

“Marriage Sunday”

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The Setting:

The day was called “Marriage Sunday.” We asked each couple to sign up for renewal of vows for the six to eight weeks prior to the event. We provided sample invitations which they could get and send to their family. We set a goal of the number of years of marriage that we wished to renew (5000 years for us).

The church was decorated for a wedding. The platform was prepared as a wedding. We used the entire service for the Wedding Sunday. We had a photographer set up to take still shots of the couples and their families if they wished. The wedding party was our pastors and their wives. Everyone who had been married more than 25 years was involved in the processional and recessional. We had reserved seating for the more than 50 years of marriage couples in the first two rows. The couples who have been married between 25 and 50 years we sat in the next 15 rows. Then all the couples married less than 25 years sat in the next 10 rows. The music was very traditional with here comes the bride.

The reception was after the service in the reception hall. We have multiple services so we signed up different couples for each service and had the reception in the evening. Our people renewed more than 6500 years of marriage. All ages and even the singles loved it.

The Sermon:

(just like a wedding we had the pulpit out and I preached standing with the staff seated behind me)

We are in a culture war. It is not between the right and the left. It is between right and wrong; good and evil; light and darkness; sin and righteousness.

The battleground is the home. Satan has aimed all of the artillery of Hell at the destruction of the family. His chief weaponry is deception. He is the father of lies.

Adrian Rogers said: “The lie is the most dangerous thing on the earth. Satan knows that belief is the father of action. He would rather you believe something wrong than to do something wrong. Lies are antithetical to God because He is the truth.”

Truth now has become so confusing to so many in our culture. They are confused, especially about marriage and the home. Satan is claiming ground in the culture war. America has lost her moral compass. We have pulled anchor and are now adrift through the deadly waters of morality by majority.

Religious leaders have become part of the problem instead of part of the solution. It is a buyers market for God’s message today. As the boomers return to church and the millennials come and investigate - they both want to tailor the message for their own whims.

Preachers are now taught how to pander to the masses, fill their pews and their pockets, purchase political and denomination clout, and then expand their own brand name.

When instead we need a sure word of “Thus saith the Lord” coming out of our pulpits. We need hot hearted men of God who are out to fill the pulpit and not the pew, to please God and not man, and to preach the whole council of God.

John the Baptist did not avoid speaking up for marriage. He spoke to the political leader of his day, Herod, and told him that he had perverted marriage. John the Baptist said: “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife” (Mark 6:18). John the Baptist gave his head for his convictions about marriage. When Jesus spoke about John, did Jesus criticize him for getting involved in a political issue? Did Jesus chastise him for treating a ruler with a lack of reverential deference? Jesus commended John and ask “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? . . . But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For I say to you, among those born of woman there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist” (Luke 7:24-28).

Does God have a word for this generation about marriage? The answer is a resounding “YES!”

Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

1. The Value of Marriage

What God said about its value:

God appraised the value of marriage and concluded that it was as valuable as the blood of Christ and the promises of God.

Hebrews 13:4: “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Word was used in **1 Peter 1:18-19: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**

Used in **2 Peter 1:4: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”**

Why does marriage have such value?

A) Marriage provides purity.

The only way to create a new family morally is through the means of marriage. Jesus 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” (Mark 10:7-8).

Marriage was given for moral, undefiled, fulfilling sexual activity. First Corinthians 7:3-4 states that the married couple should not deprive themselves from one another but rather fulfill each other sexually. Marriage provides the context for this activity to take place morally.

Marriage is the only acceptable context for sexual experience. Sex is like a nuclear reactor. It is the most powerful generator of human life. God uses it today to create human beings. Nothing is more powerful than sex in our human lives. A nuclear reactor has great power. We can use it to give light to an entire state, propel an underwater city called a submarine, and virtually eliminate an entire city. But the power of a nuclear reactor must be contained. If becomes uncontained then it destroys, pollutes, and defaces the lives of the people it was intended to help. Sex must be contained in marriage. When contained it can beautiful our world with precious children, bring fulfillment to the man and woman, bring strength to the union of the couple, and bring honor to God. But when sex occurs outside of marriage, it defiles, pollutes, and defaces the relationship.

