

The Miracle of marriage: Two becoming one.
Mark 10:2-16, Gen 2:18

Today's scripture lesson talks about a man and woman becoming one. We call that marriage. Weddings can be a very emotional events. Everyone is quite excited. Some are crying at the thought that their little girl has now begun a new chapter in her life as a wife. I think, the most common thought in the congregation at a wedding of a young couple is.... "They're too young to get married." For those of us who are married, there is a re-living of the time when we exchanged vows with our spouse. For everyone there is hope of joy for the couple, that they might find happiness in their marriage. And we pray that as the paths of their lives change from two individuals into one couple that their new journey would be blessed by God.

Scripture talks about the mystery of two people becoming one. It tells us that there is a special relationship between a man and woman called "marriage." It also says marriage was established by God. God likes marriage. This is precisely why it is important that for people who are getting married, that Jesus be the center of that marriage. That's why it is good that when a couple comes to be married they get married in a church. They get married in a church because they want to pledge their vows to each other, before God and before the church.

Now, it is precisely because marriage is a "God-thing" that it is based on more than having "loving feelings" about each other. The "love" which scripture talks about in marriage is an act of will, not a feeling. Marriage is more than just an agreement between two people to live together so long as they love each other. Marriage is a commitment, it is a vow, to love each other for as long as they live. Love is an act of will. Love means putting the needs of the other before our own. But it is even more than that! God calls us to true love,... A marriage relationship is an opportunity to reflect that true love which God has first for us. Marriage is an opportunity for us to be the very source of "God's love" to another person.

Today's reading from Genesis, tells of the creation of Mankind. He has just created the Garden of Eden, God has created Adam, the first man. God has marked him with the Image of God. He brings all the beasts of the field and the birds of the air to Adam to name them. That is significant. What does it mean... when God lets Adam name the animals? In giving Adam the power to name the animals,... to give them their very identity, God is giving Adam authority over all the animals of creation. Adam is the Lord over them all.

But among the creatures no suitable helpmate could be found. The Hebrew word for “Helper” also implies “completion.” No one among the animals could be found who could “complete” Adam. So, God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and he fashioned another creature. But this time, he did not form it from the ground, like the other animals of creation, but this time he formed the new creature directly from Adam’s side. He made a woman. She was destined to be superior over all created animals. Adam’s equal. Adam was created in the image of God. Eve was created from Adam and therefore had the same image. Eve was created from Adam’s side, symbolizing her special relationship with Adam, a relationship of intimacy. She completed Adam. The image that Eve was made out of man is a very real metaphor. Gen 2:21 says Eve was called “woman” because she was “made out of man.” There is a pun in English wo-man man. The word “woman” is made from the word Man. The pun in modern English is that just as the word Wo-man is made from the word Man so Eve was made out of the man Adam. And just so you know that this is not a pun in the modern English only in the ancient Hebrew, the words for woman and man are Ishah and Ish. Ishah – woman Ish = man. So the pun is still there in the ancient Hebrew, Just as the word Ishah (woman) is made out of the word Ish (man). so Eve was made out of the man Adam.

So back to the story.... None of all the animals of creation were suitable for Adam. But here was Eve, created from Adam’s side. She held a special relationship with, a relationship of intimacy. She completed Adam. It was to be a permanent relationship, created by God. Both in Genesis and Mark’s gospel record the same purpose of marriage.... “a man and woman, should leave their father and mother, to become one flesh...” The unity in marriage was to be even closer than biological family. Genesis declares marriage to be the deepest corporeal and spiritual unity of a man and woman. This relationship was so close, so sacred that God himself commanded that it not be broken. As our lesson in Mark says “what God has joined, let no man, separate.” “what God has joined, let no man rend asunder.” As you know in our church we do not forbid divorce. We do not forbid divorce, but we do not look upon it with joy. We look on divorce like surgery. Sometimes it is necessary... but it always does tremendous violation to the body.

