Some things are meant to last forever. That new car you bought it supposed to last a long time, but a couple of years later, the engine dies and it is time for a new one. Your forever house gets termites. Sadly, things we thought would last forever, do not. They breakdown, rust and fade away. We learn in reading today that some things are meant to last forever, specifically, marriage. As God reminds us about marriage blessings and marriage rules.

No one appreciates a cane - until you have difficulty walking. But when you are sitting in a chair, and you are afraid to cross the kitchen to get a glass of water because you might fall, you suddenly look at a cane as a very good thing. So thankful to have it.

Well, Adam in Genesis 2 was like that lame man without a cane. In a world - a beautiful brand new world just created by God (you could say it still had the new car smell in it) - in a world occupied by thousands of species of birds and animals, Adam was alone. I do not know how deeply he felt his loneliness, but God made sure he felt it. God brought to Adam all the wild animals and birds and Adam observed them and named them. But he could not talk with them, he could not work together with them, he could not sing or dance with them, he could not watch a football game with them. Adam was alone.

God looked and said: It is not good for the man to be alone. This was not an oversight by God. By having him name all the animals, G wanted Adam to feel incomplete, to know it by experience. Later, when God gave Adam the best thing he would ever have, he’d appreciate her as the best thing in all of creation.

Now what do you think God had in mind when he created Eve? The Lord God said: I will make a helper who is a suitable partner for him. And some ladies start thinking: Yep, it all started pretty early. God made a “helper” for man. Sounds like another word for “work” to me.

Well, the Hebrew language has a word for slaves and servants - and this one is not it. This word helper was not used of slaves, but of God. Yes, most often in the Bible, this word helper refers to God, as in Deuteronomy 33: Blessed are you, O Israel! The Lord is your shield and your helper. That gives us a more balanced view of how Eve was Adam’s helper. He needed the help and she was what he needed. It was not slave labor or even an employee. It was help that a friend can give.

Likewise, when God said, A helper who is a suitable partner for him, we should really think about what that means. At first it might sound like a woman’s purpose is to serve man. But that is not what it means.

It is kind of like this. [hold up my two hands to congregation.] These two hands, are they shaped the same? You might say: Yes. But if they are shaped exactly the same, when I place one in front of the other hand, why don’t the two shapes match up? It because they are not the same shape. They are actually mirror images. And that is a good thing, because if my right hand and left hand were shaped exactly the same, if they were not mirror images, I would have a lot of difficulty doing a lot of things. I could not fold my hands. I could not grab the handles of a wheel-barrow. Right handed people would be able to write and left-handed people would have great difficulty - or vice versa. But because God made my hands as mirror images - the same, yet different - it works perfectly!
That is man and woman - the same and yet different. That is that helper corresponding to each other. Remember that this was written centuries ago in a much more male-centered world. But even then, God had said that he had not made woman as a servant to man, he had not made her inferior to man, but a helper who is a suitable partner for him. Yes, God placed man as the head, the leader of the pair. But neither was superior or inferior in value or even abilities. Different, but equal. Let all men who think themselves superior to women, and all women who think men ridiculous, let all of them remember that. That is what it says when God resolves: I will make a helper who is a suitable partner for him.

God’s creation of the world had been a crescendo, like a building up of excitement. God created amazing things in the six days of creation. More or less, he started with the most basic and moved to the more complex. First was light, then land and sea, then the plants, then animals of all variety, and finally Adam, and then Eve. But that was not the last thing God created. Then what was the last thing God created? Then the Lord God brought her to the man. The last thing God created was not a thing. It was a relationship. Isn’t that beautiful? The crowning moment of God’s creation was when he established, instituted, marriage.

Do you know any women who cry at every wedding? I do. As a child, I always wondered at weddings what tragedy was unfolding before me that women were crying. But you know, there is one man who just about always cries at a wedding. That man is the father of the bride. Many a father of the bride has had words he wanted to speak to his soon-to-be son-in-law as he handed his daughter’s hand to that young man, but he could not say them. He was afraid that a word would breach the dam of emotion and he would be reduced to a puddle of tears. Think of God, at the apex of creation, sort of like the father of the bride handing off Eve to Adam. Like every father, his utmost concern was that his daughter be well taken care of.

And Adam - the loneliness he had felt when by himself, was filled. And they were without sin. God gifted those two with a perfect marriage.

Take all the wise cracks about nagging wives and lazy husbands, forget all the misery suffered in millions of marriages, and realize that it is because God’s children do not listen to their Father’s direction and advice. It is not the Father’s fault. The problem with marriage is not marriage, but the people. We realize that we live in a fallen world, and so we will never enjoy the perfect marriage that Adam and Eve enjoyed. But how can we come closest to enjoying it? What are the rules of marriage? That is a big topic.

Here, briefly, we must deal with a question that never was even asked in the past. First of all, a Christian marriage is only of a heterosexual couple – man and woman. There is a lot of room here for outrage and anger and Bible passages. But I am not going there. To the Christian who takes his Bible seriously, this is so obvious that I will only make this comment. It was male and female that God created them and united them. Likewise, in our Gospel reading, Jesus in defining marriage, spoke of male and female.

But in the recent debate over homosexual marriage, I heard a very insightful point from the other side. Some have said this: You Christians divorce like everyone else, you live together like everyone else. You break all the Bible’s other rules about marriage. It is just on this issue of homosexual marriages that you have a problem. Indeed, if that is the way we live - and in many parts of Christendom it is - then truly, to object to homosexual marriage is hypocrisy.

The Bible clearly forbids living together without marriage. The Bible clearly forbids divorce, except when the other party has effectively carried out a divorce in action. The Bible forbids these things, but many Christians seem okay with them - but not with homosexual marriage. If that is our attitude, then we are hypocrites.
God's designed and declared marriage to be an unconditional life-long commitment of one man and one woman to each other. Secondly, God gave the blessings of marriage: sexuality and children, to be within the brackets of marriage. It is not just a heterosexual / homosexual issue. People do not have the right to set their own standards for marriage, to determine their own rules for terminating it, or to devise alternate lifestyles to replace it. God instituted marriage and he sets the rules. Let no one be offended by anything I have said. Let no one offer excuses. I am telling you what G says. And if there is something in the past or the present of your life that needs to be addressed, then know this: According to John 8, there was an adulterous woman who was brought to Jesus. In regard to marriage, she had been thumbing her nose at God’s will. When she was brought to Jesus, Jesus looked into her heart and then said this: I do not condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin.

Breaking God’s will in regard to marriage is a serious sin and it has serious results. Often the results extend through generations and affect many people. But whoever looks at their sins and finds that they have sinned against this greatest gift of God, even then God forgives. In the name of his Son, every sin is forgiven.

Now here is the other part: When we feel that forgiveness, we realize that we no longer want to live in the shadows, to make excuses, or to hope that people do not recognize what is going on. In the joy of forgiveness, we ask God: Now, dear God, how can I make this right? How can I honor you and this gift you have given to us? And such people go and find ways to make things right. For one it might be to step out of a relationship. For another it might be to immediately make the relationship official and permanent. But this greatest gift that God gave to us people, let us honor it. Let us make it a source of blessing to us and to all around us.

And finally, this reminds us of how important it is for us to guide our children and grandchildren in God’s way. May we not be afraid to talk to them about how they can benefit from this greatest blessing of God in the week of creation. Yes, marriage: some things are meant to last forever. Amen.

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