B) Marriage provides security. The most honorable way for a person to have permanent companionship with a member of the opposite sex is marriage.

Marriage provided protection from sexual immorality. Marriage is a safeguard against adultery.

Fact: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that in 2002,

*92 percent of married males reported having had only one sexual partner over the preceding twelve months.

*Another study found that just 69 percent of cohabiting men could make the same claim.

Fact: The moment a woman marries her chances of being the victim of a crime, of being the victim of sexual assault dramatically drops

Fact: Marriage between a man and a woman is the best setting for children to be conceived, born, and raised.

*A recent CBS news reported on a recent study undertaken in Sweden of children in two parent homes and those in one parent homes - the study involved 1 million children over a decade, the largest to be done to date, and found groundbreaking conclusions:

Children in single parent homes compared to 2 parent homes :

- 1) are twice as likely to develop serious psychiatric problems and addictions
- 2) are three times as likely to commit suicide or end up in hospital

attempting

- 3) are 2 ½ times more likely to be hospitalized for paranoid schizophrenia or severe depression

* The study found that income level had less to do with child health and safety as did living with both biological parents.

Baby Dedication - perform it right now

Introduce the married parents and the precious child to the congregation.

C) Marriage provides eternity.

God says that He will judge those who pervert marriage and sexual behavior. Marriage is not between two people and the state but between two people and God.

Marriage is the greatest human illustration of the covenant relationship that a believer has with Christ. Marriage is a “divinely ordained relationship or union” (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18-24).¹ Marriage is a unique, mystical union where two people become one while maintaining their individuality in existence. Two other mystical unions are in Scripture: the union of the church (we are all one body) and the union with Christ (He is in us and we are in Him).

The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

When marriage is devalued and sexual activity is perverted then God will judge the participants.

2. The Virtue of Marriage

Marriage not only has value but it also has virtue. The wedding ceremony itself instructs the participants of the solemn bond these vows create. Any time someone decides to marry, it is a decision to be moral, to be honorable.

I love weddings. I love the words used at weddings. We asked our teenagers to prepare a video about these words.

We love the words at weddings - kid's video

A) The primary expression of a person's character is there covenant relationships - You are taking a solemn vow, making a heartfelt commitment.

B) Marriage values both individuals

1) Cohabitation does not. - while practiced by 10 million Americans at least today it devalues each other.

Fact: Al Mohler reported the findings of a study published by Psychology Today in August of 2005. The research is now clear according to Nancy Wartick. Cohabitation prior to marriage serves to undermine, rather than to strengthen the marital bond. Here's how Wartick summarizes the research:

¹Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics*, (Nashville, Broadman, 1961), 111.

*"Couples who move in together before marriage have up to two times the odds of divorce, as compared with couples who marry before living together.

*Moreover, married couples who have lived together before exchanging vows tend to have poorer-quality marriages than couples who moved in after the wedding. Those who cohabited first report less satisfaction, more arguing, poorer communication and lower levels of commitment."

Fact: An article in the *Journal of Family Psychology* found that

* "married mothers enjoy higher levels of intimacy and improved psychological well being compared to women who cohabit.

* "Married women also enjoy the benefits of markedly higher rates of sexual fidelity in their relationships.

2) Polygamy does not. It devalues the multiple women or men and it devalues the children born to those women and forces them to fight for the supremacy of one of their parents.

3) Homosexuality does not. It devalues each other because you declare that neither person's gender is necessary for a relationship to work. It also reduces a person's identity to their sexual behavior. Human beings are more than just a sexual activity. It devalues the other person because it renders one of the individuals unable to parent a child. It devalues a person because it creates promiscuity. This sexual activity can only be experienced outside of marriage. Even in nations where same sex marriage is legal, only 5% of same sex couples choose to marry.

4) Incest devalues a person by unfairly using the relationship that you have through blood to influence the relationship to become sexual. It is a perversion of a parental relationship of the darkest and most dehumanizing kind.

But marriage between a man and a woman values both individuals and all of the children that the marriage produces.

