

# Marriage: God's Holy Sacrament 1

(preached 9/11/22)

Please turn to *Genesis 2:18*.

LOTS OF WEDDINGS. Summer is winding down and I must say: this past year I think I performed more weddings than in any previous year! IDK why, but being able to be part of this special day for couples is one of the highlights of my calling as a Pastor.

CATHREDAL WEDDING. One particular wedding I did was extra-special: the venue was stunning, set up like a cathedral complete with hanging crystal chandeliers, faux marble walls, the works. One of things that caught my spirit were the elegantly decorated tables where the guests would all be sitting after the ceremony was over. What really drew me in was that the Bride and Groom had elected to set a place for everyone by name...in other words, each setting had the specific name of every guest on the plate written in golden glitter!

DREAM OF WEDDING FEAST. I reminded me of a dream God gave me years before about an event spoken of in Revelation 19 called “The Wedding Supper of the Lamb” where Jesus and His Church are married. In my dream, my wife and I had just got done running a very long and dangerous race, and had finally come to the end. We were escorted by a man in tuxedo into a grand ballroom that was decorated to the hilt in every way possible.

NAME CARDS. I recall feeling such peace and exhilaration, because we were finally “there.” All the promises the Lord makes in the Bible about our reunification with Jesus were coming to pass and happily ever after was just beginning! The ballroom was massive in size with hundreds if not thousands of tables everywhere. The man in the tux escorted us to a particular table where places were set. A large card rested in the center of the table that said “Gateway Fellowship” on it, and each plate had their own individual cards on them. I saw one with my name on it and, seated right next to it, my wife's name. The man in the tux pulled our chairs out for us and bid us to sit—we did so gladly.

PEOPLE ARRIVING. As we waited in great anticipation, more people began coming in and each were escorted to their tables and chairs. I remember our table filling out with people, bit by bit. I knew in my spirit that once everyone had arrived, Jesus would enter and the Wedding Supper would begin! Of course I woke up before that happened....

**Let me start out by telling you what marriage is NOT based on things I've heard others say over the years:**

- Marriage is NOT “a piece of paper.”
- Marriage is NOT “merely a formality.”
- Marriage is NOT a “business contract.”
- Marriage is NOT “an institution.”

- A couple is NOT “married in their hearts” (therefore rendering a wedding ceremony unnecessary).
- The ceremony IS important and you’re not married until you’ve done it.
- Marriage was NOT created by the State nor by humankind.
- Marriage is NOT a “ball and chain” that limits freedom or entraps a Christian.

NEW COUPLES. When couples approach me and ask me to marry them, I normally take some time to sit down with them first to talk. Sometimes when I say these things, the Bride-to-be looks at the Groom-to-be and says "see! I told you!" If that happens, the fellow then admits that he’s only getting married because she insisted. He goes on to say one or more of what I quoted above: just a piece of paper, etc.

DEVIL HAS DEVALUED. I’m saddened that the Devil has done such a great job convincing people—including Christians—that marriage has little to no value in life, reducing it to a piece of paper, a formality, or something to discarded.

- Marriage is a Holy Sacrament that created by God Himself.
- Marriage is a covenant between one biological man and one biological woman, directly representing the one we have with Jesus.
- Jesus is portrayed as the Bridegroom and we the Church are His Bride.
- We know that our great commission is to share the Gospel and make disciples—we will see in this sermon series that getting and being married glorifies God and points to Christ as the only Saving Grace there is.
- Marriage is the message of the Gospel.
- Marriage is symbolic of all the promises Jesus has made to us, both in the present and in the future.
- Marriage is freedom for a Christian desiring to follow God and His will.

BUILT NEW HOME. Imagine you’ve built—not bought—a new house and it’s finally finished: what’s the first thing you would do after moving into it? While your answers will be different, one truth stands out—***whatever the first thing is, you chose to put it at the top of the list because you consider it to be important.***

- What’s the first thing you do when you come home from work?
- When you get up in the morning?
- Again: ***whatever that is, some part of you says “this is a priority and must be done first!”***

**After creating Adam and Eve, what was the first thing God did?** Please remember: humanity is the apex of God's creation because we're made in His image. Other than angels, no other aspect of God's creation has this unique calling and identity. So I ask again: *after creating two beings made in His image, the first two of brand new race, what did God put at the top of His list when it came to them?*

**Genesis 2:18-25 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and **brought her to the man.**

<sup>23</sup> 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."

