

In the Beginning

Two Become One (Genesis 2:18-25)

Preached by Pastor Jason Tarn to HCC on February 13, 2022

Introduction

- ❖ If you've been with us since the start of the year, you know we've been walking through the book of Genesis, chapters 1-11. It's such an important book because it's about the beginning of everything. It's about our origins. It sheds so much light on God's original design for life on earth. And most relevant to us, about human life and human relationships.
 - **Today we'll consider Genesis 2 and what it reveals about the most intimate and most profound of human relationships – the marriage relationship between husband and wife.** Without Genesis 2, we'd be lost when it comes to marriage.

- ❖ **Imagine trying to put together a thousand-piece puzzle without the box in front of you.** Without the advantage of the picture on the front of the box. Where do you even start? You don't know what the finished product is supposed to look like. So you'd be lost. You'd just be staring at a mess of jumbled puzzle pieces sprawled out on the table or on the floor.
 - I think that's how many people feel about marriage. Either their marriages have fallen apart and feel like scattered pieces on the floor. Or they've seen their parent's marriage end up like that. Broken. Jumbled. In a complete mess. So many people look at marriage today and feel lost. They don't know what to do with it. They don't know what it's supposed to look like.

- ❖ **Which probably explains why many young people have delayed getting married or have abandoned the idea altogether.** Substituting marriage with cohabitation or intentional singleness. Studies have shown that, in our country, marriage rates have steadily decreased in the last sixty years. According to Pew Research, the median age for first marriage is now 30 for men and 28 for women. And the share of adults who have cohabited (lived with an unmarried partner) has now surpassed the percentage of those who have ever been married. **The trend is that less people these days are married and less even want to get married.**
 - Now I'm not here to wag a finger at anyone. I don't think it's helpful for preachers to complain about the culture and the state of things. So I'm not here to wag a finger, but I do want to point a finger to a great opportunity for the Church. To a unique mission for such a time as this. **In a marriage-stricken culture like ours – where more and more people are unfamiliar with marriage and what a healthy one looks like – this is the time to hold up the box and show them the picture on the cover.** That's what Genesis 2 is. This text provides us the picture of marriage as God intended.

- ❖ And not only is it important to preach this message in our pulpits, we need to live out this message in our own marriages. **We need Christians to get married and stay married for the right reasons.** We have the opportunity to provide our friends, colleagues, and neighbors a compelling picture of marriage. To model – not perfect marriages since none of us will ever achieve one – but healthy marriages. **And a healthy marriage is a marriage that strives to resemble the picture on the box.**
 - So that's why we're going to study Genesis 2:18-25 this morning. I have three simple points. First, we'll consider man's not-good position. Second, we'll see God's good provision. And third, we'll reflect on marriage's good purposes.

Man's Not-Good Position

- ❖ Let's begin by considering man's not-good position. This is emphasized in Genesis 2:18. But before we go there, let's review all that's led up to v18. **We saw in chapter 1 a high-level creation account where God made all things in six days.** And on the seventh, he rested.
 - **Now in Genesis 2, we don't have a rival creation account, but a more focused one – zoomed in on Day 6 and the creation of mankind.** The one creature on earth made in God's own image. So back in v7 it says, *“then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”*
 - The creature was called Adam, which is one of the Hebrew words for man. He comes from the ground, which in Hebrew is *adamah*. It's an intentional word play. **He is named in relation to the ground as a reminder that – though we are made in God's image – we are not God.** We are not the Creator. We are his creatures. We are creatures of the earth.

- ❖ So Adam is the first man and, at this point, the only man. Now we're told that at the close of each day, God surveys all that he made and calls it good. Which makes chapter 2:18 so jarring. **Because, for the first time, God calls something not good.** *“Then the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”*
 - **So the story of mankind begins with a lack – with something not good.** That's not a moral judgment. It doesn't mean something bad has entered creation. That doesn't happen until chapter 3. But it does mean that something is missing or incomplete.

