

Genesis 2:4-25

Part Two

We are continuing this morning in our study of Genesis, picking up again at Chapter 2. If you have a Bible, you may want to turn there so you can follow along. Now, two weeks ago we had our *first* look at Gen 2:4-25 and, while we looked at the message of the chapter as a whole, the bulk of our attention was on the significance of verses 4-17. The main idea that came out of that first study was that:

From the very beginning, it was the Creator's desire, in His great generosity and kindness, to live in relationship with people who are in His image, and in the midst of a beautiful and abundant world created for His, and their, enjoyment.

The picture presented in Genesis 2 is a portrait of a perfect, idyllic world, functioning as the world was meant to function, with **God's people, in God's place, under God's rule**. It was a beautiful world - a world where everything worked. To put it another way, Genesis 2 is the bright backdrop against which the darkness of Genesis 3 is revealed for what it truly is.

Well, this morning we take up the second part of our study of this chapter, concentrating this time on the last half - verses 18-25. As we do so, we must see these verses within the *larger* context just described - as part of Moses' description of the perfect world - God's kingdom, where everything is as it should be, including human relationships and in *particular*, male and female relationships in the context of marriage.

In our time together this morning we will concentrate on 3 main things: 1) Marriage as a symbol of God's generous provision, 2) Marriage as part of God's creational pattern and 3) Marriage as a picture of the future toward which God is taking his covenant people. That's where we're headed this morning. Before we go any further, let's pray.

(Pray and read Gen 2:4-25)

Marriage, like so many other things in the very beginning, was and is one of several realities that clearly illustrates God's goodness and generosity. Looking back at verses 4-17, by way of review, we saw a number of things in this chapter which display the graciousness of our God. For example, we saw how his generosity appears in the simple fact that we exist at all, we saw his kindness in the fact that we share in God's image, we saw it in the fact that He so abundantly provided for the man in the garden, in the fact that God made the world beautiful, and not just functional, in the fact that God provided meaningful work. We saw it in all those things. And we *even* saw his goodness in the fact that God provided a boundary - something that was *off limits* - for the good of his creatures and which served to remind them that there was a God and it was not *them*. All of these things were illustrations of God's great generosity and abundant kindness. And here, in the verses before us this morning, we see a further illustration of how giving and kind God has been toward his creation: He provides a partner, a companion, a helper for the man he has created.

But let's step back for a moment, to think about Adam's situation - *before* the creation of

the woman. I mean, here is Adam, in a perfect world, in a perfect relationship with his Creator - just him and God -- and guess what? It's not good enough. And we know it's not good enough because God says so himself. After a succession of pronouncements about the various things God has created being "good", we arrive at this passage where we are told, for the first time, that something was NOT good. How could Adam, as a sinless creature in an un-fallen world have God and still be in a situation that was "not good"? Is God not enough for Adam?

Well, of course, God is enough. He's more than enough. And, I think, that is precisely the issue here. You see, God understands this creature he has made. He understands that there is a vast difference between himself and Adam who, although he bears God's image, is still more unlike God than he is LIKE him. In other words: the differences far outnumber the resemblances. And, just as God has always existed in fellowship as a Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and is Himself a relational being - so too has he created this man as a relational being - with a built in need to connect with other creatures who were also finite - bounded by space and time. And so things are declared "not good" - not because there is any defect in God's world - but simply because until the man has a partner, God isn't finished yet. His relational creature needs a relational partner who understands what it is like to be a creature, a child of God and not God himself

And so, God's two stage creation of the man and the woman - alongside *some other* purposes - which we'll look at in a few moments - but the two-stage creation served to highlight the importance of both the man and the woman *together because* it underscored the truth that the man on his own is not enough. This is one of the functions of the "parade of beasts". In addition to being the first act by which the man began fulfilling his God given mandate to manage the creation, this act also underlined the reality that all of God's other creatures had companions - counterparts - that were both like them and yet different, not just sexually, but functionally. All of them except the man, that is. And so, as the man observed and named the various beasts, the unsuitability of having any of *them* as companions would have been driven home, and the need for a partner that was like him become painfully obvious.

With that point now established, God finally fashions a woman from Adam's own body - from his own side - thus making it clear that she is of the same "stuff" as him and is, therefore, not inferior to him in any way. Even further, the fact that something is taken FROM HIM in order to make her means that he now has a "deficit" within himself, something is missing. And this deficit will only be rectified if and when Adam is reunited with this woman.

As Tom Cruise says in his attempt to win back his estranged wife in the closing monologue of "Jerry Maguire" - "You complete me". In becoming united to the woman - Adam's deficit is restored. She completes him, and he and she - together - are a whole. They are, truly "one flesh". And all of this is, again, one more sign of God's wise and good provision for his creatures, knowing their frame, understanding their need, desiring their joy, and then doing something about it.