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

**As soon as Eve is created, the first thing God does is marry them.**

- He doesn't wait, hesitate, give them a chance to get to know each other, or let them talk it out first.
- God's first act isn't to give them clothes, something to eat, share His commandments, or have them shake hands.
- He doesn't Baptize them or have them take Communion.

**The very first thing God does with the first two humans on the planet is to marry them.**

**MARRIAGE WAS GOD'S FIRST SACRAMENT. IT WAS AT THE TOP OF HIS LIST.**

**It Was His Priority For the Human Race and the Reason He Created Us Male and Female.**

DEVIL REDUCED. It's the Devil, this fallen world, and the hardness of our hearts that have taken this holy and precious rite and reduced it to a piece of paper, a formality, or handcuffs that limit and entrap us. That have attempted to add more genders, make them fluid, or even to eliminate them...non-binary...and still get married.

ADAM WAKES UP. The moment Adam wakes up from the deep sleep he opens his eyes and sees God walking Eve toward Him. He knows God is giving him an amazing gift—a wife, companion, and helper. Adam has just got done walking amongst the animals and naming them. He noticed that even in the same species the animals were different—male and female. He already discerned that male and female animals belonged together in order for life to continue and that clearly was way God designed them.

NO COMPANION. While naming the animals and having these revelations was no doubt exciting for newborn Adam, he also noticed something else: while the animals all had opposite sex companions of the same species, Adam didn't.

COMPANION/EQUAL. So God knocks him out and performs an operation...and when Adam wakes up he sees that God has generously provided a companion. The Hebrew translation of the word is an "equal."

EVERYTHING CHANGES. As God is walking Eve toward him, the Holy Spirit gives Adam yet another newfound revelation—everything is about to change. He's going from being single to joined, or married.

EXCLUSIVE TO EACH OTHER. And it's not going to be the same as it is with the animals, some of which will mate for life with one partner, and some who won't. The Holy Spirit shows Adam that he and Eve will be exclusive to each other, bonded in spirit, heart, and flesh all the days of their lives.

**This astounding, exhilarating, and amazing revelation causes Adam to speak for the first time.**

**Adam hadn't said any words before this—these were his first.**

TALKING = AUTHORITY. Please remember—part of the authority of being made in the image of God is the ability to talk. *The power of tongue is life and death.* God created the heavens, the earth, the plants, oceans, animals, and humankind with His words. Whenever God speaks to this day the earth shakes and every being in the heavens, the earth, and under the earth trembles in fear!

KIDS FIRST WORDS. Angels and humans are unique among God's creation with the ability to speak. When our children are newborns, we wait for them to form their first words and tend to remember what they are. *So what's the first thing Adam ever says out loud?*

<sup>23</sup> 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."

**THE FIRST WORDS NEWBORN ADAM SAYS ARE IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS MARRIAGE**—like when we say "I do" at the preacher's prompt. God the Father was present and performed the ceremony as a Witness. Adam sees and is one with His Father's will.

**Therefore just as God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning with His spoken word, Adam's beginning verbally confirmed his marriage. Oneness with his wife.**

Let me reread verse 24:

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

**What's the difference between a boy and a man? Age? Having a job? Living on one's own and paying bills?**

*At what point or under what set of conditions does a boy finally mature into being a man?*

*The Lord actually defines this for us.*

**THE LORD'S WILL TO BECOME A MAN IS TO GET MARRIED AND BE BOTH A CHAMPION AND CARETAKER FOR HIS WIFE.**

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

PROMOTION. Our Father and Adam's Father was God and we certainly should never leave Him, and Adam had no mother. Yet even for him, he received an upgrade...a

PROMOTION...when God brought Eve to him. He went from being a boy to a mature adult. Let me say it another way: he went from being incomplete to being complete...think of Jerry McGuire famous line spoken by Tom Cruise: you complete me."

