**Sermon Genesis 2:18-24 & Mark 10:2-16 3/10/21**

**Video Link:** [**https://youtu.be/L1kFLD1Tbmo**](https://youtu.be/L1kFLD1Tbmo)

Marriage is an amazing thing. Two people belonging to different families join to form a new family. Instead of their primary relationship being with their parents, their primary relationship is now with each other. The profound depth of this new relationship is explained in the creation of woman in Genesis.

God knew that Adam needed companionship and was seeking to find someone fit for Adam. Someone with whom Adam could have mutual and supportive fellowship. Adam didn’t need a servant. Adam needed someone who could complement him so that he could thrive and enjoy life to the full. Instead of creating another human being out of the earth, God created another human being out of Adam’s own flesh and bone. This close flesh and bone relationship between Adam and Eve are reflected now in marriage. ‘*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh’ Gen:2-24.* Somehow in marriage, a man and woman become one, joined together not only by their love for each other but joined together by God. Marriage is the closest bond two people can enter.

When people get married, they usually promise to love, comfort, honour and protect one another and to be faithful to each other as long as they both shall live. One of the most popular texts used in Christian wedding services is Paul’s description of love, in 1 Corinthians 13. Here Paul tells us, ‘Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hope, always perseveres.’ 1 Cor 13:4-7. Just imagine a life where two people united by God loved each other like that.

Most couples begin marriage filled with the hope their marriage will be a lifelong union where they will love one another. When a couple loves one another, amazing things can happen. Together they can experience joy and peace. Together they can live life to the full, each growing and becoming the person God created them to be. Together they can make it through life’s difficulties knowing that they are never alone. If they are blessed with children, those children can grow up in a home filled with love, a place where they will be safe and nurtured and learn how to be loving human beings. Maybe those of you who are married have experienced some of the best that a life of love for each other can offer.

The problem is that in every marriage there are two sinners, and sinners never love perfectly. Sin hardens people’s hearts and hard hearts can be fatal to any relationship and especially to the marriage relationship. Hard hearts lack love. Hard-hearted people lack patience and kindness. Hard-hearted people are arrogant, always trying to prove they are better. Hard-hearted people are jealous of each other’s gifts, talents, and intelligence. Hard-hearted people enjoy it when others aren’t doing well, hard-hearted people are self-absorbed and like to keep a record of every time they have been wronged. Hard-hearted people don’t easily admit when they are in the wrong and don’t easily forgive when they have been wronged.

At times we are all tempted to be hard-hearted, but when the hardness takes a hold of us and pushes out love then relationships are headed for rocky ground. Far too often hard-heartedness destroys a marriage and tears a couple apart. When friendships fall apart it can be very painful, but marriage is more than a friendship. In marriage, God has joined two people together into one. When the two that God has joined are ripped apart, no wonder it is so painful. One entity is split in two and the result is an open wound that takes a lot of healing. Like all violent acts, divorce affects not just the couple but the whole community. Like ripples in a pool, the pain of divorce ripples out to touch children, parents, siblings, and friends. When hard hearts win everyone loses.

No wonder Jesus says, “Therefore what God has joined together let no one separate.” He knows the pain and destruction that comes from divorce. Of course, it isn’t only divorce that Jesus is concerned with, it is everything that happens on the journey toward divorce. Divorce is the final nail in the coffin of a long and painful death to a relationship. A death that is caused by hard hearts that do not love. Sometimes it is one-sided as one person in the relationship continually destroys it. Often both people in the relationship contribute to its destruction. Always there is hurt and pain and wounded people.

Far too often hearts do not soften, and marriages end in divorce. Jesus once met a Samaritan woman at a well. She had been married five times and was now living with a man outside of marriage. Did he write her off? No! He spoke to her with compassion, offering her the water of life and many townsfolk were led to faith in Jesus through her witness. Jesus does not want people to divorce but when they do, he meets them in their pain and brokenness and offers new life. For those who can see no alternative but to divorce and those who have experienced divorce, Christ is there for you. As Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” Matt 11:28.

Out of his love and concern for us, Jesus wants to remind us that God has established marriage and is for marriage. As Jesus blesses the little children, we are reminded that Jesus also wants to bless marriage. He has provided a path for us away from brokenness and toward love and reconciliation. A path that he has prepared for us by his death and resurrection.

As we look at Jesus, we are reminded that we don’t have to stay trapped in our hard heartedness. We can turn to God in repentance, seeking his forgiveness and through the Word and Spirit have our hardened hearts softened and filled with God’s forgiving love. As we have first been loved by God, we can stop our destructive and hurtful, thoughts, words and actions and replace them with love, empathy, and compassion. As we have been forgiven by God, we can forgive. Knowing God wants our marriages to be strong, resilient, and loving, you can we can constantly ask God to bless them.

**Amen**

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz