

Goal: That the hearers would cherish God's intended gift of marriage.

If we are going to properly understand marriage we need to go back to Genesis 2 where God creates and gives marriage to His creation. Remember, God had created everything, every plant, all the land and its animals, the sea and all the stars in the sky and gave it to Adam to rule over and take care of. But, after He made Adam, God said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone." ("Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 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. 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." (Genesis 2: 18 – 20)* How true that statement is!

Men, when we're left to ourselves, we eat junk food, do laundry only when flies start to gather, neglect basic hygiene, and do some really foolish things. Why? Because, half of our brains are missing. It's not good that man should be alone! So, what does God do? He makes a helper fit for him, but she's more than just a helper. The word Hebrew word we translate helper, "*ezer*", is more than just an assistant, it's more like an ally. It describes someone who is joined to you and with you for a specific purpose, like an ally in war. Someone to cover your back, to fight with you and for you, to defend with you against the enemy, and in marriage, the enemies are all around. No, I'm not talking about the kids. This ally, this helper, is desperately needed for Adam.

So, God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, God took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh. With that rib, the Lord made woman and brought her to the man. When Adam woke up and saw her he didn't say, *"What a pain in my side!"* No, he said, *"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman for she was taken out of man." (Genesis 2: 23)* God saw the Man's need and formed a helper, an ally, just for him. Then, God gave them marriage as the capstone, the final touch, of all of creation.

The Scriptures say that God ended each day of creation with the words, *"and it was good"*. But on the 6th day, after Woman had been created and given in marriage to Man, Scripture records, *"God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1: 31)* God's creation wasn't complete until He had made it more than just good, but very good, with His pinnacle of creation, woman.

Men, to think of a woman as anything less than what God created her to be is wrong. And women, to think of yourself as anything less than what God created you to be as the pinnacle of His creation, is a lie of the devil. You and your womanly gifts are the pinnacle that completes the rest of us, that completes God's creation. That's why, in the Lutheran church, for years we have set aside this first Sunday in October to thank God for the unique and specific gifts women have brought to the church and the world through the service of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Many of you might not know

it, but the women of the LWML have got our backs. They pray for us, they help us, and they serve with us with such joy. They are our allies and they are very good.

But, what's not good is sin. In Genesis 3, we hear that right after they ate the forbidden fruit, they try to hide their naked shame, Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent for their sin. Adam says, ***"The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate."*** (***Genesis 3: 12***) Just a few minutes ago she was, *"Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,"* my wife, my ally, my gift from God as God intended. But now, after sin, she's a pain in Adam's side. After sin, they realized they were naked and were ashamed, so they covered themselves and tried to hide their shame from God and one another. Why? Because their mutual sin was causing a divorce; between them and God and a divorce from the Garden of Eden.

That's what unrepentant sin does. It separates us, it divorces us, it brings shame. It's the Devil working hard to destroy what God calls very good. And sin strikes quickly with such contempt for God's gift of marriage and the one flesh union that God intended. Abraham and Sarah couldn't have kids, so Sarah redefines marriage by giving her servant Hagar to Abraham in order to have a child. From that moment on there would never be peace in Abraham's house. King David redefined marriage according to his own lust when he took Bathsheba as his mistress, then plotted to kill her husband. That sin divorced David from God until Nathan called him out on his sin and brought David to repentance. King Solomon's 1000 wives and concubines were never enough for him. His lust for sex lured him away from his father's God, the Lord Almighty, and he worshiped the wood and stone idols of his many wives.

History is filled with men who, through their sin, have destroyed themselves and their marriages by neglecting their faithfulness to God and have united themselves with their own sinful passions. And women have fallen from their position as the pinnacle of God's creation to be objectified and oppressed of men. Then, by the time Jesus comes along, women had virtually no rights. They were regarded as property to be used, abused, and traded. So, Jesus intentionally ministers to women and restores to them the rightful place of honor that He created them to be. He goes to the Samaritan woman at the well ([John 4](#)), He heals the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years ([Mark 5](#)), He stops the stoning of a woman caught in adultery and tells her to go and leave her life of sin ([John 8](#)), He has compassion on Mary and Martha ([John 11](#)), and He revealed Himself first as risen from the dead to Mary Magdalene ([John 20](#)). Jesus values women as He intended.

So, how is He going to react when some Pharisees try to test Him asking, ***“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” (Mark 10: 2)*** He responds with Scripture, ***“From the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Mark 10: 6 – 9)*** It’s so clear, isn’t it?

Yet today, we misuse sex and abuse women and divorce each other, all because of sin. So, for the divorced, the adulterer, the homosexual, the immoral who has joined themselves with more than just his or her spouse, where do we put our hope? We put our hope in Christ who created us male and female, uniquely different for His glory. In Christ, we receive the mercy and compassion He has for those who don’t deserve it, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the disciples who deserted and rejected Him. He still came to them, and forgave them, and spoke to them, just as He does to you.

Today, He reminds you that it wasn’t supposed to be this way from the beginning. He comes to you and speaks harsh words of law, exposing the sin of our hardened minds and sinful hearts. He strikes right at our core, reminding us that He is God and you and I are not. Jesus is God and he has done for you more than you will ever be able to do for yourself. He gave himself, His life, His all, for sinners like us.

He comes to us to give us hope. To women, He seeks to restore your lost position as the pinnacle of His creation and declares that you are worth far more than any amount of money. You are better than anything in all of creation. You aren’t just good, you’re very good. To men, He seeks to love us in the ways that we have failed to love those closest to us. He loves you unconditionally with a self-sacrificing giving love that we are to love others.

To all of us, who by our sins have become ashamed, Christ comes and covers our naked shame like he did when Adam and Eve fell into sin. Back then, God killed to make garments to cover their nakedness and shame. Later, He sent His Son to the cross so that through His sacrifice we would be clothed with His blood that washes away our sins.

To the single, the widowed, the divorced, those looking to get married, and everyone else, Christ comes as the head, the groom of the bride, to you His church and says, *“Follow Me. I’ll take care of you. I’ll provide for you. Though others may have rejected you, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Though you may be abused and mistreated by selfish sinners, I will uphold you and honor you. I made you, I called you, I love you. You are mine. And nothing can in heaven or on earth separate me from you.”*

This morning, we thank God for His love for us, specifically His love for women, and we strive to live reflecting God’s purpose and intention for marriage and the unconditional love that He has for us, His bride, the church. In Jesus Name. Amen.