

Text: Genesis 2:18-24 (CSB). 20th Sunday after Pentecost. **October 7, 2018.**

God's love is yours through your heavenly groom, Jesus. Amen.

Let's play a little Family Feud. Here's how it works. We surveyed 100 people. We put the most popular answers on the board. You try to guess the most popular answer. Ready? Let's play the Feud. What is marriage? Just a piece of paper. Popular answer. Marriage is whatever you want it to be. Define it for yourself according to your own truth. I know that wouldn't fit on the screen so well. But that's a popular answer. One popular TV show from a day gone by, a show that rhymes with minefeld even said, "Marriage is a man-made prison." Popular TV show. Popular answer.

But let's not talk about what a survey says. What does our Savior say? In our Gospel reading, when people asked Jesus about laws regarding marriage, Jesus redirected the question and answered about love for marriage. Marriage isn't about laws. It's about love. Love for God. Love for his Word. Loving to listen to God's Word. And Jesus quoted the timeless definition for marriage that God himself gave. A man will leave his father and mother and cling to his wife and they will become one flesh. What is marriage according to our Savior, according to his loving Word? Marriage is companionship, completion, clinging, Christ. I'll repeat those and repeat them again and again during this message. Marriage is companionship, completion, clinging, Christ.

Marriage is companionship. God himself said it, "It's not good for the man to be alone." With screens and technology, there's a lot we can do alone. But there's things you can't. Isn't it better to hunt with friends than be out in the woods by yourself? Having a glass of wine with friends is better than having a glass by yourself, right? A friend of mine who used to race dirtbikes said, "When my friends stopped doing it, it wasn't fun anymore to go by myself." It's not good for people to be alone. So God created marriage for companionship.

God made a helper who is like him. Now don't hear the word helper and think, "Inferior! I knew it. The Bible is this misogynistic book." Not at all. The word helper is used most often of God! God's not inferior to us. God does for us what we can't do ourselves. When you hear the word, "helper," think, "This guy can't do it by himself. He needs help!" The word means ally, companion. Remember the first c?

Marriage is companionship.

Marriage is completion. This helper was like him. This helper completed him. I know the phrase, "You complete me," sounds like it's from a movie. But really it came from God. It was not good for the man to be alone. Creation was not complete until God created a woman to complement the man, to complete the man. God created men and women different, in some obvious ways and in some not so obvious ways so that they complete each other, complement each other. Generally if you ask a man, "How's it going?" He talks about work. Generally if you ask a woman, "How's it going?" She talks about relationships, family, friends, spouse, children. Those are both good. Both gifts of God, God's perfect complement to complete man and woman.

But did you catch how God did this? God didn't simply create the woman as the helper and completer. God made the man realize his need for this helper like him. God brought all the animals to the man. And the man named them. Now we could talk a long time about how this showed Adam's intelligence, this showed God had given Adam authority over the creatures. But that's for another sermon. Here, let's focus on this. God made Adam see his need before God met the need. Picture the scene. Adam sees a

male and female animal pass in front of him. They both have long necks and tall legs and spots. Adam calls them, "Giraffes." Then he sees two hippopotamus. Two lions. Two robins. And he starts to realize, "There's two of each one of these. But there's only one of me. I can see these creatures. I can name them. But there's no one like me. There's no mate for me." And at the time God chose, after God had shown Adam his need for companionship, his need for completion, God met the need. God created the helper like him. God met the need for companionship, for completion.

And how exactly God did this is fascinating. God created the man out of the dust of the earth. But God created the woman out of man. Literally! God made the man fall into a deep, divine like sleep. And God took the flesh and bone from one of his ribs and then God closed Adam's flesh at that place. Then the LORD God made the rib into a woman. Literally, God built the rib into a woman. Wow! Can you picture that? Can you see that?

Why would God do that? I know I've said the why would God questions are dangerous and we can't always answer them. And people have pointed out that the woman wasn't taken from Adam's foot for him to trample on her. She wasn't taken from his head to rule over him. She was taken from his side to stand by him. She was taken from a place near his heart for him to love her. Now, the Bible doesn't say exactly that here. But it's certainly accurate.

The more important point, which God does make here, is this: the woman came from the man. This woman was literally a part of the man. This woman completed this man. Maybe you've heard the expression, "My better half." That was literal for Adam. She literally was a part of him. And Adam got that. He understood it completely! In the first recorded words of a person in the Bible. Yes, these are the first words in the Bible that a person speaks. The first words that a person says in Bible relate to marriage. And they are good words about marriage. "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Finally, I have companionship. At last, I am complete. Now, I have a helper like me. I sure need it. This one shall be called woman, for she was taken from man. And just as woman came from man, so every man since has been born of a woman. There's that connection, the completion. We can hear the play on words in English. Man. Woman. Many languages have the same. The play on words in the original language in which the Bible was written is even stronger. This is my completer. This is my companion. Remember what marriage is according to our Savior: companionship, completion.