- ❖ **Man alone is alone. Up to this point, everything God has created has a corresponding pair.** Heaven have the celestial bodies to complete it. The sky has the birds. The seas have fishes. The earth has land animals. But man, so far, lacks a corresponding pair. He is alone.
 - **Even God – being one – is not alone. He enjoys a Triune existence.** There is perfect, eternal fellowship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has never been alone. But man, at this point, is alone and that is not good.

- ❖ **So God says he will make a helper fit for him.** That word “fit” means another creature that pairs well with him. That corresponds to him. A creature that complements him. One who is his equal. And I do want to stress that. **This corresponding pair will be Adam's equal.** We might miss that because we get tripped up by that word “helper”.
 - **In our common parlance, helper can carry the connotation of someone inferior or subservient to the one being helped.** But, in Scripture, that is completely not the case. Out of the 19 instances in the OT, this word is used 16 times in reference to God. God is our help. He's our helper (cf. Ex 18:4; Deut 33:7; 1 Sam 7:12).

- ❖ We read that word “helper” and assume it means the woman lacks something. **But in the Bible, it means that she contributes something unique to the marriage. Something the husband lacks without her.** A husband and a wife have distinct but complementary contributions to the marriage. Which makes them equals and fit for each other.

- Friends, we need to let Scripture define itself. Let's not read definitions into biblical terms and allow the Bible to interpret its own terms. And according to Scripture, a helper is not a subservient role. It's honestly a God-like role. For God is a helper.

- ❖ Now let's think about some of implications. **Think about how profound it is for Adam to be described as being alone – even while he enjoyed perfect communion with God, unencumbered by sin.** This is all before the Fall, before the curse of sin. So he walked and talked with God in perfect fellowship. And yet, in a profound sense, he was alone.
 - **Now in no way should that suggest that God is not enough.** That God is unable to satisfy the soul. There are countless passages we could turn to that declare the LORD to be all-satisfying, all-sufficient, more than enough for us (cf. Ps 16:11; 21:6).

- ❖ **But v18 is saying that we were created for human companionship.** *“No man is an island entire of itself.”* (John Donne) No human being will thrive in isolation. That's why solitary confinement inevitably breaks the human mind. We were made for human companionship. For human community. To be utterly alone is a not-good position to be in.
 - I think the experience of many during this pandemic has confirmed this biblical truth. **The forced isolation that many had to endure – especially those who live alone – was almost unbearable.** It reminds us how much we are wired for community. No matter how much of an introvert we think we are. **No one will thrive in isolation.**
 - That's why it's so important for us to be a church community that truly welcomes and draws others out of their isolation – out of their not-good position – into an inclusive community where we can thrive together. Where we can be a people created in the image of a triune, communal God.

- ❖ **Now in God's providence, for a good majority of people, he additionally calls us into a particular form of community – an exclusive one called marriage.** Not everyone is called to marry. Jesus was not called to marry. Neither was the Apostle Paul. So marriage is *not* the only way to address the human condition of aloneness.
 - But it clearly is one way. And you could even make the argument that it's the normative way. **But the point is that, according to v18, one reason marriage was designed and instituted by God was to address our human sense of aloneness.** To meet that desire for human companionship that we all have.

- ❖ I don't imagine this to be a revolutionary truth for you. You probably just assumed this to be true. **That people get married because they long for human companionship.** A life partner. A best friend. Someone to grow old with. I want to point out that the Bible affirms that. That's a reason – not the only one – but still a biblical reason to want to get married.
 - **That's why it's important, if you and your significant other are considering marriage, to make time to evaluate the relationship.** Get some counseling. Determine how well you two fit. Do you complement one another? Do you actually enjoy each other's company? If marriage is for companionship, then it's important to be sure that you're a good match.

