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Series: Together For God's Glory
Message: The Greatness of Marriage

Transcribed Message
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Genesis 2:18-25

I read an article just this last week in the Wall Street Journal. It was entitled "The Gay Marriage Docket Stays Busy in 2015." The article began in this way: "Barely into the new year there are no signs of slowdown on the gay marriage front. On Friday, the Federal Appeals Court for the Fifth Circuit heard arguments in a case challenging bans on same-sex marriage in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. On Monday a U.S. District Court judge ruled South Dakota's ban unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in June 2013 striking down the Federal Defense of Marriage Act set off a flurry of activity on state-level bans. In 2014 alone, actions by federal courts doubled the number of states with legal recognition of gay marriage to 35 from 17 the previous year. U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle kicked off 2015 with a New Year's Day order clarifying that the earlier ruling striking down Florida same-sex marriage ban should be interpreted as applying statewide, making the state the 36th to legalize gay marriage and the first of 2015." That article was obviously written before Friday. On Friday, the Supreme Court of the United States made the decision to hear what will no doubt be the definitive case in defining what the court believes is marriage as they understand it and see it in this year 2015.

So, while that article speaks to this amazing change that we're seeing sweep across our country, a change which I described last week in our introduction to this little series on marriage as a tsunami of change, the reality is that it now is in the hands of the nine justices of the United States of America and they're going to make a ruling as they see it as to what they believe constitutes a marriage. I believe, however, that the only way we can as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ define and understand marriage is if we first of all understand the purpose of God in even creating this institution of marriage. So, what I'd like to do this morning in our big idea is to go back to Genesis 1 and 2. There we're going to see that there can be no doubt that God values marriage. In Genesis 1 and 2, we learned that God is doing something great. We learned that God is doing something special. We learned that God is doing something of eternal importance. I believe that marriage was created and instituted by God. It is not a result

of anything that men or women have thought up. It's not something that any courts will determine and decide by way of a definition. It is something that as followers of Christ we're to come to the Creator of this wonderful institution and we're going to want to realize what is it that He had intended and purposed for what we refer to as the marriage relationship.

Very quickly by way of review. Three things from last week. We said first of all that the Bible is going to have to be our foundation and that certainly holds true as we think of what I have just referenced by way of where we are headed as a country. It is going to have to begin with God. If it begins with God, then we're going to go back and we're going to realize that He owns it all, that it's all His, that He is the one who has made it and created it. He is the source of our authority, and if that is true, then what we are called upon to do is to submit to that truth and to submit to that authority.

Secondly, we talked about the fact that every marriage needs the gospel. Every marriage needs the gospel. Grace, in other words, is a must in every marriage. I've got a problem that I can't fix. You've got the same problem that you can't fix. The Bible calls it sin. Sin has separated us from God. I can't fix myself in that regard. You can't fix yourself. So what we need is to recognize that all of us are messed up and what we need is somebody to step in and rescue us. We need somebody to step in and deliver us and to be our Savior.

Then, the third thing we talked about was the fact that God's glory is of first importance. God's glory is of first importance. When you see this in the right way, when you began here with the reality that it is the glory of God that is first and foremost, then it seems to me that everything else falls into place. The very words that Jesus said when He said seek first the kingdom of God, and when you seek first the kingdom of God, everything else falls into place. Everything else finds its rightful place of priority in your life. We live every day to the glory of God. I can't impress upon you enough that if every one of us – married, single, or otherwise – lived every day captured by the moment of “is what I'm about to say, is what I'm about to do, is my attitude one that will bring glory to God”. We all know how life would be looking much different than it often is when we put ourselves first. So those three things just to get us caught up from what we looked at last week.

What I would like to do this morning is go back to Genesis 1 and 2. We want to see the divine design that is brought before us in these chapters. We want to learn together about God's created intent for marriage. Those two words are very specific to what we want to do. God's created intent. What is it that God intended for marriage to do in our lives? What was His purpose in that regard? So we're going to go back. We're going to go back into the garden once it's created and we're going to go back into that account in Genesis chapter 1. So let's do that.

As we go to Genesis 1, the first thing I want you to see is that as you read this chapter, you quickly discover that God's doing a work of filling and forming. God is doing a work of filling and forming. There's a pattern that develops as you read Genesis 1. It begins with those very familiar words: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the earth." Those words introduce us then to what it is that God is going to do in establishing this pattern of His creative work. The rest of this chapter unfolds in such a way that we see that God moves from emptiness to forming things which then fill the earth. There's emptiness. There's forming. Then, there's filling. Let there be light and there was light. Let there be light and light fills in the darkness. The darkness is gone because God has formed and created the light and it now fills the earth. There is going to be, as you read through this chapter, God shaping things, God dividing things, God separating things.

