Preaching Series: The Christ-Centered Family
Sermon Title: Having a Godly Marriage

Text: Genesis 2:18-25 -- Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 So out of the ground the Lord God 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. 20 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. 21 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. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 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." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Introduction: In the last two messages, we've looked at what the Bible says about a godly husband and a godly wife. Today, we're going to consider what Scripture says about ***the foundation of a godly marriage***. We all know that marriage has fallen on hard times, particularly in the past 40-50 years. **According to statistics from Divorce.com, as of 2022, there are 6.2 marriages per 1,000 people here in America. At the same time, there are 2.4 divorces per 1,000 people.** You say, "**That's not too bad. Only 39% of marriages are failing**!" That number is skewed in a positive direction, however, because 7% of the U. S. adult population now chooses to forgo marriage in favor of living together. It seems like either way you look at it, the institution of marriage is not fairing very well.

Those of us who have chosen marriage understand that the merging of two independent and often self-centered individuals creates many new challenges, some of which are quite difficult to overcome! **Ann Landers** says, "***A successful marriage is not a gift, but an achievement!***" Learning to love our mates the way God loves us is not easy. This is the selfless, sacrificial kind of love that is reflected in our Lord's unconditional treatment of us (**See 1 Corinthians 13:4-8**). Often the simpler route during difficult times is just to give up and get out. This reminds me of the experience of a priest named **Father O'Grady.** One Lord's day he was saying his goodbyes to the parishioners after the morning service when **Mary Clancey** came up to him in tears. "***What's bothering you, my dear***?" asked Father O'Grady. "***Oh, Father, I've got terrible news***," replied Mary. "***Me husband passed***

away last night." "***Oh, Mary***!" said the good father. "***That's terrible. Tell me, did he have any last words?***" "***Yes, Father, he did***," Mary replied sheepishly. "***He said, 'Mary, please put the gun down!***'" Not all marriages turn out the way we expect them to when we say, "**I do**."

I would like to invite you to join me in a study of marriage from **Genesis 2:18-25** as we look at what a godly marriage looks like as we continue in our series, **The Christ-Centered Family**. As you turn there in your Bibles, permit me to briefly review the previous 14 verses of this chapter. **Genesis 2:4ff** is not a second creation story as some people think. Rather **it is a close-up look at Day Six in the creation story**. God had created a perfect world where ***there were no weeds*** (*This seems to be the best translation of the word "shrub" in* **verse 5***. These came after the fall*—**See Genesis 3:18**) ***and no plants of the field***. **And that's because, as the original gardener, God chose to grow His garden in Eden** -- **Genesis 2:8 -- And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden**"). It wasn't until after the fall that Adam was kicked out of the garden and forced to work in the fields to produce food. Before that, every kind of food that man needed was already growing in the garden—**Genesis 2:9 -- And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food**). Since it had not rained on the earth (**this did not happen until Genesis 7:10**), and no man had yet worked the ground because it was not necessary, God watered the earth from streams beneath the surface. In this perfect environment, God formed man from the same substance as the earth, the dust of the ground, and placed him in **Eden**, which is taken from the word '**delight**'. God named two of the trees located there. They were "***the tree of life***" and "***the tree of the knowledge of good and evil***." Then God put Adam in the garden to work it and keep it (**See Genesis 2:15**) just as He had. Lastly, God issued a test that was meant to show Adam's loyalty and contentedness in God's provision for his needs. "**You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die** (**Genesis 2:16-17**)." Only after all of this, did God introduce marriage and tell us something about its purpose, first participants and His plan for it.