God's Good Provision

- ❖ So man's not-good position is that he has been, up to v18, alone. Now let's consider our next point and God's good provision. **Just as the LORD always does, he will fill the lack.** He will provide for the need. Now what he does initially is a bit confusing for both us and Adam. He essentially takes him to the zoo. The LORD parades a bunch of animals before him to see what he would name them. Now there are two purposes here. **First, Adam is beginning to exercise the dominion he was given over creation.** By naming them, he's demonstrating his authority over the animals.
 - **But second, and more importantly, the point of parading all the animals is to prove that none of them are fit for Adam.** God goes through the trouble of showing Adam all the animals – knowing there isn't one fit for him – so that Adam will recognize and respect the uniqueness and wonder of woman.

- ❖ Look back at the end of v20. *“But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So 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.”* Putting him to sleep is important since God is about to perform surgery. **But the reason is more than just medical – it's theological.** Putting him to sleep is not merely an anesthetic. It's a declaration of God's initiative to provide for man. Think of how God put Abraham, to sleep before establishing a covenant with him and his offspring. That was to highlight the sovereign grace of God. **Sovereign grace is likewise on display in his provision of a helper fit for Adam.** Adam didn't contribute a thing.

- ❖ Now notice how God takes one of his ribs, and in v22 we're told what he does with it. *“And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.”* **It's an important observation to note that the woman (who is later named Eve) is not made from the ground like Adam and all other living creatures.** In v19 we're told that, out of the ground, God created all the beasts of the earth and birds of the heavens.
 - So why is Eve created differently? Why is she made from Adam's side? It's too easy for someone to assume that Eve is dependent on Adam. Subservient to him. Helpless without him. **Why didn't God create her from the dust of the ground like Adam and every other creature?** Wouldn't that have better communicated their equality?

- ❖ Good question. **But if you think about it, creating Eve from Adam was the best way to convey their equal worth and nature.** To be created from Adam's rib and not the ground like all other creatures, makes it clear that the woman – and the woman alone – shares something with Adam that no other creature can lay claim to. That being the image of God. **Eve alone is Adam's equal because they alone share the image of God.** If she was made out of the ground like all the other creatures, then this point may have been lost.
 - The Puritan commentator, **Matthew Henry**, has a famous quote on the significance of Eve being made from a rib in Adam's side. Henry says that the woman is, *“not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”*

- ❖ Some people may have a hard time seeing this – but not Adam. When he woke up and saw Eve, he didn't see a creature unequal to him. But one made of him. Made for him. To be suitable partner. Listen to Adam in v23. **You can hear the relief in his voice when he sees Eve.** He was getting a bit worried when there was not found a helper fit for him among the animals. *“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.””*
 - **Adam is celebrating the similarity and equality that he shares with the woman.** Earlier we noted how Adam is identified in relation to the ground (*adamah*). But here, Adam identifies himself in relation to the woman. He uses a different Hebrew word for man (*ish*). He's saying, “She shall be called *ishah*, because she was taken out of *ish*.” The language conveys how perfect they are for each other.

- ❖ Church, this may sound basic to you. Like elementary truths. *“In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”* (1:27) **God makes a man, and his corresponding pair is a woman.** Like we said earlier, we see corresponding pairs all throughout creation. The male-female pairing sounds simple enough.
 - But that's no longer the case today. **More and more people in our culture are pushing back against the male-female binary.** They would argue that another man can be a suitable partner for a man. That another man can be a helper fit for him. Or they would reject the male-female binary altogether and claim that gender is a social construct. They would say it's oppressive to force people into one of two categories – you're either male or female. Proponents of gender fluidity would claim that you could fluctuate back and forth between the two. Or you could be neither.

- ❖ Friends, these are complex issues. Sensitive issues. Issues we would rather avoid. Hoping no one ever asks us what we think. **But I hope you see how these issues are completely relevant to biblical truth – to the picture on the front of the box.** It's hard to talk about this. It could land us in trouble. But many of our neighbors – fellow human beings made in the image of God – are struggling with their sexuality. They are lost and confused.
 - Now I'm sure many would disagree and say they've found their answer and they're living their truth. But when you compare the lives their living and the relationships they've forged to the picture on the Genesis 2 box, it's apparent that it doesn't match God's good design and his good provision for all of mankind.
 - **If we truly love our neighbors as ourselves, then is it love to remain silent when you see someone building a life that will not lead to the kind of everlasting joy that God intends but rather to perpetual frustration?** Love speaks. Love warns. Love does not condemn. Love will instead try to offer a positive, compelling picture of God's good design for sexuality and marriage.

