

## Genesis 2:18-24

<sup>18</sup> The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

<sup>19</sup> Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." <sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

"Dear friends: When God in love created the world, he made man and woman in his own image and bonded them together in marriage. Through this blessed union of husband and wife, God established the family, provided for the physical and spiritual welfare of children, and fostered the peace and stability of society." Do you recognize these words? Do you know where they come from?

They are the opening words of the Marriage Rite in the hymnal. These words remind us of the many important purposes God had in mind in establishing marriage. I'll admit: there's a lot in that paragraph. But it's full of blessings which flow from God's love for his people. As we take a few moments to consider the institution of marriage, we will see how true those words are!

These verses begin in a way that should grab our attention like a dunk in freezing water. Through the first chapter of Genesis, we hear the LORD God say 7 different times about his creation, "It was good." But here in the strongest words possible, the LORD God says, "*Not good*...It is not good for the man to be alone." The LORD God makes it very clear: his creation is not yet complete, and that is not good. Now because of his great love, he will remedy that problem.

Notice also the way the Lord does this. He saw what was "not good", but Adam remained blissfully ignorant about what was missing. So the LORD God who created all brings all the "beasts of the field and the birds of the air" to Adam. Adam sees them come in pairs and in groups. He begins to think God's thoughts. He thinks God's thoughts about all these animals. "He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name." Adam gives them a name that captures exactly what they are according to their place in God's creation. What a testimony to the intellect the Lord gave to man, and especially now since it had not yet been touched by sin!

But then another one of God's thoughts begins to creep into the corners of Adam's mind. As all the animals came to him, each one had others very much like itself. But not Adam! "But for Adam no suitable helper was found." He begins to think, "Where is the one who is like me? Where is one suitable to me? Why am I alone? If I am alone and the only one, that is *not good*!"

Now that Adam realizes what the LORD God has always known, he solves Adam's dilemma. He causes Adam to fall into a deep sleep. While Adam is under this divine anesthesia, the Lord performs the first surgery in history. He removes one of Adam's ribs, and he causes flesh to fill in at that spot. Then something even more remarkable happens! The LORD God takes the bit of flesh and bone from Adam's side and uses it to build one very much like Adam, but also quite different. He fashioned from that rib a "helper suitable" for Adam, a woman. Isn't it interesting the Holy Spirit uses more words to describe the creation of woman than he does for man? When the LORD God finished his final act of creation, he brought the woman to the man.

When Adam sees what his loving Lord did for him, the great gift moves him to poetry. After he had just seen all the animals file past with no one like him, he says now, "This one here, the one I see before me this time, she is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh (in other words, corresponding to and suitable for me!); she shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man." You may not think this was much of a love poem, but that is exactly what it was!

Then Adam goes on to comment further, as a prophet and preacher to every one of his descendants: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." What is he saying with these words? God made man and woman for each other and because of that they will leave the home of their childhood. They will commit and cling to one another and begin a family of their own as they become one flesh. To become one flesh physically certainly means joining in sexual intercourse—which God designed for use only within marriage for it to be good and God-pleasing and an avenue for God's blessing. But "becoming one flesh" means more than just a physical thing. It also involves sharing each other's

interests and having a common goal, mutual companionship, and a caring for one another and sharing in love. With these words, the Lord is establishing marriage and family and guiding us in using the sexual desires he gave.

In his great love, God gives these gifts to his people. When we look at all these things that flow from the great gift of marriage, we should remember God's great love for us. And as we live out the various callings Lord has given us in our family, it is the goal of family members is to reflect God's love for us in self giving love for each another.

That's what we want to do, and God's love radiates from every word here. So why is it so difficult for us? Poison! Poison entered perfection. Only a few verses later, we hear how the venom of the Satan infected Adam and Eve and destroyed their perfect harmony with God and with each other. That poison corrupts our attitudes and actions toward marriage and family and sexual desire, just as it has corrupted so many other good gifts from God. That poison swirls about the world we live in, and it even runs through the veins of our sinful flesh. It doesn't take long to see how that poison continues its destructive path.

Is marriage honored among us as the great institution God has established for our blessing? Is it recognized as the true foundation of society? Do we see it as a gift God has given with clear instructions as to how to define it and live in it? Or is it something we can play with and change and redefine as the whims of popular opinion change? Do husband and wife love, honor, and cherish each other as a precious gift from their Lord? Do husbands carry out their God-given role as servant-leader with joy and love? Or has it become a wearisome burden? Do wives fulfill their God-given role as servant-helper with eagerness and respect? Or has it become a yoke to chafe under? Too often, the poison has done its work too well!

What about in the rest of the family? Does love and care for one another rule each day? Do we look to see how we can serve other family members? Do we appreciate how the Lord has placed us in this special position to help them in a special way? As a parent, do I model the love and care and strength and wisdom God has shown to me? As a son or daughter, do I respect and listen to and obey my parents even when I don't agree, even when I don't want to? Do I recognize them as God's gift and also his representative to bless me? Too often, the poison has done its work too well!

What about the gift of sexual desire the LORD God created in us? I know this is not easy to talk about, but isn't that proof of how Satan's poison has corrupted this gift more than almost any other? God's plan for using this gift is very clear: it is a unique gift for husband and wife to enjoy in marriage. But what has the poison produced? Immorality of all kinds: sex before marriage, cheating in marriage, homosexuality, rape, incest, pornography, and so much more. This poison swirling in the world us around begins to affect our attitudes and actions. Without a doubt, it serves to lessen our opinion of this great gift from God. It becomes a target for mockery or shame. Too often, the poison has done its work too well!

The self-giving love LORD God created and intended for these gifts as great blessings for us has turned in an ugly selfishness, the product of a poison Satan intends to bring about an eternal death for us. What are we to do? The difference maker is love. The love the LORD God has for us is the basis of the love we have for one another in marriage and family. We must return to that love!

The LORD God wants a selfless, giving love in our relationships in our homes. That is what he wants for husband and wife. That is what he wants for parents and children. And that is exactly what he perfectly demonstrates for us. "Do what is best for the ones you love rather than for yourself," God says. "Let me show you what I mean. I will give up my Son, my only Son, for you. He was the Seed of woman I promised in Genesis 3, the Crusher who would destroy the serpent's head and also its poisoned work. He will live with you. He will keep my laws. He will embody my love perfectly. He will also erase all your loveless deeds and selfish sins. Seeking your good instead of his own, he will endure mocking and beating and finally death. But he will do it for you because he loves you! Rather than give up on that love, he will give up his life! That is Jesus. That is love. That is forgiveness. That is power for you to build on!"

To see the love of the LORD God in Jesus, to understand what that means not just for eternity but for every day, that makes a big difference. That is the antidote to the devil's poison. It takes away the toxins. It clears our thinking. It strengthens the weakness in our will to want what God wants and in our bodies to do what he says. It gives that power. When you wake up each morning, splash water on your face, and look in the mirror, you can tell yourself, "I am a baptized child of God. I don't have to listen to the devil's lies. I can do what God wants, and I want to do it! LORD God, help me reflect your love in my life, and especially in my family! Forgive me my failures of yesterday, because of Jesus I know they are already taken away. Empower me with the Spirit's work in the Gospel to live your love. Help me to see your great love in this great gift you have given, and make them both a treasure to me." Amen.