

Who invented marriage? It's a simple question but an important question. Who invented marriage? It's an important question because if human beings invented marriage then they would have the right set the rules and parameters for marriage. But if God invented marriage, then he has the right to set the rules and parameters for marriage.

Our first lesson today tells us that God invented marriage. God united Adam and Eve in marriage and our first lesson says, **“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24)**. God invented, established and instituted marriage. Since God invented marriage, all of our thinking about marriage has to go back to “What did God intend when he invented marriage?” When we have questions like, “How long should a marriage last?” Or “What should the role of husband and wife be in marriage?” Or “How should husband and wife treat each other in marriage?” When we have questions like that we always have to go back to the question, “What did God intend when he instituted marriage?”

“When God invented marriage, how long did he intend marriage to last?” “When God invented marriage, what did he intend the role of husband and wife to be?” “When God invented marriage how did God want husband and wife to treat each other?” In all of our thinking about marriage we have to constantly go back to God's institution of marriage in Genesis 2 and ask, “What did God intend when he invented marriage?” Today we are going to look at and seek to follow **God's intention for marriage and family**.

Our Gospel for today starts out, **“Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ ‘What did Moses command you?’ he replied. They said, ‘Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away’ ‘It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law.’” (Mark 10:2-5)**. Moses had to regulate not just the religious but the civic life of Israel. If someone was going to sinfully divorce their wife, Moses required that he give his wife a certificate releasing her from that marriage so that she could get married again. It was a safe-guard for the wife. It didn't mean that the action of the husband was God-pleasing. The action of the husband in divorcing his wife wasn't what God intended when he invented marriage in the beginning. Jesus directs their attention back to what God intended when he invented marriage.

**“‘It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,’ Jesus replied, ‘But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female’ [And then Jesus quotes Genesis 2] ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’” (Mark 10:7-8)**

Did you notice that all three Scripture lessons today had a quotation from God's institution of marriage in Genesis chapter 2? The first lesson was God's institution of marriage in Genesis chapter 2. And then in our second lesson Paul said **“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31)**. That's a quotation from Genesis chapter 2. And then the Lord Jesus quotes it again in our Gospel. In their teaching about marriage both Jesus and Paul wanted people to go back to the beginning of creation and ask, “What did God intend when he invented marriage?”

So what can we tell about marriage from God institution of marriage? **“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Mark 10:8)** In marriage God unites a man and a woman together. And this union is so tight that the husband and wife are even called “one flesh.” Jesus says, **“So they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Mark 10:8b)**. It's really a special thing. If you are married God bound you and your spouse so closely together that you are even called one flesh. And Jesus' instruction to you today is “Do not break that bound.” Jesus says, **“What God has joined together let man not separate” (Mark 10:2)**. God binds husband and wife together and he intends that union to last until he takes one of the spouses home to heaven.

God binds husband and wife together and he intends that it would last for life. Now there are two ways that Scripture talks about in which people sinfully break this bond. A spouse breaks the bond of marriage either by unfaithfulness or by desertion. Jesus speaks of unfaithfulness in Matthew chapter 19, **“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matthew 19:9)**. Sexual immorality or sexual unfaithfulness breaks the marriage bond that God established. The second sinful way in which spouses break their marriage bond is by desertion. They willfully leave their spouse. The apostle Paul was talking about divorce and he said, **“If the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances” (1 Cor 7:15)**. When someone breaks a marriage bond through unfaithfulness or desertion, Scripture permits the innocent partner to acknowledge that the marriage bond has been broken and obtain a divorce.

If you are not the innocent party, if you are the one who broke your marriage bond through unfaithfulness or desertion you need to repent. You to be sorry for your sins and be willing to amend. Remember what Jesus said last week about unrepentant sin. He said unrepentant sin can send you to hell so you need to do everything you can to stop. And when we are sorry for our sins and when we turn to Jesus for forgiveness, then we can hear that Jesus shed his blood for this sin too. Jesus is your bridegroom who loved you and gave himself up for you to make you holy, cleansing you in baptism and making you radiant in his sight. And then for the penitent and forgiven sinner there follows fruits of repentance. The fruit of repentance for the person who has broken their marriage bond is to immediately stop any extra marital affairs they have been having. Another fruit of repentance is to seek to restore the marriage bond if that is possible. Sometimes it is not possible to restore what sin has ruined. If that’s the case then the fruit of repentance will be to follow God’s intention for marriage and family going forward.

But even if we haven’t gone so far as to break our marriage bond through unfaithfulness or desertion, that doesn’t mean that we have perfectly kept God’s intention for marriage. When husbands and wives say mean and biting words to each other, that’s not what God intended when he invented marriage. And it’s not an excuse to say, “They said hurtful things to me first.” Christian marriage needs confession and forgiveness, not an endless cycle of repaying insult for insult. “I’m sorry.” “I forgive you.” That’s what God intends for Christian marriage.

When husband and wife make God’s forgiveness the center of their lives, then that has a positive impact on their children. Our gospel says, **“People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’” (Mark 10:13-15)**

God’s intention for family is that we pass down the knowledge of Jesus to our children. One way of bringing your children to Jesus is by sending them to our Lutheran elementary school. In our school they hear and read and memorize God’s word. They sing and they pray and they see the example of Christian teachers. That’s one way to bring your children to Jesus. Another way to bring your children to Jesus is to bring them to Sunday school right after the service today. There is a poster in our narthex promoting Sunday school. The poster has a picture of Jesus welcoming little children and it says, “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me.’ Be with Jesus. Come to Sunday school and church.” Another way to bring your children to Jesus is to read a bible story book around your dinner table or at bedtime. Find as many ways as you can to bring your children to Jesus. Our gospel says, **“And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them” (Mark 10:16)**.

God’s intention for marriage and family is that they both center around Jesus, his love and his forgiveness. More and more gather your family around Jesus and you and your family will be richly blessed. Amen.