That's the pattern that as you read this Genesis 1 account you see. God does all of these things by means of pronouncements. So there's pattern, and then there's pronouncements. God is speaking in this opening chapter. He says it and it happens. He commands it and it comes to pass. God is the dominant subject matter of Genesis 1. You read through these verses and you realize very quickly that God fills every verse. God is referenced in some form or another over 40 times in Genesis chapter 1. He very much wants us to understand that He is the one who's doing the filling and the forming. He's the one who is patterning His creative work after this certain way and He's doing it by means of pronouncements. All the way through this opening chapter of Genesis, we see this repeated pattern that follows these specific repeated pronouncements.

Then, when you get to the third day, we have an additional thought and God says at the end of every day after the third day "and it was good". And it was good. And it

was good. When you see the pattern and you see the pronouncements, it is God saying “let there be, it was so, and it is good”. Let there be, and it was so, and it is good. This is the language of Genesis 1.

I think this is very important because God's work of filling and forming then is going to culminate in the crown of all creation. God's work of filling and forming is going to find its culmination then secondly in God's crowning creation, which is of course the man and the woman. I want to begin by looking at this sixth day in the creation of the man and the woman by having you notice first of all that there is a surprising declaration that God makes. In fact, we're going to note there's a couple of them. There is a surprising declaration and I want you to notice with me in verse 26 of the first chapter: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” Just when we're getting used to the rhythmic pattern of “let there be, it was so, and it is good,” just when we'd expected that God would do that again, the pattern is broken. We have something else in its place. We don't have that pronouncement. We have God acting and doing something different when He begins by saying, “Now let Us make man in Our image.”

Just look over chapter 2 verse 7 for a moment: “Then the Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground, and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” So it's different in the culmination of His creation, in the crowning achievement of this creative week when God wants to create the man, He does something different than He had done in the previous days. He doesn't speak and create man. There is within the Godhead this decision that man will be created out of the dust of the ground.

Go back to chapter 1 verse 28: “And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” God intends for the crown of His creation, the man and the woman, to do the very thing that He has been doing in the previous days. He is going to charge them with filling and forming. He created a big world and God wants this big world filled and formed. He is

going to entrust this responsibility of filling the earth and subduing it to the man and to the woman.

Here is the second surprising declaration that I know all of you are aware of in chapter 2 and verse 18. The second surprising declaration is verse 18: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'" It takes us back before the woman was created. What you have in the Genesis account is in Genesis 1 a summary of God's creative work, right? When you come to Genesis 2, God steps into that creative work and especially into that sixth day and He says, "Here, let me fill in some of the details that I know you're going to be interested in." So what we learn in that second chapter and that 18th verse is just that – that God says after having created Adam, before He created Eve, God looks at Adam and He says it's not good for man to be alone. What's important as well for us to realize at this point is this is not Adam coming to some point of self-realization. This is not Adam in his great intellectual prowess, which we know he had, coming to discover and to realize that he is alone. No, the text specifically says Adam, before God's declaration that it's not good for you to be alone, must've thought everything was just fine. Obviously, he was in a relationship with God. He fellowshiped with God. The rest of God's creative work was there. God steps in and makes a declaration and says, "It's not good, Adam, that you're alone".

Now, what we would expect to happen next is that God would create Eve, right? It's not good that you're alone. I know what I'll do. I'll create a helper for you as God will say later. But that's not what happens. God doesn't immediately create Eve after He created Adam. In fact, what God does is He gives Adam an assignment and He has Adam naming the animals. We know that as Adam goes through Zoology 101 and all of these animals come before him, he discovers and learns three things. Rather than God immediately stepping in and filling this aloneness that existed having been revealed by God to Adam, God has him name the animals. Adam makes three discoveries. As the animals walk before him, he realizes that everyone is paired off and there's a he and there's a she. There's a he and there's a she. There's a he and there's a she. So he realizes immediately that there is a difference between these animals as they are walking by him. One is male and one is female. He recognizes that.

As that happens, there's a completeness that he obviously has learned he does not have. It is not good for him to be alone. He has no one to complete him. As he watches the animals walk by, he sees that they have what he doesn't have. They all have a helper. They all have a completer. He doesn't have one.