And so God fashions this woman and brings her to the man who immediately responds with, "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." Now, in your English translation, you may notice that the

words are type set differently on the page. That is the translator's way of telling you that what you are now reading - in the original Hebrew - is *poetry*.

In other words, and to my wife's great delight no doubt, what we have here is something like the first "musical" with Adam waxing lyrical when the woman is first brought to him. Now, I'm not sure that this means that men are required to burst into song whenever their wives enter the room - but what surely *is* being conveyed here is that there is something *very right* about the man's delight and gratitude at God's gracious provision of a helper and companion.....

Well, In addition to seeing marriage as a symbol of God's generous provision, I want you to also see marriage as part of God's creational pattern, as a model or paradigm for human relationships both in terms of their nature and their order.

If you remember from our previous studies, we saw how humankind's being created in the image of God meant a lot of things but that, in the context of the Genesis account, and in the light of Genesis 1:28, it meant *specifically* that the man *and the woman* were to both be fruitful and multiply and to exercise dominion over God's creation. This is part of how they are to "image" God. And, because they have been given this task of filling the earth with God's images, this further illustrates why it was "not good" for the man to be alone, why it was so necessary for him to have a companion: because it was part of the creational pattern and purpose.

And so, it is certainly right to say that part of the creational pattern for human relationships included, and still includes, this function which we call *procreation* - bringing new life into the world. And yet, as important as that is, it must be seen in the context of Genesis 2:18-25 where the emphasis, clearly, is on the aspect of *companionship and help*, and not on the procreative function.

And this is important to keep in mind since, in the history of the church, a misunderstanding of the priority of companionship and having a helpmeet has led, at times, to the development of a number of unhelpful perspectives on marriage. For example, there have been times in history where the relational aspect of marriage has been greatly ignored, reducing its significance to the provision of offspring and the performance of thankless, but necessary labor. At other times the procreative function has been elevated to unhelpful and illegitimate heights - leaving happily unmarried singles and infertile couples or couples whose children have died tragically - leaving people in those situations to wonder if they somehow stand in some diminished position - which they clearly do not. Those are just two examples. But a lot of unhelpful things happen when we forget the emphasis that Scripture places upon *companionship* in marriage.

Still, with all of that being said, it is nevertheless true that we see in these verses the necessity of woman's creation so that, together with the man, they can fulfill the important, *but not all important* procreative function with regard to marriage. That is certainly *part* of the creational pattern.

Another part of that pattern, seen in these verses, involves the introduction of roles and distinctions between men and women. On the one hand, the equality of the man and the woman is made very clear in this passage, in a number of ways. The woman is made out of the man - not from some other substance - but from *his flesh*. She is of the same “stuff” that he is. Further, in the scheme of things it will be the woman who, by God’s design, is the vehicle for bringing new human life into the world - out of her body, out of her womb. And, further, there may be some significance to the fact that the woman is taken from the man’s *side* - and not from some other part of him such as his head or feet.

And there are other things which point to her co-equal standing before God. In Hebrew, the word for man is “ish” and the word for the woman is “isha” - which sounds the same, but comes from a different root word, one that means “soft”. Again, you see: similar, and yet different - I think that this is no accident. Likewise, there is the declaration of the man in verse 23 that she is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones, and the implication that in being joined to him she completes him. Finally, there is the clear statement in Gen 1:27, that the woman and man both were created in the image of God. So, again, the man and woman are equal in substance and worth and significance before their Creator.

And yet, there are differences between them. For starters, besides the obvious physical differences - which really ought to be the first clue - there is the fact that the man was made first and the woman was made second. Now, if it were not for Scripture’s own treatment of this fact, we might not be inclined on our own to attribute any great significance to this. However, the reality is that Adam’s being created first meant that certain roles and responsibilities fell to him as the “first born” and that other roles and responsibilities fell to the woman who came afterward. We know this is the case because the Bible’s own commentary on this portion of Genesis - found in various places like 1 Timothy 2:13 or 1 Corinthians 11:8 - but the Bible’s own infallible commentary on Genesis 2 shows that the *order* of their creation was significant.

There is also the reality that, after the woman’s creation, she is brought to the man, who proceeds to name her. Now, to be sure, the woman is NOT just another creature being brought to him. That is clear in the passage. Still, just as the man expressed his authority through the naming of the creatures, so too is there an element of that same kind of thing to be found in the fact that he also names his wife - and will do so yet again after the fall.

We see further evidence of role differences in the fact that, as John Piper points out, the instructions about the forbidden tree were given to Adam *before the woman was created*. And yet, later on in Genesis 3, the woman clearly is aware of the instructions about the tree - but we have no record of her being given the instructions. So how has she come to know them? Obviously from her husband who has taken responsibility for letting her know what are the rules for life in the garden.

