

Genesis 2:18-24

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 10, 2021

How would you assess the world today? Your answers may vary, depending on whether you are an optimist or a pessimist. Public opinion polls often ask if we think our country is heading in the right direction. Many responses are negative: "We're going to the dogs." "We're off the rails." We do witness much that is not good. Sometimes when things aren't going well we need to take a step back, review issues, or even start over. Looking at this text does that for us regarding the basic unit of society, the family. We go

BACK TO THE BASICS

- I. Marriage is designed by God
- II. Marriage is blessed by God
- III. Marriage will endure

As we go back to the basics and zero in on developments of the sixth day of creation we see that marriage was designed by God. Lots happened that day. The Lord created the domestic animals, reptiles and wild animals all by the command of his powerful word. He also made humans. He took special care in doing so, as he consulted first internally about making us in his image. He got personally involved as he formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the life principle. He showed love for his product by placing him in the Garden of Eden. He gave mankind dominion over the rest of our world. The garden provided food for eating. God is amazing!

But something was missing. Day by day the Lord had noted that what he had made was good. However, at this point he indicated there was something for which that was not the case. "It is not good for the man to be alone." He knew the type of being he had made. We are social creatures, needing to interact with others. While we may cherish some time in peace and quiet by ourselves away from a loud and busy world, being alone all the time leaves us lonely. "It is not good for the man to be alone."

God had plans of what to do about it, but he also wanted Adam's buy-in. He brought before the man a parade of the creatures inhabiting Eden with him. That made impressions on the man. He saw how each of the animals had their partners, male and female. However, there was no one matching himself. So God would initiate his plan: "I will make a helper suitable for him." It was not good for him to be alone, but he would receive not just a playmate. His partner would have an

intended role. She would be suitable for him, corresponding to his being, complementing him. She would be his helper to carry out the work that needed to be done. They would help one another as they shared life and service to God.

God then provided what he had planned. He caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep so he could not see or feel what was happening. He removed a rib from his chest and closed the opening. "Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man." How precise were his actions to what he had announced! She was made from his own body. You can't get any more like someone than that. However, she was not a clone of Adam, an exact replica. Man and woman differ but they fit like matching gears. They are like one another physically, mentally and spiritually. They are equal, but with individual, different roles.

These two divinely created people God then brought together. He had designed what would fit best but did not force them together. He brought Eve to Adam, who assented, as we will hear, and Eve must also have agreed, as there was no objection. So in God's actions we see his intentions for marriage: one man and one woman to be together. We follow that design, recognizing the wisdom of our Creator and his right to define what he instituted. Marriage was not a development of society in the course of human history. God set it up to be an unconditional, mutual commitment of a man and a woman to become husband and wife. Our nation changed its definition a few years back. It was not an advance—you can't improve on what was part of the perfect world. As Christians we value God's Word so still look to him for the design of marriage as we go back to the basics.

II.

His wisdom and love show as marriage is blessed by God. Adam recognized the gift he had received from his Maker. "The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.'" Remember that as he viewed the animals he saw they were pairs but there was none like him. Now there was: "this one" he repeated three times with emotion. She is God's gift to me! "Now," he exclaimed, this time, at last, this is the one I've been waiting for! Feelings gush out in his words. Joy filled his heart. He accepted God's gift with gratitude.

Still in the state of perfection with the fullness of God's image, he knew the source of the one brought to him. She was his very flesh and bone, designed and now built by God. The name "woman" expressed their closeness and oneness with the word "man" inside it. He had someone with whom to share life and its blessings, to carry out God's plans. He appreciated her.

We recognize God's blessings still. Adam and Eve lacked a selection of potential spouses. We have many choices for a partner in life. The dating process can take some years. Computer assistance has worked to bring some people together.

It's not that God has decreed from eternity who must marry whom. There is a human role as we make choices and accept or turn down offers. As we await a partner we pray for guidance. Once he has led us to that mutual agreement to marry, we give thanks and recognize God has joined together husband and wife, as Jesus noted in today's Gospel reading. We show that gratitude in love and respect for one another, in caring and sharing, and in faithfulness.

There is also a message for the unmarried. Honor God's gift as you seek a life partner or are sought. Don't grab for the fruits of the relationship without marriage. Await his time and accept his will if he has not led you to a partner. Seek his guidance for whatever other plans and blessings he has for your life.

III.

Although challenged by sinful attitudes and behavior we note that marriage will endure. The final verse of the text reveals that truth. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Adam had finished speaking. These words were not part of his experience. He and Eve had no parents to leave. It was God's statement through Moses, his inspired author. While we're growing up our love is properly directed to mom and dad. When committing to a spouse, husband and wife are united into a new family. The relationship with parents is not ended, but the new bond takes precedence. We are leaving father and mother.

The unity of husband and wife was expressed as being one flesh, reflecting the origin of Eve. The couple is joining their goals and dreams for life, their interests, yes, their hearts. You care and feel for each other, both in joys and in sorrows. The ultimate physical expression of this unity is present in the sexual intimacy of marriage. God designed male and female to complement one another in this act of oneness. It is also his way of carrying out his plans for the population of the planet. Not every couple produces children but the process continues. The Christian home is also the best way of passing on faith. Truly the family is the basic unit of society.

Because of those issues we see the continuance of marriage. The verse indicated these things *will* happen. It was looking to the future. This account is not just a historical note about Adam and Eve, the first inhabitants of our world. These are God's plans while the earth stands. No expiration date was stated ("Do this for the

next five centuries" or some other limited duration). Marriage survives despite man's disobedience to God's will.

We are speaking of the institution of marriage, not about individual unions. In the reading from Mark we heard Jesus pronounce, "Let man not separate" as he talked about husband and wife. God separates spouses by the death of one or both of them. Marriage is a lifelong union for this earth, not an eternal one that continues in heaven.

We see violations of God's will regarding marriage. That was the topic Jesus addressed when questioned in the Gospel. It has been experienced by many. You know the heartaches resulting for many where God's ways are not followed, with discord, unfaithfulness and breakups of families. Some of you have suffered the effects personally. Others have caused them. What can you do? Like all failings, they began from what we hear in the very next chapter with the Fall into sin. Sin permeates our society, each of us individually and all our relationships. We repent and turn to God for mercy. God provided the solution in sending Jesus, who bore all our guilt for marriage and family issues, other sins against the sixth commandment and any other sin. He paid for the whole messy lot of them. We thank him, seek to turn from sin and to follow his ways. We draw on his strength to fight the challenges sin brings to our relationships. Marriage and faithfulness to our spouse, purity in thought and word and deed, all take commitment and work. God supplies the power, as he wants his design to be followed. The Holy Spirit provides it through the gospel of God's love in Jesus, received in word and sacrament.

We pray for his blessings on all our homes and families, including those families consisting only of one. May each of us recognize God's will for our lives, seek to follow and honor it, enjoy his blessings and trust his gift will endure. Above all, live in the family of faith as we support and encourage one another in his ways.