I think the third thing he sees is there's no one like him. There's no one like him. God makes this declaration to Adam that it is not good for you to be alone, and then it's almost as if God affirms this truth. In addition to affirming this truth, He is also affirming to Adam that he is unique of all of God's creation. You are not an animal among animals. You are a created, unique person because you have been made in the image and likeness of God.

Adam, in this process of discovering, forces us then to ask a question that you're probably thinking right now. Okay, I didn't know we were doing a study in Genesis 1. What does this have to do with marriage? What's the answer to that? It has absolutely everything to do with marriage. This has everything to do with marriage, because we said what we want to learn this morning is God's created intent for marriage. We want to understand the very purpose of God in creating the institution of marriage. God established marriage as a means, and He equipped humanity to populate and to cultivate and to fill the earth and to subdue it, and He made it kind of fun in the process, right? This is the intent that is behind what we're going to get to when we come to the second chapter. God's intent is what is so very vitally important as we will come to see in just a moment.

Let's look at God's supernatural provision as it relates to marriage. What is God's design for marriage? I want to just put before you this morning four things that I think flow out of this Genesis account and speak to how it is that we are to understand marriage, the purpose that God intended when He created and blessed mankind with this institution. The first is marriage is two people becoming one in every way possible. Marriage is two people becoming one in every way possible. Adam in verse 23 said when he saw Eve for the first time and with great delight shouted out, "At last!" Having gone through the exercise previously in watching the animals walk by, seeing that there was a male and female, that there was a completeness and a help that he did not have, that something was missing and lacking in his life, he now learns at last God has done

for me what I have witnessed in all of the rest of His creative work within the animal kingdom. It's not good to be alone. Here is now one who in fact corresponds to me. Adam is going to come to realize that it is God's created intent that he and Eve be one in every way possible, that they be one in mind, that they be one in heart, that they be one in body, that they be one in purpose. God's created intent. Listen. Gender and marriage are not incidental. Gender and marriage are not incidental. They are vitally important in understanding what it is that God designed marriage to do and to be. The goal of marriage. One of the goals of marriage is for there to be a partnership, for there to be oneness. Paul picks this up and we're not to be able to get into the details of what he says but in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 he says: "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman (which is probably a euphemistic statement written dealing with the sexual relationship). But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." So you see the import and the impact of what is created in Genesis. Paul picks up in 1 Corinthians and says, yeah, do you not understand that when God created the marriage relationship, He moved us as married couples – from me, mine, and I and He created something totally different and unique and it's now us, ours and we're together. That's God's intent from the beginning. Man apart from woman is incapable of realizing and achieving this most important function that God has given to humanity. Woman apart from man is not able to realize this oneness which is a part of God's created intent in marriage.

The second thing that we see about marriage from Genesis 1 is marriage is with a view to procreation. Marriage is with a view to procreation. It takes us back again to Genesis 1 where God said be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. What did we say God was doing in His work in Chapter 1? We said God was doing the work of forming and filling. Forming and filling. Now He has entrusted that to us, and hence He has created a man and a woman and commissioned and commanded them to be fruitful and to multiply. God wanted the earth to be filled with people. He could've created all those people, right? He chose not to create those people. He chose to entrust to us within the

marriage relationship the ability and the capacity to procreate. The very picture of the work that God did, forming and filling, He entrusted to the marriage relationship. We now take up that mantle and we are given that responsibility and that privilege of filling the earth. It speaks to the sanctity of the sexual relationship within the marriage relationship. It speaks to the sanctity of human life. This amazing privilege that God has given every time spoken of in Scripture in an affirming way is within the context of the marriage relationship. That's the place that God intended for this forming and filling to happen. This filling of the earth, being fruitful and multiplying.

God, in His wisdom, knew that it would be best if every child born into this world had a father and a mother. We know that life doesn't afford that privilege to many children, but that doesn't detract from God's created intent and the design that we should hold up that says in the mind of God He knew that it was valuable and important for every child whenever possible to have a father and to have a mother because that's the responsibility that God has entrusted. Here's an important point that I want you to see. I think we need to underscore this – that marriage is for making children. Yes, we affirm that. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. It is not the only charge that God has given. It is not the only purpose for marriage. It is one of. It may not be the most important, but it is certainly one of the purposes that God has given. Add this note as well. "Marriage," John Piper says, "is for making children disciples of Jesus." Within the context of the marriage relationship, we realize and we understand that every couple is not able to have children. There are life circumstances, life issues. There are biological issues that do not allow every couple to have children. If a couple came to me and they were of the age where they had the capacity to have children and they said, "We would like for you to marry us" and as we went into this process of counseling, they announced to me at some point: "Oh, by the way, I don't know if you care or not, but we are not going to have children. We have made the decision that we want to get married, but we are not going to have children." It would be my conviction that I wouldn't marry them.

