

June 28th, 2015

What the world calls parenting and what Christians call parenting are two things altogether different. What the world calls love and what Christians call love are perfectly opposite from each other. When the world calls employees to do their jobs we Christians understand a much higher calling than simply putting in our time. We as Christians in the work place are called to work not for our bosses' satisfaction, but for Christ's. All these differences, throughout the centuries has set Christian's apart in their culture and has been a vital witness to the world around them.

Fundamentally, nearly everything the world calls people to or offers them, the Christian is called to a far different thing all together. Unfortunately in our society today there has been one thing that has seemed by most Christians to be a similarity between the Church and our culture. Marriage has been something, that for years, our culture has seen in the way that we have seen it, or at least it has felt that way. Friday June 26th, 2015 the Supreme Court of the United States voted 5 to 4 in favor of redefining our culture's understanding of marriage as essentially, any union between two consenting adults, regardless of gender.

I submit to you Church, that there was nothing different between Thursday and Saturday. There is nothing fundamentally different happening today that's different than last Sunday morning when there was no Supreme Court ruling on this topic. Our culture is redefining things for themselves, as they always do, but this doesn't change the reality of what our faith, our religion, our Christian conviction is. Let me say it this way; The position of the world on how I am to parent my children makes no difference to me. The position of the world on how I am to love my wife and my family makes no difference to me. The way that I work for my employers has never and will never change because of the shifting definitions of what it means to hold a job in our society. Likewise, how I view marriage and how the Church is to view marriage—also—doesn't —change.

The discussion is not whether we think; Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, or Transgender individuals ought to have a right to sign a contract with the State and get the financial benefits of a cohabiting relationship which the world is now in the process of defining as marriage. For us nothing has changed. Our sacred book, our religious conviction, and our consciences are held captive to the fact that God, alone, has the right to define marriage and that He has done so profoundly and purposefully. It is not a political position that we hold. It is a religious conviction, a position based not on passing trends or personal biases. It is a position that is rooted solely and uniformly in

the fact that, without need of interpretation, our God has clearly stated how marriage is to be understood, in our Holy Scriptures.

Let me also say this; If our God had clearly defined marriage as the Supreme court is defining marriage now, then I would be the first to applaud our society for doing that which would line up best with our beliefs. They've done that before, and I'm grateful that they have. However, I say publicly and unashamedly, that on the sole grounds of my religious convictions I must disagree with our culture, on yet another topic.

This morning as a part of our ongoing series on "Simple Christian Truths" I want us to consider; The Foundation of Marriage, The Purpose of Marriage, and by conclusion, our Response to Alternative Definitions of Marriage.

### **The Foundation of Marriage:**

Genesis 2:15-25.

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper **fit for him**." Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. **But** for Adam there was not found a helper **fit for him**. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "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.*

If I might be so candid, did you know that Adam and Eve after this, had sex? From the moment after they were created and placed together by God in this supernatural manner, they were then considered husband and wife. There was no contract signed. There was no florist, no baker, nor was there a justice of the peace. There were no other humans so surely there were no bridesmaids or groomsmen—no witnesses to this union. There was simply a man, a woman, and God's blessing. This is the establishment of marriage and consequently the Biblical definition of it. A man, a woman, and God's blessing upon them to be fruitful and multiply. In this text and in this principle we see God's order of things for marriage. Man is not blessed by God to

go without a comparable helper. Man is not blessed by God to marry a beast. Man is not blessed by God to marry another man. Nor is man blessed to marry multiple women. That which God blesses and calls a marriage is the union between a man and a woman.

Our society is not the first to define marriage in the way that the Supreme Court has just ruled. Throughout history civilizations, the world over, have seen fit to declare unions of all kinds. Before the 19th century in our own country polygamy, the practice of having multiple spouses, was an accepted practice by many. When the Federal government decided that this was not right, they passed laws to declare bigamy and polygamy an offense punishable by fines or even time in prison. I applaud our government for the definition they believed in 1890 when they passed these laws. The point I make is that for the Bible-believing Christian in 1889 and the Bible-believing Christian in 1891, the government's decision to outlaw certain marital practices was of no consequence. Regardless of what our government or society finds to be true, that has never and will never change what we believe to be actually true.