Marriage's Good Purposes

- ❖ Church, this is where we need to be clear on what marriage is, on what it's supposed to look like, and what it's intended for. **If we're going to engage the culture on these issues, then we need to realize that our best argument is not going to be a sermon.**

- ❖ It's not going to a book or podcast. It's going to be our own marriages – our own example. So let's consider our third point – marriage's good purposes. So that we can live it out ourselves. This is addressed in v24. Here the narrator makes an aside, stepping out of the narrative for a moment to draw out a theological implication.
 - *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* That “therefore” to start the verse signals that you can't fully understand what marriage is without the background context of Genesis 1-2.

- ❖ **This means every marriage is intended to serve the same purposes behind why God gave Eve to be married to Adam.** If you seek to fulfill them in your own marriage, then you can experience and exemplify the goodness God intended from the beginning.
 - Now based on Genesis 1-2, I can see three good purposes for marriage: **(1)** to address that not-good state of aloneness by binding you in a one-flesh union with another; **(2)** to serve as the context wherein you can fulfill God's first command to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth; and **(3)** to function as a stage upon which you and your spouse can uniquely reflect God's glory as his image bearers.

- ❖ **Let's consider how marriage addresses our aloneness by establishing a one-flesh union.** Look back at v24. It describes marriage as a leaving and cleaving. A man leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife. Implying a change of relationships and a change of loyalties.
 - **Prior to marriage, your closest relationship is with your parents regardless if you feel close to them or not.** We're not talking about how you feel towards your parents. We're talking about God's design. In his created order, you're born into a family and your first loyalty is to your parents. You shall honor your father and your mother.

- ❖ **But once married, that one-flesh union supplants the bond between parent and child.** Your primary loyalty shifts to your spouse. That does mean you abandon all loyalties and ties to your parents. In some cultures and families, the metaphorical umbilical cord remains strong. And that's not necessarily a bad thing – as long as it doesn't strangle the marriage.
 - But the point is that a one-flesh union is formed. **From that moment forth, till death do you part, the Lord never sees you alone.** He always sees you in union with your spouse. In a profound sense, you are never alone. Where you go; whatever you do; you are going there and doing it in union with your spouse.

- ❖ **Again I want to stress the importance of young couples contemplating marriage to seek wise counsel from friends, family, and church leaders.** To help you determine if you're compatible. A suitable match. Because you'll be spending the rest of your lives together in the most personal, most intimate, most comprehensive relationship on earth – a one-flesh union. It's one of the most important choices you'll ever make. You want to choose well.

- ❖ **And those of us who are married – who have already entered a one-flesh union with another – we need to be reminded of the significance of that choice.** We can get so busy with life, with work, with kids – that we lose sight of this profound purpose for why we got married. **Sadly, it's possible to still experience that not-good aloneness *even* in marriage.**
 - If that's the state of your marriage, then it's time to repent. To turn around and make a change. To reprioritize what's important in life. To rearrange your schedule. To make time for your spouse. It is not good for you to be alone in marriage. God called you into marriage to address that very state.

- ❖ Now this idea of becoming one flesh has many layers of meaning. And one layer is to understand it in physical terms. Becoming one flesh with your spouse is what we experience in the marriage bed through sexual intimacy. **What's stressed here is that second purpose in marriage – to serve as the context wherein you fulfill God's first command to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth.**
 - That means sex is a part of God's good created order. It's not a result of the Fall. Notice in v25 that they're naked but not ashamed. This is the only place in the OT where nakedness is mentioned without reference to humiliation. **Because sex is a good gift from God.** But it needs to be enjoyed in the right context – in a one-flesh union between a husband and wife. If you try to enjoy it in any other context, you'll find that a good thing can have harmful effects. **The right context for a fire is in the fireplace.** Try to enjoy it anywhere else, and you risk burning down your house.