God may not bless them with children but we do not go into marriage going against the very created intent that God has put before us, which is to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God doesn't bless every marriage with children but He does

expect us to pursue the intent that He has created within the marriage relationship. This is the beauty of what Piper says. Marriage is for making children disciples of Jesus. If you can't have children, if God hasn't allowed you to have children, it doesn't keep you from accomplishing the very thing that God designed marriage to do and to provide. The making of children as disciples and followers of Christ can be accomplished even if you biologically can't have children, right? You could adopt. You could have foster children. You could have ministry in the life of children pointing them to the Lord in a local church setting. We don't look at this as simply a limitation. We recognize that God ultimately is the one who blesses a marriage with children and in some cases in His wisdom He may not do that.

Here is the interesting thing and I don't know if it has any theological significance per se, but in Matthew's gospel in the 19th chapter when Jesus is confronted with the Pharisees' questions about divorce and marriage, and He answers those questions. Do you know what Matthew by the Holy Spirit's direction brings right into the topic of discussion in the next verse? "Let the children come to Me." It is almost as if Jesus affirms what it is that we're seeing here by God's created intent. The bottom line is marriage is a view to procreation. If God blesses you with children, then you engage that process and you point those children to Jesus. If God doesn't bless your marriage with children biologically, it doesn't mean that you can't be used of God and be a blessing to children and be a part of moving them to more likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, marriage is for protection. Marriage is for protection. We all need more protection than we would like to admit. Because we are different by design, men and women need different kinds of protection. Men, it would seem to me that we need to protect our wives in certain ways. We need to protect our wives in terms of their honor, so we speak highly of them in every setting. We protect their honor. We protect their reputation. We protect their time. We protect their heart. We may be called upon to protect their safety, their health. Many ways that men are to move into the lives of their wives and afford protection, because that's a part of God's created intent for men.

Men, just as importantly, we need to acknowledge that we need the protection of our wives. We need our wives to protect us. We need them to protect our honor. We

need them to protect our reputation. Sometimes, they may need to step in to protect our time. They need to protect our passions as well. One of the things that every wife is charged with is to protect the passions of her husband, to make sure that he understands without any equivocation that his passions are met and satisfied only within the parameters of this covenant marriage relationship, that no man has any right to look outside of this marriage relationship for any fulfillment of his sexual passions or needs. It's a violation of God's Word and of His truth, of His created intent. Wives need to step into the lives of their husbands and protect his passions from being distracted. We've all seen it – a husband in the presence of his wife, captivated for a moment or for many moments by the passing of a beautiful woman. It's grievous. It's hurtful. It's wrong. It shouldn't happen. That doesn't mean we can't acknowledge that God has created beauty. There is nothing wrong with that at all, but we're not to allow our passions to be captivated except by one, our husband or our wife. Marriage affords us protection as God intended it.

Then, finally, marriage comes with an expectation of permanence. That certainly is the sense as you close out that second chapter in Genesis: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave (to be glued permanently). He is to cleave to his wife." Then it goes on to say that the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed. Now you say I am not sure I get the permanent side of that verse. Man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife. Just in case we didn't get it, Jesus says in Matthew 6 quoting and referencing this most foundational passage in all of Scripture which every New Testament writer keeps coming back time and again to Genesis 1 and two, because Genesis 1 and two is the foundation of marriage. It is God's created order and intent that we read in these chapters. Jesus in Matthew 19:6 says without hesitation what God has joined together, let nobody put asunder. There is that matter of permanence. God's intent for our marriage is that it be a picture of His faithfulness, to be a picture of our commitment to Him and to each other, that it be a portrait, that it be a picture of Christ's love for the church, Christ's love for us, which we know no matter what we may do, Christ loves us to the end. We'll see some more of this as we move forward in the weeks to come, but this is I believe the picture that Genesis gives to us of God's created intent for marriage, that we are to pursue

because what we see here is the way that God values marriage. In Genesis 1 and 2, God is doing something great. He's doing something special. He's doing something as Paul is going to say "mysterious" because it is of eternal importance.