And clinging. After the first words of Adam, we get God's timeless definition of marriage. "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds (or clings) with his wife, and they become one flesh." We know this is a timeless definition from God because there was no father and mother at this time. There was only Adam and Eve, the first man and first woman, who were created directly by God. Marriage came from God, not from people. God set up marriage. God established marriage. God gave marriage as a wonderful gift, given only to his highest creation: people. God gave this gift of marriage and this definition of marriage when the world was still perfect. Think about that. The marriage of one man and one woman is God's way to reclaim a little piece of paradise. God's definition is good. God's definition is timeless. God's definition is for our good.

God's definition has three main points. Leave. Bond. (We've been saying cling so we have all c words.) Become one. Leave father and mother. Not forsake or abandon. But leave behind that relationship as the most important human relationship and now make the relationship with your spouse your most important human relationship. Of course, no one in your life is to be more important than God, but no human in your life is to be more important than your spouse. When one man and one woman get

married, they have started a family. They have left father and mother and they cling to each other. Now, I usually make a joke when people are studying the Bible before marriage, "You are stuck with each other once you're married." But isn't that so cool? This person wants to be stuck with me? I love this person so much I will gladly be stuck to her. We will be like glue to each other. There's no friend who will move with me across the country when I move, but my spouse will. My children will one day leave the house (I pray!) and they won't always be around. But my spouse will always be stuck to me. We are promising to be stuck together for life, to cling together for life. How cool is that!

And then there's the final part of God's definition. Become one flesh. Yes, God is talking about the sexual union. God made no mistake in his order. First the leaving, then the clinging, then the becoming one flesh. First getting married then the one flesh. That too is part of God's loving definition. Part of his love for us to enjoy that gift with one person for life.

But is that how we treat marriage? Do we tend to follow the Family Feud or our Forever Father? No sex before marriage? Come on, God didn't really mean that. A loving God wouldn't tell people to wait that long. Just one person? Doesn't God want us to be happy? Why can't marriage be two men and one woman or one man and three women? Why be so narrow with a definition? Why be so old-fashioned? Why even have marriage at all? That's just a man-made thing for a day gone by. Besides, married people are unhappy and unmarried people are happy. Ask my single sister. Ask my divorced friend. They are a lot better off. Ask my married friends. They feel stuck. Sad.

But how does God treat marriage? God treats marriage as a holy estate, the way to true and lasting happiness. God uses marriage to picture his relationship with us. God often pictures himself as a faithful, loving husband. A husband so loving, he sacrificed himself for us. He gave his only Son to meet our greatest need: forgiveness. God made Adam realize his need for companionship and completion and God met those needs with a woman. God makes us realize our need for forgiveness and God met that need with a man, his Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus frequently calls himself, "Our perfect groom." And he calls us, "His perfect bride, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish." Christ loved us with an everlasting love. Christ met our greatest need by giving his life on the cross.

That love empowers us to love as Christ loved. We heard that in our second lesson. Husbands are to love as Christ loved the church, sacrificially, selflessly. Christ's love helps us see: Christ is our constant companion. Christ's love for us is complete. Christ clings to us continually. A marriage with Christ will enjoy these wonderful blessings: companionship, completion, clinging, Christ.

A marriage based on Christ will not be about laws, but about love. The point of this sermon and I pray and pray again I've conveyed that, is not to rail on all the sins going on against marriage out there, but instead to revel in all the blessings Christ has given to marriage. What a blessing to enjoy continual companionship with one person! Only God's gift of marriage provides companionship in this way. What a blessing to be completed in marriage. I don't think to bring a gift to a new neighbor next door. My wife won't go without one. What a blessing! God's gift of marriage lets you cling to one person and that person clings to you, like they cling to no other. It's hard to put into words how cool that is, how happy that makes me, how much happiness God intends with his loving and timeless definition. It's a piece of paradise to bond, to cling, to become one flesh. Best of all, it's the greatest blessing to have Christ. To have a Savior. To have one who loved me unconditionally. To have one on whom I can place my sins. To have one who always forgives me. Husbands, you can't be perfect like Christ. But what a blessing it is when your wife sees Christ in you. Revel in the blessings. Don't listen to the survey. Listen to your Savior.

Don't worry about the laws. Focus on the love God gives in marriage. Don't listen to all the popular put downs of marriage. Listen to God say what marriage is: companionship, completion, clinging and Christ. Companionship, completion, clinging and Christ. Amen!

God has declared you one with him through his Son, Jesus. Amen.