But that’s not all. The man’s unique role and responsibility is then further demonstrated by two facts: Firstly, after the man and woman sin, God comes looking for the *man*, not the

woman, even though she ate first and was tempted first. Why? Because Adam is the head of their relationship and, although both are guilty, it falls to Adam to be confronted first.

Secondly, the initial temptation of the serpent - whose desire was to overthrow God's pattern and purpose - his initial approach was to come to the woman. This was illegitimate for at least two reasons. Firstly, because instead of ruling over the creatures, the woman, and later the man, were in a situation now where they were listening to one of them, thus inverting the natural order of things. Further, it was also illegitimate because the Serpent deliberately ignores God's designs and approaches the couple through the woman, not through the man, for the express purpose of introducing confusion into their relationship.

Finally, and as we have already seen, when we go to other parts of the Bible which are looking back upon and reflecting on the theology of Genesis, we see that in a number of places the conclusion of the biblical writers is that there *are* role differences between men and women and that these differences are *grounded* in the creation pattern that we find here in Genesis. We see this, in a number of places which we have already mentioned but perhaps most clearly in Ephesians 5:22-33 - which we will come back to in a moment. But...**BUT**.... once again, having said all these things, it is important to keep remembering that we have to see them all within the larger context of what God is doing.

From the very beginning of Genesis, what have we seen? We have seen a God who is all powerful and all wise and loving and kind and generous and giving. And the creation of male and female relationships - with their similarities and differences - simply must be seen within that context - as a further expression of God's goodness and kindness. Therefore - no matter how counter-cultural it may seem - we need to see the distinctions between men and women as a GOOD thing, as a right thing, as a helpful thing. To be sure, the sinfulness of our own flesh and the fallen-ness of our world make this hard - even *very* hard to see and value sometimes. And the patterns of relating between men and women can become quite twisted and disfigured and ugly and hateful in our world. *But the problem is not God's pattern* - it is sin and its effects which are the problem. And we only make things worse when we reject or doubt God's pattern and God's wisdom. We only invite further hurt and pain and hardship.....

Well, in addition to seeing the procreative purpose and the male and female role/relational pattern, we also see a creational pattern here in terms of what IS and is NOT to be considered a legitimate expression of human sexuality - i.e., what constitutes true *union* and *legitimate one-ness*. Simply put, when you look at the movement and momentum of the creation up to this point, when you see *what* God has been doing and *why* he has been doing it and *where* he is taking this whole thing, it is painfully obvious that the only pattern of human sexuality that FITS with God's plans and purposes for humanity is *heterosexuality*. You simply cannot look at this account and this developing plot line and conclude that male-male or female-female relationships fit into this picture. They clearly do not. They clearly are out of step with what God is doing.

Saying these things is not about homophobia. There is no irrational fear or paranoia behind what I am saying - no loss of love or lack of compassion or understanding. Nor can this be characterized as some sort of "hate crime" - as if these things are said to incite violence and the unjust persecution of people who believe differently on these matters. Nor is this even about the hypothetical question of whether two men or two women could really *love* each other or be *faithful* to each other.

Very often these sorts of things are batted about as if they WERE the main issue. But they are NOT the main issue. They are *emphatically* not the point. The issue isn't whether two men or two women could be as faithful to each other as a man and a woman, the issue is whether two men and two women could form some sort of union *and still be faithful to their Creator, still be faithful to the designs and purposes for which God created this world and the human race.* Again, the issue is not faithfulness to each other, it is faithfulness to the Creator. And the plain fact is this: you cannot enter into a same-sex partnership without, at the same time, committing *cosmic, spiritual* adultery with regard to the Creator. THAT is the issue. And it leads us to the third and final main thing I want you to see this morning.....

Marriage is not only a further symbol of God's generous provision, and a key part of God's creational pattern, but it is also **a picture of the future toward which God is taking his covenant people.**

Now, to be sure, this particular function of marriage is not something that was as clear to the people in Moses' day as it is in our own day. For God's people back then, the significance of these verses was tied more to the fact that they affirmed the on-going necessity and validity and dignity of this institution for God's people.

Living as they did, in the midst of a number of different pagan cultures, about to enter into a land with an even greater variety of people, who had all sorts of strange ideas about men and women, and how they ought to relate, and what was and was not legitimate in terms of sexuality - In the face of that sort of social/cultural minefield, they are reminded through the creation account of how and why men and women were created. Further they were reminded of how both the man and the woman bore the image of God, and of the role that companionship played in their relationship and of their mandate to multiply and exercise dominion together and, most significantly, of how they completed one another in a one-flesh relationship.

All of these things would have been - and still are - vitally important for God's people to be well grounded in as they entered into their new home. And those things alone, apart from any future significance of marriage - were certainly valuable enough for the people in Moses' day.

