman provides, and vice versa.

The Lord calls the woman a "helper" suitable for the man. This is not a put-down, anymore than Moses called God his "helper" in Exodus 18:4. But it does indicate a different relationship, as we heard Paul describe the husband as "the head of the wife" in today's epistle reading (Eph. 5:23). Both are equally made in the image of God, and have equal status. But husbands and wives have different responsibilities—the husband as head, the wife as helper—to complement, complete one another. So in marriage God brings the two, man and woman (not the same sex) together.

Tragically, it didn't take long for this good gift of marriage to get tarnished. The very next chapter in Genesis relates the sad story of the man and woman both falling into sin. The man, Adam,

failed to protect his wife from the tempter. The woman, Eve, took the forbidden fruit without consulting her husband. Next thing we know they were hiding from God, and Adam was blaming the woman and God, “This woman you gave me, God, she gave me that fruit! It’s all her fault!” Hardly a loving relationship.

So it goes on today. Instead of loving, complementary companionship we find “the battle of the sexes.” Too often husbands become lazy, self-centered and neglectful of their wives, or become harsh and abusive. Too often wives grow bitter and resentful of their roles. Conflict and quarreling result. Marriage, God’s good gift to mankind, has been ravaged by sin.

Yet God’s will remains the same regarding marriage. To express his will, he gave us the sixth commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.” He commands that husband and wife be loving to each other, and faithfully committed to one another. His will is expressed this way in Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage shall be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.” This refers not only to husbands and wives being faithful to each other, but all people, including the unmarried, are not permitted to engage in sex unless they are husband and wife, as God defines marriage: “they will become one flesh.”

There we find a second reason that marriage is God’s good gift to mankind: It is expressed as a *commitment to their union*. Adam expressed that when he saw Eve for the first time: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” He recognized this woman had come from him, was a part of him. So he committed himself to being united the woman that was his own body. Still today, “a man leaves his father and mother” and becomes united to his wife, starting a new family.

When a man and woman today decide to get married and say their vows, they are making a commitment to remain one flesh. You heard in the gospel reading how Jesus applied this passage to divorce. When asked if it was permissible for a man to divorce his wife, Jesus replied, “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man and will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Mark 10:6-9). Divorce is breaking apart what God has joined together. It’s for good reason that God says, “I hate divorce” (Mal. 2:16). As common as divorce is in America today, that doesn’t make it any less sinful; every divorce involves sin, whether it’s one or both who are at fault.

How can we restore marriage and make it that good gift again? God’s Son, Jesus Christ, restored it for us. We heard in Ephesians 5:25 how Christ is “the head of the church,” how he “loved the church and gave himself up for her.” When we were baptized, Christ cleansed us from our sins “by the washing with water through the word” (Eph. 5:26). Through faith in Christ, we are members of the Holy Christian Church, which is his body and described in Revelation 21:2 as Christ’s bride, that in heaven the church will be “prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband,” to be joined with the Lord forever there.

So let’s be joined in Christ and cherish this good gift to us all. If you’re single and have no plans to be married, be thankful that you can use this position to serve the Lord with the gifts he’s given you. Jesus and Paul were single, so you’re in good company. If you are married, be united to each other and to your Lord. In love be ready to confess sins to each other, humble yourselves, forgive one another, love one another as your own flesh, be your spouse’s loving partner. Cherish one another. Remember how God viewed the world after marriage: “It was very good!” May it be very good in your lives as well. Amen.