- ❖ Now let's be clear. God did give the good gift of sex in marriage for the sake of the pleasure it brings to the couple. But let's not lose sight of the first command that God gives mankind, which is to be fruitful and multiply. **We're talking about the purpose of procreation.** It's just as important as pleasure.
 - The fact that God designed marriage, and sex within it, to normally have the potential to produce offspring – babies that are completely helpless and need you to sacrifice what's good for you to serve what's good for them – **it reveals that sex and marriage were never designed to help you serve the self.** They were designed to be the very context where you learn to serve the other.

- ❖ **That's why children should never be viewed as an imposition on your lifestyle or a restriction of your freedom.** They should be viewed as good gifts. And every couple should be open to receiving God's gift, if he so wills.
 - **Now having said that, I want to stress that we must not idolize child-bearing and make it the ultimate purpose of marriage.** Those struggling with infertility are not experiencing marriage-lite (a lesser version). Their marriages can be equally fulfilling because the ultimate purpose of marriage is not children. It's the glory of God.

- ❖ **That leads to that third good purpose for marriage – to function as a public stage upon which you and your spouse can uniquely reflect God's glory.** Remember, the man and the woman were created to mirror the image of God. To reflect his glory to the rest of creation.

- ❖ Just think about how a husband and wife in a one-flesh union mirrors God's image in a unique and profound way. Earlier, we said God is never alone. He eternally exists as one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Within the Godhead, there are three persons in one being. Or another way to say it – **three persons perfectly bound in one union.**
 - Now what is marriage but two persons bound together in a one-flesh union? It's clearly not an exact representation. But on earth, it's the closest we've got. God created marriage to be the one human relationship on earth that most closely resembles his Triune existence.

- ❖ **The point is that marriage was never intended to be an end in itself. It was designed from the beginning to be a signpost pointing to a greater reality.** Marriage was meant to reflect the glory of God. The Israelites knew that. They read Genesis 1-2. So they got married and gave their sons and daughters to marriage. But for thousands of years, no one knew what it was about God that was being reflected in their marriages. Marriage remained a mystery.
 - Until the Incarnation. Until the Son of God took on flesh. And the people of God came to realize that their God is a Trinity. And that their marriages are intended to reflect this mysterious aspect of God's very nature. What an honor!

- ❖ And then the Death and Resurrection of the Son of God, revealed that mystery even further. So we read, in **Ephesians 5:32**, the Apostle Paul reflecting on the death and resurrection of Christ. After quoting Genesis 2:24 in reference to marriage, Paul says, *"This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church."*
 - **Marriage refers to Christ and the Church.** In other words, it's a picture of the gospel. You have Jesus (in all of his goodness and holiness) and us (in all of our sin and evil). We couldn't be more different. **But when he died for our sins and we put all our hope and trust in him – we are united with Christ in perfect oneness.**

- ❖ **And now every married couple has the chance to treat their marriage like a public stage where they can reenact the drama of the gospel, giving glory to the God of the gospel.** Sure, your spouse is different than you. And those differences sometimes get on your nerve. You wish they could be more like you. But it's actually because you are so different – when you experience and enjoy oneness in marriage – you're giving testimony to the gospel of Christ and the Church.

- ❖ So live out your marriage for others to see. Not your perfection. Because, again, you'll never achieve a perfect marriage. **But you can strive for and enjoy a healthy one. One that points people to a reality and relationship greater than the two of you.** One that offers a dim but true reflection of God's glorious nature and his glorious gospel.
 - Let's do this for the sake of those on the verge of giving up on their marriage or for those who currently have no interest in marriage. Let's hold up the Genesis 2 box of what marriage looks like – enhanced to greater clarity by the gospel.