The Purpose of Marriage (**Genesis 2:18-20 -- Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 So out of the ground the Lord God 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. 20 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**). **At the end of**

the 5th day, God called everything that He had made good. Still, He wouldn't refer to it as 'very good' until the end of the 6th day when God created man and woman and gave them dominion over the earth. When God made Adam, he was alone in the world. It's doubtful that he realized his situation, however, until he had named the wild animals. In doing so, he noticed that God had created them male and female to reproduce after their own kind (**Genesis 1:24 -- And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds).** Yet when he looked around, Adam found no such suitable helper for himself. **THIS BRINGS US TO GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MARRIAGE**. In making Eve for Adam, God was supplying the final piece of the puzzle that would allow mankind to fulfill its God-given mandate and thus bring glory to Him. As I said last week, the term '***helper***' here used to describe Eve does not imply that in some way she was inferior to Adam. This is simply not true. Just like him, ***she was made in God's image*** (**See Genesis 1:26-27**), ***thus declaring her worth to be incalculable***. Rather, what we learn from these verses is that Adam was in some way incomplete without Eve. She was vital if he was going to be able to fulfill the command given to him by God. What do I mean? Well, let's state the obvious first.

- **Without Eve, Adam could not reproduce after his own kind**. The phrase "***Be fruitful and multiply***" is another way of saying, "***Have a lot of babies***." God did not create Adam with the ability to accomplish this on his own. Therefore, the woman was an absolute necessity if they were going to obey God's command. As the maker and architect of humanity, He determined that it would require a man and a woman to make a baby and to raise one. Adam and Eve were expected to care for and train their children so that they could repeat the same process over and over again and fill the earth.
- **Without Eve, Adam could not rule over animals.** Mankind's rule was to be a benevolent one reflecting the very character and nature of God. **As Adam and Eve multiplied, their descendants were meant to come alongside and help care for and be effective stewards of every living creature on land and sea by caring for the earth and all the creatures in it**. **By the way, this means that, as Christians, it ought to matter to us what kind of things are being done to our environment. I'm not saying we should worship the earth, or take the view as some do that mankind needs to be done away with so that Mother Earth can survive, but we certainly should be doing our best to care for our planet and making a difference where we can.** Did you know that a garbage truck's worth of plastic enters the world's oceans every minute? All told, humanity has dumped up to 14 million tons of plastic pollution into the seas, and bits of it can be found from the water's surface down to its most extreme depths. You wouldn't know it looking over the side of a ship, since much of the waste has

been broken down by waves and ultraviolet light into microplastics, particles often as small as a millimeter wide. But when researchers in 2015 analyzed more than a million pieces of trash in the Pacific, 99.9 percent of it was plastic. Scientists have no idea how long that will take to degrade — perhaps hundreds of years, if ever. By 2050, according to the World Economic Forum, there will be more plastic, by weight, in the ocean than fish. Mankind is to be a good manager (steward) of God's creation. And this means that we should care about matters like this. We should be asking the question, "**Are the choices we make improving the environment for the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and every living creature that walks upon the ground or systematically destroying it**? (**Review: The Purpose of Marriage – (1) to multiply and (2) to become benevolent rulers**)

The Participants in Marriage (**Genesis 2:21-23 -- 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. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 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 had only been around for a short time, yet it took the naming of the animals to help him realize that there was not found a suitable helper for him like there was for every other beast of the field. So, God put Adam to sleep, removed a rib and, after closing up the place with flesh, fashioned his wife from it. God presented this new creation to Adam and he was so overjoyed that he sang the **first love song**: "***This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh***." You may have heard of the phrase '***flesh and blood***' referring to a member of someone's family. This is how the phrase is used hereafter (**2 Samuel 5:1 – Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh**). Adam then gives the new creation her name---***Ishshah*** (which is the feminine form of the word for man, '***Ish***'). <u>This is her name because she was made from man</u>. **With this act, God established marriage**. Notice that it has been from the very beginning a union between a man and a woman. This is God's providential design <u>based on His purpose for mankind</u>…to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it. Today some people advocate for same-sex marriage. **While I am not without sympathy for those who struggle with romantic attraction to others of the same gender, there is simply no good defense from the Bible for the practice of homosexuality or same-sex marriages**. Two women do not make a marriage and neither do two men for the simple reason that God did not design it in this way. It requires both a man and a woman to make a baby and to raise one so that the child will be able to repeat the process and, in so doing, help subdue the earth

and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and every living creature which walks upon the ground. (**Review: The Purpose of Marriage – (1) to multiply and (2) to become benevolent rulers; The Participants of marriage – a man and a woman**)

The Plan for Marriage (**Genesis 2:24-25 -- Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed**). After laying out the PURPOSE of marriage and the PARTICIPANTS in marriage, God now reveals His PLAN for marriage. It involves two steps.

