Genesis and the Divine Institution of Family 06/26/22

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I want to preface today’s remarks with an instructive, hopefully encouraging reminder for all of us.

Kerry said a very wise thing in our men’s Bible study the other day.

He said that the only thing that matters is that we and our family members will come to Christ and spend eternity together in heaven.

Think about this.

Boil it all down.

Get rid of anything extra in your minds and focus on the true purpose for the things you do.

What is the meaning in all of this?

Colossians 3:1 says, “**If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

What are we doing?

Why are we doing it?

Let the truth be your guide and your purpose.

Keep this in your heart and mind as we go through the sermon today.

This morning we will be dealing with God’s third Divine Institution as given in Genesis, the Family.

The family, as with all of God’s Divine Institutions has been under heavy attack beginning in the latter half of the 20th century, with the attack having been greatly accelerated in perhaps the past 20 years.

We’ll deal with the attack on the family in more depth next week, but for today, we will be talking about three things in regard to the family: The context into which God instituted the family unit, God’s definition of family, and God’s expectation for the family, or what His design for a family structure should be.

Before we get into the institution of family, let’s recap the difference between an institution and a convention, and then let’s quickly refresh ourselves on the first two Institutions, that of Responsible Labor and that of Marriage.

SLIDE 1

To begin with, remember that God had a specific organizational framework in mind when He created everything, so we should take these institutions, or ways of life seriously, since God not only instituted them, but also showed us how to participate in them.

If you’ll recall, we use the word “Divine” to describe these institutions we are working through, since they were established by God in His word.

They are not common or low, they are Divine, and they derive from God’s nature, so we should hold them in the highest regard and aspire to defend and practice them.

Institutions are organizational in nature, and they form building blocks for society.

They are not intended to be changed or done away with.

Conventions, on the other hand, are established by man, and are fluid and changeable.

The reason we always mention the two terms together is that they are commonly interchanged. This is to say that men try to conventionalize institutions.

Another way of saying this is that people try to turn what God meant to be an unchanging, foundational basis for organization into a mere convention so that they can alter what God intended to suit themselves.

We have witnessed a denigration of the first two Divine Institutions, Responsible Labor and Marriage, and we are also witnessing the effects of people redefining family, with devastating personal and societal effects.

SLIDE 2

Let’s take a second to recall the first two institutions given by God, that of responsible labor and its necessary companion, marriage.

The first image we see of God in scripture is Him as a worker, creating all that exists from the infinite intelligence that He has eternally possessed.

In Genesis 1:28, God tells man and woman to be fruitful, multiply, to subdue the earth and have dominion over all that live on the earth.

His first command to us is to get busy bearing fruit, multiplying, subduing and dominating His creation.

This is a call to productive, diligent responsible work.

In order to do this work, to fulfill this commission from God, the single man needed an equal and complementary partner.

The word helper is used twice in Genesis 2:18-20.

The word helper used here is ezer in Hebrew, which refers to the kind of help God offers through His Spirit.

The Spirit is referred to as Ezer all throughout the Old Testament.

This elevates the woman as a helper as someone provided by God, and it changes the nature of the word, help.

She is not a go-fer or someone to be ordered around, but an emissary of the Lord, offering comfort and counsel as a perfect complement to man’s effort to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion.

The relationship between a man and woman was intended to be beautiful type of the unity and harmony between man and God.

Once sin was committed, the fall of man caused a series of terrible consequences.

One of them is that the relationship between man and woman is marred and distorted.

Where there was intended unity, harmony and productive partnership, there is now competition for dominance, resulting in an ongoing battle for supremacy.

God said to Eve, “Your desire will be for your husband and he shall rule over you.”

This is a sad reality that should drive us to our knees before the Lord.

Ever since this curse was instituted among mankind, the man/woman relationship has been marked by strife and trouble.

This being said, it is still God’s intention that we fulfill His command to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion, and that one man and one woman should seek to join together and become one.

The same verse that establishes God’s singular, intransigent, institution of marriage gives us the next institution, that of family.

It also gives us an earthly purpose.

SLIDE 3

Genesis 2:24 says, **“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”**

Remember, this directive comes within the context of the previous directive to “be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion.”

