

Malachi 2:10-16; Eph. 5:22-33; Reforming our View of Marriage I. The Wrong Views of Marriage Exposed II. Marriage Restored to a Place of Honor

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you know, tomorrow is Reformation Day. During the 15 and 1600 there was a dramatic shift in thinking of God's people. The Reformation directly impacted all aspects of life. It was not a simply change in our view of theology- but it was a return to the source- a going back to the Bible on all areas. For example, the wall between sacred work and secular work was broken down. Now all of God's people are engaged in holy work as they do all things to the glory of God- as they work hard with their hands- doing all things as to the Lord. This evening we are going to focus on how the reformation had an effect on marriage. There was a disconnect between what the RCC taught about marriage and what the Bible has to say about marriage. And to prove this concept, almost all of the Reformers were married men who spoke highly of their wives! As the Reformation swept the land- as people began to read and submit to the Bible alone- the effect was that the monasteries and convents were emptied and these believers got married and raised families. I think that we sometimes take for granted the blessings we have in our heritage of faith- in the joys and freedoms we have in institution of Biblical marriage. So today we are going to compare on contrast the Middle Ages RCC view of marriage to that of Bible. With this theme: Jesus Christ gives the gift of marriage to His people as a beautiful picture of His love for us.

I. The Wrong Views of Marriage Exposed

In our first point we are going to start by exposing some of the wrong views of marriage- some of the positions of the RCC that undermined this institution. So to start, marriage in the RCC during the middle ages was seen as a lessor or less ideal lifestyle than that of being single. In other words, only those who were less holy- or who had less self-control- would get married. Singleness was the best- and even for those who were married it was better not to have intimate relations with your spouse. So where did this line of thinking come from? Well, in I Cor. 7:6 Paul does say- I wish you were all single like I am. Writing to

the church of Corinth, Paul is stating that it is good to remain in the position they were when God had called them. During that specific time of persecution, singleness did have an advantage because traveling with a wife and children would make matters more difficult. Added to that, remaining single does enable you to have a singular devotion to serving the Lord. But Paul continues, there are benefits to getting married as well. In fact, both being married and remaining single are acceptable and pleasing to God.

Each person has their own gifts from God- singleness is a gift from God- but so also a godly spouse is a gift from God! So the point is that one is not necessarily better than the other- both being single and getting married are pleasing to God! You can be a faithful follower of Christ in singleness or in marriage. But this God-pleasing freedom to marry or remain single was lost in the RCC. In the RCC, the truly holy people would remain single. The holy orders and that of celibacy- to remain unmarried- was elevated about marriage. Those who were really close to God dedicated their lives to that of monk or nun. And even for the married, it was better not to have sexual relations. So the marital union in marriage was only for restraining sin and having children. There was no pleasure or joy in it- marriage was a necessary evil because of lust and a person's failure to exercise self-control.

But this false teaching extended beyond the actual relationships within marriage as well. Not only was singleness to be praised above marriage- even the bond of marriage itself was under the control of the church alone. In other words, only the church could marry a couple- and that same church could annul the same as well. Since marriage was a sacrament in their view, the church alone has the right to preside over a marriage. So you could not get married without the blessing of the church. And if you happened to not like your spouse, it was in the church's power to annul or cancel your bond. So the church had supreme authority over the institution of marriage. And for a price, a Pope could cancel what God had brought together. So you have this scandal where King Henry the 8th wanted his marriage annulled by the pope- so that he could marry someone else with the hope of having a male child. Only if the church is seen as the supreme authority over marriage does this make sense. That the ruling of the church would

have the power to bind and unbind what God says that He himself does. But there are other challenges to marriage today as well. Other wrong views of marriage that continue to plague the church today.

Sometimes marriage is viewed as a ball and chain. That somehow this marriage is stopping me from doing what I want and living how I want. Even the despising of the wife of your youth. This takes the form of sexual sins- adultery of the mind and committed with the eye. It is so easy to break up the bond of marriage today- no fault divorce treats marriage with less respect than leasing a car! So our struggle to retain a proper view of marriage remains! In other words, even though we no longer live in the day of the Reformation, our battle to preserve the purity and honor of marriage remains!

