

Mark 10:6-9

August 21, 2005 – 14th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (special)

What God Has Joined Together

✠ God's creation (v.6)

✠ "Leaving and cleaving" (vv.7,8)

✠ Preserve and protect (v.9)

In the name of Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, dear Bride of Christ, His holy Church:

One of my most treasured perks as a pastor, is getting to review God's gift of marriage for weddings. I've often wished the congregation could benefit as well even without attending the wedding. Today I get my wish as the Holy Spirit uses the occasion of our busy moving week to meditate this morning on yesterday's wedding text. Young and old, married or single, we all have this awesome, priceless blessing from God's Word to deeply appreciate **What God Has Joined Together**.

✠ God's creation (v.6)

This text is not as frequent as one might expect for weddings, perhaps because Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, is under attack by His enemies. He's on His way to Jerusalem to suffer and die on the cross for our sins, but the Pharisees are trying to tie a noose around His neck with a tricky question to discredit Him in front of the crowds. His enemies want Jesus to fail this test: "*Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?*" Jesus often answered questions with questions. "*What did Moses command you?*" You can almost hear the Pharisees thinking, "Great! Now we've got him! He'll be pitted against Moses, our greatest prophet, so everyone can know that Jesus is an imposter." So *they said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."* That was true because some of the Jews in the desert with Moses so despised God's gift of marriage that burning your husband's food might land you on the doorstep not knowing whether you were divorced or not. The piece of paper was a stop-gap measure, a civil way of indicating who was married to whom. Jesus burst their balloon of pride. "*Because your hearts were hard...Moses wrote you this law,*" *Jesus replied.* Hard hearts are sick, unbelieving hearts.

Now God's Son corrects all of public education in America. He shows why so few citizens appreciate marriage and some demand what they call "gay marriage." America has been teaching that we evolved from slime. If so, then marriage is just a social arrangement to manipulate for sex and money. Unfortunately, some Christians do not trust the Bible from the very first verse, leaving them defenseless against Satan's temptations. Some try to take the blessings of marriage without being married. This is the sin the Bible calls fornication, or after marriage it's called adultery. But heterosexuals should not be arrogant because wherever God condemns homosexuality, He also condemns adultery and fornication.

Jesus wants to cleanse us of our sins and their sad results. So He tells us: "*At the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'*" Some deny the differences, but brain scans are so obvious that even a child can tell which is male or female. The LORD God said, "*It is not good for the man to be alone,*" then created the woman from the man and for the man to love and cherish for life. God designed her to complete him. And her role was very simple. He was to treasure her like a priceless flower. She simply needed to let him. How tragic that Victoria's Secret exploits God's gift. How tragic that Christians in Victorian England stifled God's gifts by not teaching how God created sex in marriage to be "*very good.*" (Genesis 1:31) Dr. Martin Luther was right: "If you don't teach your children, the devil will."

✠ "Leaving and cleaving" (vv.7,8)

"*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*" Or as the old King James Version translated, "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife....*" "**Leaving and cleaving**" is God's design. Relationships for children and parents change when he leaves his father and mother to cleave to his wife.

It's not disrespect for parents, but to put each other first. If misguided in-laws try to control their married children, God wants Christian couples to respectfully decline. First for the man for life is his wife. And her first priority for the rest of her life is her man. Couples and in-laws who try to do otherwise may seem fine for a time. You can tie a stout rope between your bumper and garage door and drive away. But by not "**Leaving and cleaving**" the stronger the old relationship the more damage when you finally reach the end of your rope. It's bad bumper time for the couple and a hole in the door for in-laws.

Jesus says, "***The two will become one flesh.***" This is Bible language for sexual intercourse. Again, slimy evolution has no problem with men and women using each other like worn out socks. But God wants all of us, married and single, to confess the truth that we deserve eternal damnation for our sins of selfishness. Then we are delighted to hear and accept Christ's innocent blood as payment for all our sins. Kneeling at the cross of Christ, we see far more to God's gift than animal instinct. Yesterday's wedding bulletin said: "THE WONDER OF A JOURNEY WE BEGIN...HAND IN HAND, HEART TO HEART." Truly, "***If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.***" (1 John 4:12). God's gift of love in marriage is far more than Hollywood can conceive. Christian love in marriage is like an isosceles triangle with three equal sides and Jesus at the top as the Head. The closer we come individually to Christ, the closer we are to each other. The more we reflect His light in our life, the more we burn like a unity candle, no longer two, but one. Christian couples under God committed to each other for life, enjoy God's gift of heartfelt intimacy far more often than movie stars and actors ever could.

† **Preserve and protect (v.9)**

But be warned. When you stand before God's altar to receive God's blessing and the gift of prayers by your loved ones, you become the target of our ancient enemy from hell. Soon after the beginning Satan brought sin, rebellion, misery and death into the Creator's perfect paradise. He tempted Eve to take the lead and Adam like a dumb ox to follow. When the LORD God came to correct them, He did not say, "Eve, where are you?" He said, "***Adam, where are you?***" – Where are you in your relationship with me? Adam was foolishly hiding from God who blistered him with this well deserved rebuke, "***Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it....'***" (Genesis 3:17) God cursed what makes men feel most fulfilled. Our work in office or field is by sweat and toil that eventually ends back in the dust of the earth. And for woman the curse came on her most fulfilling relationships with childbearing and her husband. What once was a wonderful servant headship as he made unselfish decisions always for her good, was now corrupted by sin. Her sinful nature rebelled, and his would neglect her while frustrated that she never seemed to have enough.

If the Bible is myth and legend, not God's Word, then why does it know where we hurt? And if God is not infinite love, coupled with caring power, why would God promise His Son to save us from the unhappiness of sin? A line in our wedding service nearly twenty-five years ago said: "And though by reason of sin many a cross has been laid upon this estate, yet our heavenly Father will not forsake His children in their time of need." Our gracious God wants to **Preserve and protect** His gift of marriage.

In the Hebrew and the Greek original – Old and New Testaments – God the Holy Spirit says literally, "What God has glued together, let man not rip apart." If you honor hobbies and friends more than your spouse, you're taking a gravel road full of potholes. Keep it up, and major tire wear will cause a fatal accident. But go back to the Master Mechanic, and He will realign your relationship to put you back on the road again – "HAND IN HAND, HEART TO HEART." For married and single the God who has loved you from all eternity wants to strengthen your relationships with His special instruments. And Christian couples in particular He wants to benefit from a little-known statistic. Couples who constantly worship God together at home and in church, do not fall apart. In church and Bible class through God's Word and sacrament they grow closer and closer in love and gratitude for **What God Has Joined Together**. May He grant us all sincere gratitude for His priceless gift – in Jesus' precious Name. Amen.