But even deeper, the reason why “the breakup of a marriage” is so disheartening is that the marriage relationship reflects the relationship between God and the church. A breakup of a marriage mars the image of the love which God has for us. From Eph 5:21 it says Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water

through the word, The relationship between a man and woman was to reflect our relationship with God. The love we have toward one another in marriage reflects the love we have first experienced from God. Therefore, the reason why marriage is so important is that marriage reflects the relationship between God and his people. When Jesus became man, God and mankind became “one flesh.” At the cross, God made special vows to us, marking us as his, promising us that He would never leave us. At the cross God promised us that he would love and cherish us from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, And it is God who pledges his faithfulness to us. And the only different thing was that His promise would last forever. As humans we can only promise till death parts us. But God’s promise would last... not only until death but through death. As it says in Psalm 23, “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil For thou art with me*” Even death itself will not separate us from the love and promises of God. What a joy to know that our relationship with God is that secure for all eternity.

God’s view of Marriage also teaches us something about our ability to show love to others. In marriage by your own power you cannot carry out your vows “*To love and cherish, Till death parts you,*” By our human abilities alone we are incapable of truly fulfilling marriage vows. The reason why we are incapable is that we are imperfect in our ability to give love. Sin makes us incapable of perfectly giving love. Sin makes us incapable of perfectly receiving love. And this lack of ability to show and receive love has horrible consequences. You see deep down inside, everyone has a need to be loved. Yet because we live in a sinful world everyone has struggled with their worthiness of being loved. Sometime or another, we have all faced rejection. Someone does something mean to us. Someone is rude to us. Someone does something unloving to us. Sometime or another we have all had to deal with rejection. Most times we just move on. Ok I am not loved by that person. We get over it. Move on.... But there is a problem.... If I receive too much rejection, it can move me from a self image of “I am not loved” to “I am not worthy of being loved.” “I am not worthy of being loved” What a horrible feeling. Such a feeling can eat away at my insides. It’s bad! It’s bad because it destroys our self-image. It can make us feel like “less of a person.” It can make us feel like there is something wrong with me. And worst of all, it can lead us to despair. It can make us despair that we will never be able to satisfy that deep basic hunger to be loved.

Now there is a deeper reason why rejection bothers us. The reason why we struggle with our worthiness of being loved, There is a deeper reason why we hunger to be loved. The deeper reason is that deep down inside, deep down inside

our need to be loved by our parents, our need to be loved by our friends, our need to be loved by spouses, is rooted in our need to be loved by God. I mean think about it. If I was fully convinced, not only in my head, but in my heart of hearts, that God, the creator of all things loved me, that God felt “I” was worthy of being loved. If I felt at all times, the presence and love of God, If I was truly assured of the love of God then even if I did not have the love of other people even if I was rejected by others it would never occur to me to think that I was unloveable. It would never occur to me to worry that my need to be loved would never be satisfied. Because I would know in my heart of hearts, that the only person who really counts, GOD, GOD, my creator, loves me. Then when I run into rejection by others, I am not crushed. If you don’t love me... the problem is not “in me.” The problem is “in you.” Because I am loved by God. The one who created me, (and created you, for that matter....) loves me. If you do not love me, then the defect is in you. Today, I want all of you to know I want you to know and believe in your deepest heart of hearts that You are loved, that God loves you. He loves you in a way that no human is capable. He loves you with a depth deeper than the ocean. Scripture says, ¹³Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. When we were condemned to Hell by our sin, Jesus laid down his life for us at the cross that we might receive eternal life.... that we might be called “children of God”. He has promised that nothing can separate us from His love. In Romans 8:36 St. Paul asks *What can separate us from the Love of God?* His answer: *I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the **love** of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Into the places where no one can go with us... Into the places where nothing of this world can be taken, Even into the valley of the shadow of death God has promised to be with us. Nothing can separate us from the love and protection of God. What a tremendous hope God has given us.

In Christian marriage you will only be able to carry out your vows because the love you show is a reflection of the love you have already received from Christ. In the daily lives of any Christian married or not, you will be able to love others, only because it is a reflection of the love you received from Christ. It is only by Christ's power that we will be able to love. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we will truly be able to show God’s love, comfort and hope to all. God is simply calling us to be reflections of his love. May God use you richly to be the very source of HIS love to others. Amen