II. Marriage Restored to a Place of Honor

So as we continue, we will consider what the Bible has to say about marriage. Marriage is one of the few ordinances that were established before the fall. Even before Adam and Eve sinned, there was holy matrimony! Marriage is a gift of God- and this union is an act that God performs! He brings the man and woman together- He binds them together as one. What God has joined together as Mark 10 says- let no man tear apart! So marriage is a work of God! As we read in our text from Malachi 2:15- has the Lord not made them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union. So we take note of this fact, marriage is not an act of man- it is not an institution that human made up- some social construct for the good of society that we developed. No, rather it is an act of God where He unites them- makes them one- and anoints them with His Spirit. Since that is the case, man is not the authority on marriage, the LORD is. The church does not make them one, God does! And no power or authority of man has the right to annul that which God has joined. Again, marriage is a gift from God for the good of those who enter into it. Marriage is good- it is a blessing from God- and the fruit of companionship and protection are found within.

The seriousness of marriage is again indicated in Malachi 2:14- the wife of your youth is your companion by covenant. There is a covenantal aspect to Christian marriage. As the man and woman stand before Christ and His church they are making a promise- they utter a vow. So marriage is not just a social

agreement- it is a sacred promise that God holds you accountable to. Although not a sacrament, that is not to imply that it should be entered into without consideration! Marriage is a lifelong commitment to live together- for better or worse, in times of sickness and in times of health. So this relationship is to be guarded- as 2:15 says. Protected and defended- so that you do not commit the sin of deceit- breaking your word and transgressing the covenant you have entered into. Divorce does violence to this covenant- rips the fabric into which man and woman have been woven together. So apart from the grounds of adultery and desertion, marriage is to be life-long. Do not be treacherous- v. 15 says- faithless. Do not act like a traitor- being unfaithful in your words and how you relate to your spouse!

But marriage is to be more than just an agreement to stay together no matter what. God's design for marriage is that it would be for our good- something that we enjoy! It is wonderful- isn't it- that God's commandments are for our good- something we can delight in! Like getting a commandment- you must spend the rest of your life with your best friend who is going to be a blessing to you! This commandment- to live together as husband and wife- to not forsake the wife or husband- is not a burden but a blessing! There are spiritual blessings- a portion of God's spirit resides within you. And there are physical blessings- in fact, we are told in Prov. 5:18 to take pleasure in the wife of your youth! Rejoice- be glad in- to actually enjoy- to take delight in your spouse and marriage! Sometimes you will see a married couple that are anything but joyful- they really don't like each other and the marriage has gone sour. But that is not what God's design is for us- marriage is a gift- a blessing! He who finds a good wife find a good thing as Prov. 18 says. A good wife is in fact a gift from the Lord! So we should strive to see marriage as a gift from God- your spouse as a gift from God! That this relationship would be blessing to you both! And that even applies to the act of marriage- the intimate time between husband and wife. Although this act has been perverted in our world, husbands and wives should not be ashamed but rather they should delight in act of two becoming one. As Heb. 13 says, keeping the marriage bed pure. But there is one more aspect of marriage that Malachi 2 speaks to- and that is of children. As 2:15 concludes, what was God seeking from

your marriage? The answer is, Godly offspring! Now to be clear, having children is not the only reason why two Christians will get married. But the fact remains, God uses the marriage of two of His children to be the context in which the next generation of believers will arise! In other words, God uses Christian marriage to be the greenhouse in which new plants are nurtured for the Kingdom! Not only are children a blessing- a heritage and reward from the Lord's hand- God also uses Christian parents to teach their children about what it means to be a member of the household of faith! God not only has an interest in the future of the human race, He has an interest in the future of the church! And the Christian marriage is where He seeks godly offspring! So children are a good outcome of marriage! We should delight in the children of this church- to hear their little voices – to see their smiling faces! God has richly blessed us- and it is our prayer that He continues to work in the hearts of these little ones so that they are raised in the fear and knowledge of the Lord.

Before we conclude, it would be remiss to pass over the typology of the marriage given in Eph. 5. The union of the husband to his wife is given as a picture of Christ and His bride, the church. As Christ has loved, served and provided for His bride- so husbands are to love their wives. As the church submits to Christ her head, wives are to submit to their husbands. Christian marriage uniquely paints a picture of Christ and His church. The better your marriage is- the better picture you paint! So we have a double motivation toward obedience! Not wanting to disobey nor wanting to misportray the love of Christ for His people.

To conclude, Christian marriage is a blessing and a gift from God. Given before the fall, sanctified after the fall- now given as a picture of Christ and His bride. Jesus Christ gives the gift of marriage to His people as a beautiful picture of His love for us. The Reformation helped to restore marriage to its proper place of honor. Martin Luther called his wife, Katie, a hospital for his soul. She was such a refreshing blessing to him. He called her his holy lady and a gift from God! Truly a good spouse is a gift from God- and a good, Christian marriage is a gift to the watching world! A gift that points to Jesus!