***No matter how old he is or what he's accomplished in life, a single man hasn't grown up the eyes of God until he commits himself either completely to God as a celibate like Jesus and the Apostles, or to a human female wife.***

ELON MUSK. Some single men exult their status, seeing themselves as wild stallions with a herd of mares at their beck and call. Elon Musk is a billionaire who invented the Tesla car, sent rockets into space, and almost bought Twitter ...yet he refuses to die to himself and commit to one woman. Despite the world looking at him with admiration at all he's accomplished, he's a boy in the eyes of God.

ADAM TO HUSBAND. The translation of the word "Adam" is more than just "man," it's also "hypocrite." When Adam married he was given a new identity called "husband" which translates to "mighty champion and righteous steward."

**These are labels given by God Himself, so which one would we rather be called by Him?**

HUSBAND PLAYS ROLE OF CHRIST. It goes deeper than this. In 1 Corinthians 11 & Ephesians 5, Paul explains that while both Adam and Eve are made in the image of God, Adam (and the husband in general) was meant to play the role of Jesus in his marriage and—later on—we'll get to Eve's role.

***Playing the role of Christ is an honor!*** When I read this in 1 Cor 11 and Ephesians 5, I'm stunned! Just as the Lord is our mighty champion and righteous steward, He has assigned husbands the exact same role for his wife and children.

JOHN 3:16. A few months ago we did a deep dive into John 3:16 where I explained it in terms of a wedding. God the Father gave Jesus to us is a dad giving His Son to a bride for their wedding. Remember the loving revelation we got from this: **Jesus was committed to us before we ever knew Who He was.**

**Before we ever realized He was the Son of God, our Savior, Who died on the Cross for our sins. Before we ever fell in loved with Christ, He already loved us.**

- Agape is the love of God and is a noun.
- Agapeo is the love of God in action and it's a verb, meaning "to bind to/become one with."

***Boaz didn't just have warm and fuzzy feelings for Ruth—he bound himself to her before she even knew who he was!*** When he saw her gathering from his fields, not only did his heart leap but he decided—listen now!—right then and there that he would marry her and take care of her for the rest of her life. He was already committed to her before she was even aware of his presence, much less how he felt.

BECKY AND I. I felt the same way about Becky when I finally worked up the courage to ask her out. I wanted to propose marriage on our first date and it was only my grandmother who talked me down from that lofty intention. I was ready to forsake everything and everyone in my life for her, be married, and move in together on day 1. I was already "there" but Becky wasn't...it took her a bit.

***Christ is already "there" with everyone too which is what John 3:16 tells us.*** He's ready to get married and even now, His Father is preparing the wedding ceremony and reception to end them all! It's going to be the biggest and most resplendent occasion to ever take place in the history of humanity!

RAPTURE IS FOR WEDDING. Did you hear what I just said? We all think we're waiting for the Rapture, but the whole purpose of the Rapture is to dress us into our proper wedding robes and walk the aisle with Jesus!!! Our new bodies are clothed with "fine, white linen" which is proper dress for our ceremony. This whole thing has been for a wedding and we'll explore that more in a later sermon when we exposit Revelation 19.

***Getting and being married here on earth is a reflection of Jesus' eternal commitment to us.***

LOVE IS BOTH. Getting and being married here on earth represents both the soft-hearted feelings of love AND eternal commitment Christ has for His bride. Jesus was and is our Mighty Champion going to Cross and taking all our sins and His Father's wrath for us. Then He stomped His heel onto the Serpent's head and let Satan know that we belonged to Him now. Isn't this the way a real man treats a woman he claims to love?

EYES WIDE OPEN. Being God, doesn't He know everything? Beforehand is what I mean. He knew all the times I would be a jerk to Him, yet He committed Himself to me anyway, so truly He came into this relationship with His eyes wide open. He hasn't be surprised or flabbergasted by me even once. Yet He keeps the covenant.

JUST LIKE HIS DAD. That is how important marriage was and is to Him. And since He's made us in the image of His Father to the point of telling Phillip: "if you've seen me, you've seen the Father" then clearly He places the same priority and importance on the sacrament of marriage as His Dad.

## **HE SEES IT AS A PRICELESS AND PRECIOUS COVENANT TO BE HELD ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE.**

JESUS QUOTES GENESIS 2. When asked about marriage and divorce by the Pharisees, Jesus answers this way quoting directly from Genesis 2 and adding a bit of His own to it:

### **Matthew 19:4-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning '*made them male and female,*'

<sup>5</sup> and said, '*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*'?