Truth doesn't change with the passing tides. Truth doesn't hang upon the vote of 9 people appointed by a president for a life-term. Jesus in the upper room praying for His disciples answered the question of truth for us. In John 17:17 Jesus prayed for His disciples, "Sanctify them in truth, Your word is truth." My understanding of truth has nothing to do with my own background or my own biases. The Word of God, the Bible, is my standard of truth and nothing else.

In our text, God says, which is to say truth is, women are those creatures which are fit for men to marry and nothing else. Truth has been dictated to me, by God in His Word, that there was nothing else "fit for" man—than woman. The phrase "fit for him" which occurs twice in our text, can be better translated as "compatible" for him. In verse 18, God, speaking about all of mankind not merely Adam, says that it's not good for, us men, to be alone. So, God brings before Adam—that representative head for all of mankind—God brings before him all the beasts of the field. For him there was not one creature that was compatible. As a side note here, this little jaunt was not for God's benefit but for man's, so that Adam as well as all of us could see that nothing as of yet had been made for men specifically.

At the end of verse 20 we read, "*But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.*" There was a deficiency in all of creation. There was a situation that was, for the first time, "not good" and God highlights that for Adam and consequently for all of us. In all of creation there was nothing, not one thing to be a compatible helper to man. What a devastating hard reality for Adam to experience. Then, by God's wonderful grace, He put Adam to sleep and crafted something that man had never seen before.

God formed another being, purposefully to be a perfect match, a perfect comparative companion and helper. That perfect match was none other than—woman. God says here that man and woman are a perfect match, and Adam happens to agree, “This, at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh...” (vs. 23) Because God had done this, because there was a deficiency in man in that it was not good that he be alone, God established an undeniable, and unchangeable principle in verse 24. *“Therefore [Because of all that previously took place] a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

The first table to have ever been invented defined from that moment forward what a table really is. The first colonial-style home to have ever been designed and built, forever defined what colonial-style homes look like. A table is a table only if it closely enough resembles the very first table, and the style of the house you build is defined not by what some might say about it, but by the style it has been patterned after. In like manner, marriage is only real marriage as it reflects the first marriage.

### **The Purpose of Marriage:**

This is where I come to the second point in my sermon; The Purpose of Marriage. God is the one who has defined what marriage is, and only those things that look like that can be defined as actual marriage. As this is the case, He then also has the right to tell us what marriage is for. In our text we see the beginning principles or the shadows set-forth of the purpose of marriage. Note that the woman’s role was to be a "help" to her husband. Marriage is for the conjoining of two fleshs into one flesh. The husband and wife are also therefore to be fruitful, multiply, subdue the earth and rule over it. In Genesis 1:28 see what God said to them once the specific events of chapter 2 occurred: *“And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”*

The New Testament fleshes out these mandates by actually expressing that these mandates and the purpose of marriage is actually more singular in principle than all of these individual things. Before we jump over there, let’s just quickly recap the Genesis 1 and 2 expressions of the purpose of marriage. A wife is to be the helper to the husband; the husband is tasked with managing the earth; the two of them together are to be populating the world, that is, to spread throughout the world; they are to subdue or overcome the world; and they are to rule over all the earth. Now from the New Testament book of Ephesians, chapter five. Verse 31 actually quotes Genesis 2:24.

*“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.*

The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit explains what the whole deal with marriage is all about. The point, the purpose of marriage is not to do all those things in Genesis 1 and 2. The purpose of marriage is to picture Christ and His Church by doing all those things and more. The husband is to sacrificially love his wife by looking to her physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. He does this by subduing the world, by having dominion over the world, and by protecting the wife from these things. Why? So that in that relationship, we as well as the world might see the love of Christ and therefore glorify Christ for that great love. The wife is to submit to the husband in all things as if she were submitting to Christ Himself. Why? So that in marriage, the Church’s relationship with Christ might be better understood. Marriage is a point of praise for the Christian concerning the love of God, as well as a critical point of teaching us how we are to live as Christians—in joyful submission in all things to our God.

If marriage were between, let’s say, multiple wives, the purpose of marriage, the picture of what marriage actually represents could cause us to think that there are multiple peoples of God. If Jesus died for His chosen Bride, but then has other brides as well, would not the picture of Christianity be nothing more than pluralism? There would then be pictured multiple roads or paths to God. This is a fundamental destruction of Christianity as whole. If a man were to be joined with another man then Christianity would be between multiple gods. The gods and demigods of Greek Mythology is all Christianity would become. No. You see marriage is more than just some legal contract to a Christian. Marriage is sacred picture of our very religion. It is not a bias or a bigoted perspective. Marriage is an integral part of who and what we are as Christians. We could no sooner give up our definition and purpose of marriage than we could give up worship and praise. We could no sooner accept an alternative definition to marriage than we could destroy the very foundational teachings of Christianity. Therefore we could no sooner give up the Biblical definition of marriage than we could give up our very breath.

