



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2021

GENESIS 2:15-25, MATTHEW 19:3-6
PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR
DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.
TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

I want to take you back over 26 years, to the night my wife and I got married. It was a gorgeous evening, absolutely dreamy...except for one small detail. I was in seminary at the time so we had a lot of clergy participating in the wedding, but the designated preacher...NEVER SHOWED UP. Just never arrived. I looked to my father and said Dad, you're a priest, you need to preach, he said: "Can't do it, too emotional son." So, I went to the bullpen, and asked another priest who said, "I'm in."

Well, this dear man begins the wedding sermon so well....until he gets to a metaphor where he says: Marriage is like a big trapeze act, two people coming together, and as he's saying this he's using big hand gestures...Yes, marriage like a big trapeze act is full of...._____, and he loses his train of thought. So, he begins again, Marriage like a big trapeze act is full of:_____, and he can't bring up the right word in his mind. The preacher winds up a third time...Marriage like a big trapeze act is full of DISILLUSIONMENT. All the air goes out of the room. He would later admit: *Al, I think I used the wrong word there.*

But did he? PERHAPS YES, PERHAPS NO. I'm going to leave it there a moment as a cliff hanger. Let me back up. As you know we are in week three of our deep dive into Genesis. Last week I said Genesis 1 is our birth certificate. Every birth certificate gives two bits of information: It tells us: Who and Whose we are. Whose are we? God said: Let us make man in Our Image!

The us is:

- God the Father, the creator
- Jesus The Son, the rescuer
- And the Holy Spirit, the fuel tank!

That's "whose" we are! We are the image of one God who is: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But, so often we go from Genesis 1, right to Genesis 3 where we read about original sin and the apple. Therefore for many, Genesis 2 is the Iowa of Scripture: Fly over country! So, let's intentionally land our plane in the cornfields of Genesis 2.

For in chapter 2 God invents MARRIAGE! Marriage is the very first institution established by God in the Bible! And the only institution established before the fall! Think of that, marriage was invented by God in a time of no sin! Here's how it happens. God, in verse 21 takes a rib out of Adam, and makes a woman out of that rib! It's the biggest case of take out ribs ever! Eve born not from dust but from Adam! Adam then utters the very first words ever said by a human in the history of the world! Eureka She's beautiful! Bone of my bones! Flesh of my flesh! taken out of me! God continues: For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, be joined to his wife and they will become one flesh.

So...so far:

Genesis 1: We are created by one God

Genesis 2: Marriage is between one man and one woman

God creates only one Eve for Adam, not several Eves, nor another Adam! Proving that hetero-sexual monogamy is the divine pattern for marriage that God established in creation before the fall!

So, this morning I want to talk to you about what Genesis 2 reveals about the radical purpose of marriage. Now, I know some of you are single looking to be married, while others of you are single with no plans for marriage. You might be thinking, what does this have to do with me. This sermon is critical to everyone because you need to know what to look for in a spouse! But all of us need to be praying for the marriages around us! As marriages go, so goes the church, so goes the community, so goes the nation!

I love one marriage license I came across. After the blank for number of marriages, the groom put: "First." The bride meanwhile entered: "Last." Yes, Genesis 2 reveals the secret and true purpose of marriage: In addition to the obvious, that marriage is for companionship, leaving and cleaving, Genesis 2 reveals this: Before Eve is born, God places Adam into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it, and gives these SPECIFIC instructions to Adam in verse 16:

Adam, eat from any tree of the garden except for one, don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, if you do, you will die.

Notice, God gives Adam a choice to obey or disobey. Why? When God made Adam in His image, He didn't want to make a human robot. God gives Adam free will. This free will is the evidence of the love God has for us! He loves us so much, he desires we choose to love Him rather than be forced to love Him. Reminds me of engagement. Husbands, when you engaged your wife you didn't say..YOU WILL MARRY ME. You said: Will you marry me? True love comes when we choose it. Without choice, Adam would have been a prisoner.