<sup>6</sup> So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

JOHN 17 ONENESS. We've explicated Jesus' famous John 17 prayer and applied it to our covenant with Him: that He and us are 1. Not two, but one. ***This is a declaration of marriage!***

NOT TWO, BUT ONE. Both Father God and Christ use the same words and phraseology when talking about husband and wife. We are no longer two separate and sovereign beings in the eyes of God...and isn't His perception the one that matters? We are one and Jesus confirms it in verse 6 above.

ETERNAL SECURITY. Eternal security is a big topic in the Church, so imagine this: what if you felt that Jesus was holding back both His affection and commitment to you? Starting with the day you were Saved or rededicated your life to Him? Imagine Him sitting on His throne as you repent, ask for forgiveness, and ask Him to be your Savior...and His arms are folded on His chest. He has a skeptical look on His face. Finally He says "we'll give this a try and we'll see what happens."

***How secure and loved would you feel?*** The good news is that Jesus is all in and has been that way since before we were born. I'm not trying to diminish feelings of love which is the word Eros love, but Agapeo commitment endures on even when feelings aren't there. Good news is that Jesus' feelings for us don't fade, but I speak of human marriage.



**Look at the end of verse 6:** just as God joined together Adam & Eve way back in the Garden, thus God presides over our marriages today and He does so at the ceremony—not in our hearts and intentions. I'll cover that in another sermon.

**UMARRIED & LIVING TOGETHER.** The devil, this world, and our flesh hates marriage and they do all they can to downplay, devalue, and redefine what it is. For years now modern western society has unmarried people living together in romance or having “one night stand” relations with each other, yet unwilling to make this step of commitment.

**FLESH INTERPRETS.** Remember what I told you a few months ago: the flesh interprets the Scriptures too...our flesh. When it reads 1 Corinthians 7, which I read to you in last week's sermon, stating each man should have his own wife and each wife her own husband, it sees a ball and chain. It doesn't want its “freedom” to be with whoever it wants, whenever it wants, to be “limited” to one spouse. It places itself first, asking questions like “what if my feelings change?” worrying that it will be “stuck” in a loveless, passionless marriage.

**SELF PRESERVE.** The flesh doesn't want to die to itself, it wants to preserve itself so even though it will physically join itself with another, move in, have kids, and share bills...it avoids the sacrament of marriage. It avoids the action verb aspect of God's love, commitment.

**MORE THAN FEELINGS.** The world has deceived us, telling us love is about how we feel. When we feel good with this person, it must be love...and **that's not true because there's more.**

**COMMITMENT.** The love of God isn't just about feelings. Boaz did indeed have the warm fuzzy's for Ruth, but he also committed himself to her for life and then acted upon that commitment.

**JESUS DIED.** Jesus loves us with warmth and tenderness yes, but He committed Himself to us so far as to die to Himself on the Cross, shedding His own blood and having His own body broken for our transgressions.

**DIE TO SELF.** The more mature step in love is dying to the self and completely committing ourselves to our spouse. Binding ourselves to them for better or worse, rich or poor, in sickness and in health, in joy as well as sorrow, until death do we part.

**We die to the self because the Lord will make us into a new being—we are now one with our wife or husband in His eyes.**

**MORE TO GO.** We have several sermons in this series to go and I'm willing to bet a lot of questions have raised up in some of your minds. What about divorce? Adultery? Abuse? Being married to an unbeliever? This is only sermon #1 so please stay with me and let the Spirit of God lead you to the wisdom you need.

For today I ask you to do this, no matter if you single, married, divorced, or widowed:

- If you've devalued marriage to a piece of paper, contract, or formality then I call upon you to repent.
- Your repentance can and should start with the revelation of the great value God has placed upon this holy sacrament, then realizing your goal is to match your will with His.
- If He thinks marriage is sacred, important, and priceless then we should too.
- If you think that love is mostly or only about joyful, affectionate feelings toward someone else I call upon to you repent.
- True love follows the model of Jesus in John 3:16—we commit and join ourselves to those we love which is greater and longer lasting than feelings.