

Sermon Genesis 2 18 25 19th S af Pent S B

Sermon: 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Genesis 2:18-25 (v. 18)

Theme: God's gift of marriage

Goal: Jesus came to restore the original good plan of God for man and woman.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: God always has good plans for us. But we don't recognize them and follow our own way. We think we know better about ourselves than God. What are the consequences of this behaviour? We have experienced several times how much it hurts our body and spirit when we go astray, far from God's good plans for us.

This story is old. It began shortly after God had created everything and "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

But the man and the woman thought they knew better than God and they followed their own way, which eventually led them out of the paradise, facing sufferings and pain.

The same happens with God's good gift of marriage. We have the account of the first wedding in our text. As every wedding party, it was a day of joy and gladness! Not many guests were present: maybe some lions, cheetahs, monkeys, birds... maybe the choir of angels sang... Everything was fine and perfect, with the Lord Himself being the minister and blessing Adam and Eve. What happened to this original institution of the family? Men oppressing their wives and abusing them; other women added to the first one; divorce, not just once, but several times; other kind of relationship than a man and a woman... What God had created very good became a mess and many are even afraid to marry. Is there any hope? Can we go back to the very first plan of God for man and woman? Of course there is hope!

Jesus Christ restored the good relationship between humankind and the Creator by His sacrifice on the cross, reconciling us with God again. And He restored the good relationship among people, between man and woman as well, as He preached “love each other as I love you!” We are not in the restored paradise yet, but with our heart filled with God’s love and with the presence of Jesus in our lives we try to live according to God’s good will in our man-woman relationship as well. When things don’t go that well, we learn from Jesus to forgive each other and to begin again. And, step by step, blessed by God, we can enjoy a “little corner” of the paradise in the family relationship. Don’t allow the evil to transform your marriage in a hell, but submit yourself to God in love, following His ways, and you will enjoy big things in your family!

Let’s go back to God’s original plan as written in our text and take strength from it for our family life.

## I – Partnership

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” I think we all like to have our own time and to be alone for a while; but not for ever. We need people around us to talk, to share, to help, to listen to and to speak to... The human being is a social one. Even that everything God had created was very good, something was missing. All the animals had their partners, male and female. “But for Adam no suitable helper was found.” There wasn’t any beautiful gorilla female which would fit Adam... And so God decided to create a suitable partner to Adam. A Commentary wrote: *“The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor 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.”* (Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*).

This commentary summarizes how the relationship between man and woman shall be. Is it always so? No. Even as new creature in Christ, making all efforts to live according to God's will, we fail many times. We always need to come back asking for God's forgiveness and strength to have a new beginning every day – in all the aspects of our Christian life and also in our family relationship.

To marry is not a law. Some people don't find the suitable helper, or prefer to remain single, as the Apostle Paul was. These situations are exceptions and these people need special strength from God to manage their loneliness. The church and the extended family play an important role in supporting these people with friendship and help when needed.

## II – Happiness

I like the reaction of Adam when God introduced Eve to him: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” You cannot imagine that he said this in a sad and bored way: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” NO! He was excited! He had now someone to talk with, to share, to work with, to travel, to care for and to be cared. His eyes shined and sparkled!

The happiness we enjoy on our wedding day should not fade. Remember it often. This is one of the reasons why we remember the Wedding Anniversaries in prayer: we pray that God would preserve husband and wife faithful to each other and help them in the difficult days that every couple has to face due to sicknesses, lack of respect and love, too much work, apathy, depression and other reasons. Every couple knows where the shoes hurt. Jesus invites us to remember that “at the beginning of creation God made them male and female... Therefore what God has joined together let man not separate” (Mark 10:6). Problems among man and wife have to be solved

under God's guidance and forgiveness. I know that this is not always possible "because our hearts are hard" as Jesus said in our Gospel. The same Jesus has softened our hearts with His love and forgiveness; and these gifts have to be shared with our partner. Forgiveness shall always prevail, even in a case that leads to divorce.

### III – Pleasure

Some religious people deny pleasure among man and woman in the marriage. They say this is sinful. NO! Pleasure in the man-wife relationship in the matrimony is in God's plan. "For these reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Many other passages of the Scripture highlight the joy and pleasure a man and a woman can enjoy as husband and wife.

Children are in God's plan as well: "Be fruitful and increase in number" (Genesis 1:28). We have to receive them as God's blessing and bring them to Jesus, as the parents did in the Gospel of today. Interesting to note that the episode of the children brought to Jesus is immediately after the text that speaks about marriage and divorce. They are fragile and dependant and they need their parents' love and care. They are those who suffer most in a case of divorce. – Children are not always given to a couple; we don't know why. But we have to be sure that God has other plans for those who cannot bear children. There are many needy children to be cared for and other people to share love and kindness.

Conclusion: Look to marriage as God's gift: if you are married, if you are single, if you are widow; if you have children, if you don't have... In Christ we are all a big family to share love and fellowship with our fellows and with our little ones. Amen.