Now, what are we going to take away? Very briefly here at the end and maybe not so briefly, what do we take away? Three things. First of all, as Christ followers, we must be champions of marriage. This is no time to shrink back in the face of our culture. This is no time to simply concede that our culture simply gets to define marriage in any way that they want. No, we said last week that once you unhinge marriage from this foundational passage in Scripture, culture is going to take marriage wherever it wants to go. Opponents of traditional marriage don't want to acknowledge that, but neither in '73 did those people who pushed for abortion rights believe that there would be an operational procedure called partial-birth abortion. At the time, they mocked anybody who said that we would ever do anything like that. Marriage is going to go down that same path. Marriage is going to be redefined by these nine justices, and I would imagine in 10 years we won't even understand the full extent of the ramifications that will still be unfolding in our nation. But, that does not mean we are not champions of marriage. What I mean by that is we become champions of marriage and we start with ourselves. We have a tendency to look out there to find all of the enemies. Do you know what? There are enough right within, aren't there? If we would have Congress and the Supreme Court affirm tomorrow that marriage is a relationship between one man and one woman, marriage in this country would still be in a world of hurt. Let's be honest. It would still be in a world of hurt. So we're to be champions of marriage within our own marriages. Be champions of marriage. How do you view marriage? It's mysterious. It's high. It's holy. It's important. It's great. It is all of these things that we have seen. How do you conduct yourselves within marriage? That is, how are you a champion of marriage? By how you speak of it. By how you conduct yourself. By how you honor it. Seeing marriage as God does as great, special and of importance. Valuing and honoring your vows is a way to be a champion of marriage.

Secondly, as Christ followers, we must stop what's evil. We must stop what's evil. Again, start within yourself. Start within your own marriage. Start within your own personal walk with God. If there are bad habits in your personal life that are hurtful to

your marriage, guess what? Stop it! If there are patterns of sinful behavior within your marriage relationship that you know are destroying your marriage, stop it! That's how you stop evil from coming into your marriage. If you're making poor choices, stop making those choices, so that you can champion marriage and stand against what's evil. If you've got pornography coming into your life, if you've got phones and iPads and computers that you don't want anybody to look at, you've got a problem. Your wife should have access to everything that's on your computer, to everything that's on your iPhone, and everything that's on your iPad. That's just my conviction. We have to speak with conviction and we have to speak with clarity to what's happening in our culture.

Then finally, as Christ followers, we must help restore what's broken. As Christ followers, we must restore what's broken. You know, every time I talk about marriage, it's for some encouraging and for others frankly it's discouraging. I know that. I know that from all of these years in ministry that anytime we take up the subject of marriage, it is something that hits certain people with a great deal of force because the pain of what they have experienced is so great, and perhaps just thinking back on their own personal failures in that journey tend to overwhelm them. That's not ever the intent that we come to a study of marriage about. The church must hold up the ideal. We must say this is God's created intent. This is God's goal. This is God's desire and design. But we must also acknowledge that we live in a fallen world, and you and I make choices that we may later regret, that need to be washed over again and again at times in the forgiving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Part of our responsibility as the followers of Christ is that marriage fulfill its redemptive purpose as well and that we allow the grace of God to wash over our lives and over our marriage. It is because marriage is if nothing else a picture as we said last week of the gospel. It is a daily reminder of the brokenness of our lives and of our need for God's grace in our relationship with Him and in our relationship with each other.

We face great challenges in 2015 in the United States of America. The church of Jesus Christ is going to be called on like never before to know the Word of God in a way that is not simply superficial, but to know the Word of God in a way that is deep and purposeful and specific and intentional so that we can speak with clarity, that we can speak with grace into the circumstances of the lives of people that God brings across

our path. We are not going to be able to do that if we are just doing a 10,000 foot flyover every time we open the Word of God. We need to be champions of marriage. We need to be protectors, to stand against evil. We also need to be a redemptive force in our world. There is so much brokenness. There is so much sin. There is thankfully so much of the grace of God.

The gospel says to me this morning I'm not okay. The gospel says to you this morning you're not okay. We're not okay because we have violated the very purpose of God by means of our own willful disobedience and sin and rebellion. God in His grace is reaching out to each one of us wherever we are and He's wanting to draw us back into this relationship with Him. He has done that primarily through the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross, was raised again, and did so in payment for my sin and yours. That's the oil of grace that God wants to pour into your life and your marriage. If you've never put your trust in Jesus as your personal savior, that would be what we would delight in helping you to understand and pursue this morning. You can do it right where you're sitting, acknowledging I've fallen short. I've sinned. Sin brings death and separation and God in His grace has sent His Son Jesus to be our Redeemer, our Rescuer, our Defender, our Restorer.