Which is WHY God in the very next verse says to Adam: “It’s not good for you to be alone, I’m giving you a helper. It’s no accident these verses are back to back! God knows Adam and all men are NOT up to the task of choosing wisely and living in obedience! Put it together: Verses 16 and 17:

*God said: Eat from any tree in the garden, except that one,
Next line: “It’s not good for the Man to be alone; I’ll make him a helper..”*

So God creates Eve and marriage to be a mutual chiseling tool. Marriage, where Iron is sharpening iron, each helping the other to choose wisely. Carving the other into the image of God! Yes, Marriage is a chief way God makes us into His image! So that together we might make the highest Gospel impact on the World! Therefore Marriage is an institution for discipleship! This is how our Anglican Prayer Book in the wedding service says it: “The Union of Husband and Wife is ordained by God TO MAINTAIN PURITY for the purpose of building up, church and society!

TO MAINTAIN PURITY for the purpose of building up, church and society! In other words: Husbands and wives: *love the HELL out of each other!*

How does this play out in real life? Since the days of our court-ship, my wife has been a:

- Remarkable
- Persistent
- Detailed
- Clear Minded
- Focused

Back seat driver-from the front seat. Oh the fights we’ve had while getting from point A to point B. Thank God we don’t drive to church together. But Genesis 2 tells me I need to give her thanks when she’s telling me how to drive because she is ‘perhaps’ keeping us from a wreck! Don’t tailgate! Use your blinker! Slow down! Keeping my driving pure! Choosing the good!

Most Seriously: This is how a Genesis 2 marriage works: Back to the Garden of Eden, spouse helping spouse avoid that tree of disobedience. HOW? God puts your spouse into your life to point you to choose the tree Jesus died on to give you eternal life! Spouse helping spouse choose Jesus in every circumstance. By Spouse helping spouse avoid choosing the wrong tree, and walking away from worship! Spouse helping spouse avoid choosing the wrong tree of:

- Hopelessness
- Isolation
- Regret
- And the big big tree of Unforgiveness

Spouse helping spouse avoid choosing the wrong tree of addiction. Spouse helping spouse avoid choosing the wrong tree of pornography. Spouse helping spouse avoid choosing the wrong tree of adultery, idolatry, gossip, and selfishness. God will use your marriage to break you, to re-create you into His image.

So you could say: My emergency wedding preacher was partly right! Marriage can be full of disillusionment if we resent the very person trying to chisel us! It Reminds me of the story of a man crying over a gravestone: "Why did you die? Another man walks up and tries to comfort him. "Did your mother die?" "No." "Your father?" "No." "Well, who died?" MY WIFE'S FIRST HUSBAND!

It's why Tim Keller loves to say, "We always marry the wrong person." If you think your spouse exists only to fulfill you, and not chisel you into His image, they will always be the wrong spouse.

But disillusionment can also happen when we go into marriage thinking any of the following:

- He's my best friend
- She makes me laugh
- We make each other happy
- She exists to fulfill me

Because Seasons will come in marriage where your spouse will not make you happy, laugh, or fulfill you!

In fact the purpose of marriage is the purpose of the church! The New Testament says the Church is the Bride of Christ! It's why clergy wear white! Like marriage, the church exists to chisel us into the image of Jesus to make the highest impact on the world! Marriage, like a trapeze act, is full of Shaping each other into the image of Jesus.

Not by trying harder, being bossy or condemning, but surrendering more deeply to whose we are. Surrendering to the Father who created you. Surrendering to JESUS WHO redeemed you. SURRENDERING to the Holy Spirit who gives you the humility, conviction and fuel to shape and be shaped! Which is why, the most joyful times of your marriage will be then you're doing mutual ministry together.

My friends, Marriage, yes, is for companionship, raising children to love Jesus, but also, to chisel you and me into the image and likeness of Jesus. I end with the marriage between that great 16th century reformer, Martin Luther and his wife Katie. Before they met, Martin would bathe, believe it or not- only once a year. Katie loves that bad habit out of Martin. And he would change his ways to bathing weekly! Talk about maintaining purity! More importantly, while Luther spent his time teaching, preaching, and writing, Katie turns a three-story monastery into a Christian conference center for local students and visiting professors to rent rooms to study under Martin! As the Reformation movement spread across Europe, Katie was the epicenter as she and Martin with others would hammer out the intellectual framework of the Reformation! "The Union of Husband and Wife is ordained by God to MAINTAIN PURITY for the purpose of building up, church and society! Amen.