Marriage has become a civil union but it’s origin was purposefully devoid of civil magistrates. So no matter how our culture might name their civil unions they are still not Christian marriages. And while we’re here on this point let me say a word to those heterosexual unions as well. Simply because you are a man and woman doesn’t mean you have a Christian marriage. The Biblically defined marriage is one in which,

regardless of any pomp and circumstance, there is in the union a man, a woman and God. This, and only this, is a real Christian marriage.

### **Our Response to Alternative Marriages:**

I have had the great pleasure of performing three weddings in more than 9 years of pastoring. I have officiated a wedding between two people that were not Christians and not members of any church some years ago. In that case, through seeking counsel from those I trusted in the Lord, I came to the conclusion that as Paul says, marriage is to be honored by all, I performed their wedding. In so doing God hindered sin in their lives through stipulations I placed upon them. They were living together and doing all that this entailed. When they came to me I told them that in order for them to be married by me, they would need to immediately stop their unbiblical life-style, live in other locations until they were wed, and undergo my marriage counseling wherein I warned them, it would be focused on their repentance and faith in Christ. They accepted my stipulations and we proceeded.

Our response to the lost community seeking marriage is to do what we can to assist them in becoming as Biblically married as possible. In the case of the man and woman who were living in adultery, they ceased their offense toward God, as far as I knew, submitted to the teaching of the Word, they followed the stipulations I gave them, and they followed a biblical model for their wedding. Fundamentally, I could not perform a homosexual union as the first stipulation would be that they cease from their sin of homosexuality. That—potential-union, could not take place because the equal stipulations I place on all people I counsel and agree to marry could not be met-and the wedding continue. So the response to this news of homosexual marriage or any other alternative unions that might come, would be a violation of equality toward those I have already counseled and married and would be, not only inconsistent, not only contrary to my beliefs, but would be the very act rejecting my faith and blasphemy to God Himself.

The response that this church must have toward those seeking an alternative marriage must equally be the same. This is an issue of our beliefs in not merely marriage, but more critically in an integral part of our very religion. To put it more bluntly, to allow homosexual marriage in this congregation would be the equivalent of a wholesale denial of our faith in Jesus Christ and His Holy Bible.

Ladies and gentlemen, here we stand, we can do no other, God save us!

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, I do want us to understand that the response to alternative marriages is just that, and conversely, our joyful response to homosexuals is profoundly different. Although we most definitely detest any other so-called marriage besides the one defined and purposed by God, we whole-heartedly are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. The homosexual man is our neighbor, the lesbian woman, is our neighbor. The bisexual or the transgender men and women of our society are our neighbors. As such God has called us to go out of our way to show them love. And love for our homosexual neighbors doesn't stand in a 2 hour line to buy Chick-Fil-A. Love for our neighbors doesn't blast a bull-horn screaming at cross-dressers "they're going to hell". Love bears all things, it believes all things, it hopes all things, it endures all things, love never ends.

Our response to those who are desiring to be joined together as a homosexual couple is to love them enough not to abuse them, but to shine for them the light of the gospel and call them, in meekness and gentleness, to repent and believe in the God of the Scriptures. To help them find their truest hope and joy not in a supreme court ruling, but to find their great joy in Christ. To be satisfied with what and how God made them and not seek to alter that beautiful image He has graciously granted them. It is our task to extend to them love, compassion, wherein the truest expression of that love and compassion is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Homosexuality, along with; covetousness, malice, envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossip, slander, hating God, insolence, haughtiness, pride, the inventing of evil, disobedience to parents, foolishness, faithlessness, heartlessness, ruthlessness, and the approval of all these things are declared to be sins in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, Paul clearly expresses this in Romans 1. You see other people's sins and our sins are to be counted, in our eyes, as no different. The lust of the heterosexual is the same as the lust of the homosexual, both are deserving of hell equally, and both have only one cure—Jesus Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joshua E. Bishop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joshua" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bishop".

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