

**The Second Lenten Midweek, Wednesday, March 11, 2020**

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## **Our Faithful Bridegroom**

Exodus 20:14; Genesis 2:15–24

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Eph 1:2*

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The text of the Sixth Commandment from Exodus: **“You shall not commit adultery”** (v 14).

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We all know how marriage is regarded in our world today, especially marriage between one man and one woman. It’s considered old-fashioned, unimportant, restrictive and narrow. Some even call it hateful and bigoted. We’re told that there are as many genders as there are people. We’re told that intimate relationships can be as varied and diverse as the imagination allows, and, oh, how our imaginations run wild! Marriage itself is now being redefined. Its most extreme opponents openly express their desire to destroy marriage and the natural family altogether.

I think that marriage—marriage as God intended it—is the greatest martyr on earth in our day, or at least one of the greatest martyrs in our culture and society. The Sixth Commandment, **“You shall not commit adultery”** (Ex 20:14), seems downright quaint in a time of polyamory, throuples, open relationships, sexting, hookups, and porn as close as the nearest screen. All of these make a mockery of marriage, which is to say, they make a mockery of God.

But let’s not kid ourselves that the problem is simply out in the world. Have we Christians *really* held marriage and the sexual union in high regard? We breathe the same air as everyone else. We watch the same movies, listen to the same music, laugh at the same jokes. Some statistics suggest that divorce, porn use, and views of marriage are similar among Christians as in the rest of the population. What infects the world, infects us. It shapes how we think, how we speak, how we live. Instead of being the salt of the earth when it comes to marriage, we’re more likely to lose our saltiness and succumb to the blandness of sin.

If *we* wink at sin, if *we* laugh at unchastity, why would we expect the world to be any different?

The truth is that we can't fix the world. We can't even fix ourselves. We can't restore marriage or end sexual sin or turn the clock back to a previous era—not in the world, not even in our lives. And the future, it seems, is just as bleak.

Our world may not hold marriage in high regard. We may struggle to hold marriage in high regard. But there is *One* who does hold marriage in high regard—God. Marriage belongs to Him, not to us. The purposes of marriage— help and support, mutual delight and joy, procreation—are His purposes, not ours. And the strength to lead chaste and decent lives in what we say and do won't come from within us but from Him.

In Genesis 2, you heard where marriage came from. God made Adam from the dust of the ground. Then, while Adam slept, God formed Eve from his side. He **brought her to the man, and the man said**, dancing and singing, **“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”** *Therefore*—the Holy Spirit says—**a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh** (Gen 2:22–24). Adam and Eve in the Garden, before the fall into sin, are the pattern and type of true marriage. Call it old-fashioned. Call it unimaginative. Call it narrow and confining. I'll call it good, beautiful, and true.

But why should God be so dogmatic about marriage? Why is the union of husband and wife, and their faithfulness, so important to Him? After all, our marital status doesn't determine our identity, our worth, or our completeness as human beings. You who are the single or widowed are made in God's image, just like those who are married. In Christ, you **have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace** (Eph 1:7).

Why does marriage matter to God? Marriage matters to God because it points beyond itself to something bigger, to something HUGE! When the Holy Spirit moves St. Paul to speak to husbands and wives about love and submission, he ends with these words, **“This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church”** (Eph 5:32).

Marriage, chastity, and the Sixth Commandment are ultimately about Christ and the Church. In what way? Because Christ, the wounded bridegroom, **loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might make her holy, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish** (Eph 5:25–27). God created marriage as an icon, an

image, a window into the union of Christ and His Church. It's meant to be a picture of the Gospel, of the bridegroom who gives Himself fully, completely, even unto death, so that His bride will be forgiven and appear spotless, unblemished, holy, and radiant. Just as everything is shared between husband and wife, so Christ makes a great exchange with His bride. Her takes her sin, her unchastity, her sexual immorality, adultery, and mockery of marriage, and He dresses her in His own righteousness.

Jesus is the new Adam. On the cross, He left His Father in heaven and His mother Mary. He fell asleep in death, and from His side God took the material to create His bride the Church. **One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water** (Jn 19:34). Blood and water, from His side to the chalice and the font—Holy Baptism, Holy Communion, creating the Holy Christian Church, bride of Christ. Now bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh.

This, dear friends, is the one marriage that lasts. In our marriages, we pledge faithfulness till death us do part. This one goes beyond death.

JESUS CHRIST, THE BRIDEGROOM OF THE CHURCH, IS FAITHFUL  
UNTO DEATH . . . AND EVEN BEYOND.

He has not and He will not forsake us, divorce us, leave us, or mistreat us. He is utterly faithful, perfectly chaste, full of love and honor for you, His bride. He holds marriage in high regard. He will not dishonor it in any way. One Bridegroom, one bride, and a wedding feast that continues forever! Whatever comes in this life, whatever dishonor or disregard marriage may fall into, this is the future of marriage.

And I'll tell you what, this is what I want. Not old-fashioned, but eternal. Not restrictive and narrow, but secure. Not my sinful imagination running wild, but His holiness and righteousness covering me. This is how we regard marriage. Even better, this is how Christ, our faithful bridegroom, regards marriage.

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The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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*Phil 4:7*