However, as the Old Testament unfolds, you see that the institution of marriage, as important as it already is, begins to take on an even deeper meaning. God has more purposes in mind for marriage than just companionship, or procreation, or social stability, or whatever. In addition to all of that, with this institution *He is painting a picture of something.* He is providing a visual aid that he wants his people to never lose track of, and to maintain, intact, until he has

finished working out his purposes here. Why? Because the picture that this relationship paints is a picture of the relationship between God and his people.

We see this sort of language appear in Isaiah 54, where God is the “husband” and Israel is his “bride”. We see the same sort of language about Israel as a bride in Jeremiah 2, and again in Jeremiah 31 about God as the “husband”. These same sorts of themes are behind the verses in Ezekiel 23 and again appear in Hosea, especially chapters 1-3 where Israel is depicted not only as a bride but as an *unfaithful* bride at that, but one which, nevertheless, the Lord loves.

Going on into the New Testament we see this very same language picked up, in a number of places, only now it is being tied even more clearly and explicitly to the relationship between Christ and his bride - the Church. Listen to Paul’s words in Ephesians 5:22ff,

Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish....

And then, a little further down, Paul adds, quoting from Genesis 2:

...Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church....

Now, of course, there is a great deal in that passage - which we’re not going to address - but what I don’t want you to miss is the fact that Paul says that marriage is a mystery, and a profound mystery at that, but that it’s ultimate reference is to serve as a metaphor, an analogy of the relationship between Christ and his Church. This is the deeper significance of Genesis 2, which Moses and his people did not yet see, but which we, through Paul *can* see. *So look at it.*

When you begin to understand this purpose for marriage, to point beyond itself to this thing that God is doing, to this relationship that God has made and is preserving - when you see those things, you begin to see why it is so important that we not only keep this institution, but that we keep it *as it is* and preserve it *as it is*.

A writer named Gage, in trying to describe this deeper meaning and purpose of marriage, does so by showing the parallels between Adam and Jesus, in this regard. He points out that just as the first Adam was innocent, was made to sleep, was then “wounded” - something taken from him so that his bride might be formed - *in a parallel fashion* - Christ - the last Adam - comes, is also innocent, has his own side wounded, enters into the “sleep” of death, for the express purpose

of redeeming for himself a bride - the church - to render her clean and pure, that she might be made acceptable for him.

And this, you see - the fact that the bride has to be *made* acceptable - recalls the language and ministry of the prophet Hosea. A man who, in order to illustrate the idolatry and spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness of God's people Israel - deliberately takes to himself an unfaithful woman - a whore - and makes her his wife and he loves her with a love that is faithful, even when she is faithless. That picture - this unfaithful, promiscuous, tramp of a woman - what is that?

It's you. It's us - the church. We might prance around thinking that we are some sort of great catch, some great prize, some beautiful, innocent, virginal bride. But are we any different than the people of Israel - are our hearts any less prone to wander, to worship at the feet of other so-called gods, to lust after them and their empty promises? Are we any different? Notice again Paul's language in Ephesians 5,

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...

Why does he have to give himself up for her?

...that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish...

Christ has to give himself up for us - his bride, his church - because we are like the unfaithful tramp that Hosea loved, and kept loving - we are the unfaithful, adulterous bride of Christ, who is our husband. And we, as Paul describes in Ephesians - we do not make ourselves presentable to Christ - he is the one who has to make us presentable to himself - because we cannot do it. He labors to clean us up, to make us pure, to clothe us in new garments that are without spot or wrinkle. That's what the cross WAS about, that's what your sanctification IS about.

And if you do not see this about yourself - that you were not this great prized catch but rather this unfaithful tramp upon whom God has nevertheless set his love - if you do not see this about yourself, then you do not yet understand your own heart. Until you DO see this, you will not begin to comprehend how great IS God's love and mercy, and how great his love and mercy CONTINUES to be toward you.

Until you see your sin, and your continuing rebellion, as the on-going, spiritual adultery that it is, then you will not understand how amazingly patient and kind God has been toward you. You will not see him as the faithful husband who waits at the door, watching as you return home

from your latest tryst, who looks you in the face, as you straggle through the door, stares you in the eye - knowing who you are, and where you have been, and what you have done - and he says without an ounce of guile or deceit that *He loves you*. He still loves YOU, and forgives you, and wants you, exclusively for himself. Until you see that reality, you do not understand yourself or your sin.

But when you DO begin to see these things, you DO begin to understand this reality, you will see the transforming power of that kind of love - this undeserved mercy and forgiveness that can shatter the hardest of hearts and which breaks you and amazes you. And there, under the constant gaze of your faithful husband, you will be loved out of your unfaithfulness, staggered and stunned, humbled and smitten.

And forever changed by His transforming grace.