C) Marriage makes the sexual relationship righteous and beautiful.

God gave us sexual activity as a gift. In Genesis 1:28: God gave the command to be fruitful and multiply and God said that everything He had made was very good (Gen 1:31). First Corinthians 7:2-3 commands the married couple to render unto each other the due affection. Hebrews 13:4 states that the marriage bed is pure. Proverbs 5:19 commands the married man to be in love with his wife and to "let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love."

Sexual drive was a driving force to bond for Adam. He could not find a suitable completer because animals and men were not made to go together. God made a woman to be his companion and gender and sexuality served to bring them together.

Sexual activity inside of marriage enhances community because it reminds, teaches, and confirms to us that we need someone else to be fulfilled. We are not just individuals. It is not good for man to be alone.

However, sexual activity outside of the marriage is sinful. It devalues and degrades the individuals involved.

D) Marriage domesticates men.

God said that it is not good for man to be alone. The number one social problem in America today is the unattached male. Crime, sexual perversion, abuse, drugs, single mothering, foster children needs, and many other social ills come from this one problem.

Marriage can provide such a wonderful place for a man to thrive, reproduce and contribute to society.

3. The Victory of Marriage

A) Marriage is a pleasure

The wife is the crown of the husband.
The wife is a token of the favor of God.
The wife brings honor to the husband.
Wife brings beauty to a home.

Her children rise up and call you blessed.
You have each other late in life even after gravity has set in.

Fulfillment, nurturing, unconditional love, understanding, and someone who believes in you are provided by a lifetime of marriage.

We have produced a video celebrating our couples who have been married for more than 50 years.

50th Anniversary video

Time for the Renewal of Vows:

Have everyone stand who intends to do this.

Husband (Wife) will you joyfully receive your Wife (Husband) as a gift from God; will you enthusiastically continue in marriage for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do you part; will you protect your family from the devastation of infidelity; will you intentionally and creatively make every effort to love, honor and respect you, and to be loyal and true to you in all circumstances for the rest of your life - do you so promise

Vows:

I, Clayton, take you Linda
to continue to be my wedded wife (husband)

to have and to hold
from this day forward
in sickness and in health
in poverty and in wealth
for richer or for poorer
to love and to cherish
and forsaking all others
Cling to you only
till death do us part

Have the couples kiss their brides.

Now present the couples as continuing to be married.

Let everyone applause and have them sit down.

B) Marriage is a picture

1) It is a picture of courtship. Jesus Christ is the completer of you. He is what you need but you do not even know it. He seeks you just as a man seeks a woman. He reveals Himself to you and tries to win you with His love. His love for you was demonstrated at the cross. Jesus valued you at the cross. He shed His own blood to pay for your sins so that He could reconcile you to God. No he offers you life with Him. He offers you the gift of His shed blood to demonstrate His love for you. He shows that He will never deface, devalue, or deflect your beauty but rather that He will only cause you to become more radiant through His sacrificial love. With honor He offers you Himself and a life forever with Him.

The man in courtship does the same. He offers a woman life with him. Jesus offered His valuable blood to prove His love. The man offers a valuable diamond to prove his love. The man invites a woman to enter into life with him so that he can always beautify and bless the bride just as Christ ever liveth to beautify His church.

2) It is a picture of proposal. The man proposes to the woman, inviting her to enter into a covenant relationship reserved for only one. The man offers himself to be the leader, lover, and lifter of her life. Jesus Christ proposes the same to you today. He will save you and lead you eternal life through a covenant relationship with Himself.

3) It is a picture of engagement. By faith, when the proposal is offered then the woman trusts the man do that which he promised and to come for her. Our Lord Jesus proposed to us. We believed His promise and now we are engaged to Christ. Now we wait for Him to come for us. He will come and get His bride.

4) It is a picture of the wedding with Christ. In Matthew 25: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him." When Jesus comes then He will dress us for the wedding. He

will transform our lowly bodies into the image of His glorious body. He will present us to the Father. He will have the marriage supper of the Lamb. He will take us to our new home where we will reign with Him forever and forever.

Can you see the victory of marriage? Jesus is coming soon.