- **LEAVING**. God's design for marriage is that a man would leave his father and mother. It means to '***depart from or forsake***' his parents, though not in the negative sense with which we usually associate this word. **This is to take place because he is joining his bride to begin a new family**. As the head of this new family, it will fall to him to do what his parents have done for him over the past many years. This includes **PROVIDING** for his new family, **PROTECTING** them and **NURTURING** in them a love for God and others.
- **CLEAVING**. God has called us to '**hold fast**' to one another in marriage (**For an example of the word usage see 2 Samuel 23:10 -- Eleazar rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clung to the sword – it was as if his hand was frozen to the sword).** Here in **Genesis 2:24**, the idea is that we become glued together so that what God has joined together, no man would dare to separate (**See Mark 10:9**). **In the husband-and-wife relationship, their loyalty and affection are meant to be directed toward each other and not anyone else**. Included in this term is the idea of physical intimacy. **Note verse 25 for a moment**. "**The man and his wife were both naked and felt no shame**." In other words, they had nothing to hide from God or each other including their physical bodies. In God's plan, a sexual relationship between a man and a woman is meant for marriage only (**Hebrews 13:4 – Let the marriage bed be undefiled**). In the morally perfect world that God had created before the fall, we see God's ideal expressed for marriage. It isn't until after the fall in **Genesis 3** that we find all sorts of sexual deviancy. (**1**) **Genesis 4:19** – polygamy; (**2**) **Genesis 16:4** – Adultery; (**3**) **Genesis 19:5** – Homosexuality – 'to know' does not mean to build a relationship, but to be sexually intimate. This was their sin (**See Jude 7**); (**4**) **Genesis 34:1-2** – Rape and fornication; (**5**) **Genesis 38:15** – incest; and (**6**) **Genesis 39:6-7** – Seduction. THESE ACTS ARE THE RESULT OF PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE TO IGNORE GOD'S PLAN FOR MARRIAGE IN ORDER TO SATISFY THEIR OWN SINFUL PASSIONS. IT HAS NOT BEEN THIS WAY FROM THE BEGINNING!

Let me conclude with some practical suggestions regarding what you can do to "cleave" to your spouse:

- **Never Stop Dating Your Mate**. The things you do to win a person are the same things you do to keep him or her.
- **Learn to Build Bridges, not Walls**. Don't let resentment or unforgiveness build up. Deal with it right away.
- **Initiate Intimacy**. The Apostle Paul thought it was so important that he warned that we should not stop being intimate unless for an agreed upon time, for the purpose of prayer and with the knowledge that the couple should resume sexual activity lest they be tempted (**See 1 Corinthians 7: 3-5**).
- **Examine Yourself** – The only person you can change is you. **Psalm 119:59** talks about the importance of self-examination when it says, "**I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes**."
- **Grow in Christ Together** – When we acknowledge His rightful place in the marriage, it has the best possible chance of becoming a picture of His relationship with the church.

Conclusion: The further we move away from God's ideal for marriage, the more divorces and broken families we see. Certainly, this has been true here in America. Listen to this: **At the turn of the 20th century, preachers were very concerned because the divorce rate because it had climbed to 10%. Today, in the early stages of the 21st century, it is slightly over 50%.** What will it be in another hundred years? A teenage girl was examining her grandmother's wedding ring. The girl said, "***Wow, what heavy and cumbersome rings those were fifty years ago***." The grandmother replied, "***That's true, but don't forget that in my day they were made to last a lifetime.***" YES – I AGREE! MARRIAGE IS MADE TO LAST A LIFETIME AND IT CAN, IF YOU UNDERSTAND GOD'S PURPOSE FOR IT AND FOLLOW GOD'S PLAN.