

The Chief End of Marriage – Gen 2:18-25

The Glorious Mystery that is Marriage III

Introduction – What is the chief end of man? Similarly, what is the chief end of marriage? It is not your personal self-actualization, it is not your happiness, and it is not your comfortable future. The chief end of marriage is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. *“There never has been a generation whose general view of marriage is high enough”* – John Piper. The church must understand as “the church” the importance of the institution of marriage and she must preach the glorious mystery that is marriage because she is herself a bride; in fact she is *the* bride. The theology of marriage is critically essential because the gospel message itself is at stake.

Marriage is God’s Idea (Gen 2:18-22) – God’s desire from the beginning was for man to subdue the earth and fill it (Gen 1:27-28). And it was His desire to use the institution of marriage (and family) as the means for this to take place. He decreed that man’s solitude was not good and set out to rectify this (Gen 2:18). None of the animals qualified (vv19-20) because this helper must be of the same essence, a fellow human being made in God’s image (1:27). In order for a marriage to take place, God decided to divide into two and then bring back together into one; He brought about a death and resurrection (2:21-22).

Marriage is God’s Doing (2:22-24) – This was the work of God and not Adam and Eve. This was an arranged marriage and God gave away the first bride. He then spoke (v24, Matt 19:4-5) and declared the design of marriage. He also was the One who brought about the one-flesh union (v24, Mark 10:8-9), blessing the sexual union in marriage. When a couple gives vows to one another, God is the main actor which is why Jesus said, *“what God has joined together...”*

Marriage is for God’s Glory (Eph 5:30-32) – Why did God do this, and why this way? In his discussion on the roles of husbands and wives, Paul shows us that ultimately marriage is the display of the glory of God and His gospel. The mystery is that our human marriages are living parables of Christ’s covenantal relationship with His people; they exist (stealing a phrase used multiple times in Eph 1) to praise the glory of His grace.

“Naked and Unashamed” and the Doctrine of Justification by Grace through Faith – Consider the result of this covenantal relationship and what is being symbolized while at the same time being enjoyed and lived out (Gen 2:25). Adam and Eve were naked and yet unashamed because of the unconditional, vow-protected, covenantal love in which they found themselves. When sin entered in, this unashamed nakedness was the first thing to go (3:7). But covering themselves did not take care of their shame and God eventually made coverings for them (3:21 – tunics of skin, implying atoning blood was shed). The nakedness had pointed to the state of peace with God and with one another. Vertical peace with God only exists when God gives it in a work of covenantal, unconditional love. Horizontal peace with a husband and wife is also a gift from God and mimics the elements of gospel-grace.

“Bone of my Bones” Theology (Gen 2:23, 25) – To say that marriage is ultimately about God and His glory is not to deny the glorious gift that marriage is to a man and a woman. In fact, quite the opposite, marriage rightly understood and applied blesses a couple, a family, and even the surrounding culture in powerful ways. While Piper might be correct that no generation has ever had a high enough view of marriage, a look at Christian cultures such as the Puritans, shows us that some had a higher and consequently more blessed view. William Perkins, a 16th Century Cambridge Puritan, wrote, *“Marriage was made...by God himself, to be the fountain...of all other sorts and kinds of life in the commonwealth and in the church”* (in Ryken, *“Worldly Saints”*). Another said that God’s glorious kingdom was to be erected and established in the home of a faithful married couple and their family – this was the purpose of marriage.

However, in addition, *“Although the Puritans emphasized the family as an institution designed first of all to benefit God and society, they did not neglect the idea that the purpose of a family is also the personal fulfillment of every member of the family”* (Ryken). In other words, a right primary commitment to the glory of God as the purpose of marriage actually promotes personal happiness and blessing (companionship, faithful children, sexual intimacy) in the persons with such commitments.

Displaying the Covenant-Keeping Grace of God – If this is kept central in the mind of a husband and a wife, the gospel will be preached in the life of the marriage and the blessing of gospel grace will be given and received over and over. Therefore –

Regularly Remind Yourselves of God’s Purposes – Your marriage is not primarily about you, so stop acting like it. You may not have had a good theology of marriage when you wed, but remember, God arranged your marriage and He has His purposes (and they are good). What did He join together? A living gospel message.

The Work of Sanctification – Christ did not die for a lovely bride. He died to make His bride lovely. Every marriage imperfectly preaches the gospel. But that only means that there is always the opportunity to show the work of Christ’s kind sanctifying transformation not just for the benefit of your marriage, but primarily to the glory of God.

Rest in Covenant, Spirit, and Grace-wrought Justification – If marriage declares the love of Christ for His bride and the church’s devotion and honor to her Lord, based upon the unconditional love of God through His Son, then “see” the message and respond to it with faith. Then and only then, turn and live it out in your marriage – to the glory of God.