Keep the purpose in focus...

Let’s break this down.

It begins with “Therefore,” which means we need to pay attention to what was just said.

In the previous verse (23), upon being presented with the woman by God, Adam breaks into a poetic song.

**“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”**

Adam continues naming all that God puts before him, and the best has been saved for last.

He calls the woman Isha.

This Hebrew word for woman is synonymous with the English word “wife.”

The obvious meaning here is that the woman and man are part of one another, and that God intends that they be together.

To this point, the Hebrew word for the man had been “adham”, but in verse 23 it is “Ish.” Through this use of language, we see that man (ish) and woman (isha) are connected and that they complete one another.

Back to verse 24, God says that this being the case, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, the woman.

It is interesting to note that at the time this command is given, there are as yet no fathers or mothers on earth.

God continues His work of creating something beautiful from nothing.

Marriage is given as something completely new, with no precedent outside of the infinitely wise mind of God.

Again, God’s definition of Family is

**“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”**

The assumption here is that man remains a member of the organizational unit comprised of Father and Mother, along with presumably any other siblings, working to fulfil the command to be fruitful, multiply and have dominion, until he is joined to his wife and leaves, becoming one flesh with her, at which point they eventually become Father and Mother, having children of their own, and so on.

This definition of a family, the only one, is given within the context of a purposeful directive (be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion), with an exclusive beginning (the conjoining of the man and the woman), and an open-ended assumption that this will continue ad infinitum on the God’s earth.

Also note here that God’s definition of family is literally part of the same sentence as His definition of marriage between one man and one woman.

In other words, there can be absolutely NO other definition of family.

As much as we would love to conventionalize God’s institution of family to fit our own desires and circumstances, we cannot.

God said it.

He laid out the parameter.

It is what it is, like it or not.

There is no room for interpretation or alteration.

We will either conform to His word or we will not.

SLIDE 4 (Roles within the family)

We are given in Genesis 2:24 the definition of both marriage and family.

This includes the components of a family of origin and of new families, but we must dig a little deeper in scripture to find context and forward function of these essential units of organization.

The three components of the family are man (father), woman (mother), and children (future mothers and fathers).

It is not enough to simply identify these parts or roles in a family, however.

It is crucial that we frame the purpose and function of family if we are to understand, follow, and ultimately model the form.

In other words, we need to know God’s will for the institution we are upholding.

SLIDE 5 (Purpose of the Family)

There are two overarching purposes for the family.

First and foremost, the purpose of the family should align with the individual purpose for existence, which is given to us in Deuteronomy 6:5-7

**5You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.**

**6“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.”**

Next week we will dive deeper into the purpose and function of family, but for today I want to view family in more general terms.

In these verses we see that the first purpose of the family, which follows the individual purpose, is that of devotion to the Lord, to fear Him and keep His commandments in our hearts.

In verse 7 we see that the spiritual purpose in our families is to pass this devotion and love for God on to our children .

Remember the wise words that Kerry Volz shared with me and the others in Bible study last week.

The only thing that truly matters is that we pass on our faith and that we are reunited in heaven with our Lord and those in first in our families, then with everyone else.

This should be our north star, our guiding principle.

Our purpose is to hand the baton of faith to the next generations and to perpetuate fear of and devotion to God.

If you look back on verse 3 we are told to do these things that it may be well with us and that we may multiply greatly.

God wants us to produce Godly fruit and to multiply.

His original command is always in action.

It too, must be a guide for us.

My question is this.

How many of us are fixed on these two purposes in all we do?

To love the Lord with all we have and to pass this love for Him on to the generations that follow us, and to be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion over the things God has given us?

Is this our goal?

What exactly is our goal, or what are our goals?

Do we operate with those in focus?

Or do we reactively drift along, hoping that things go our way?

Are we intentional?

Do we live and lead with purpose?

These questions lead me to the next point in the sermon.

As either fathers, mothers, or children who will one day be a father or mother, do we know our role within the family and are we purposely working to fulfill it?

I’m guessing that mostly the answer to these questions would be no.

This is not an indictment of any individual, just a general statement of the human condition. Without willfully following God’s instructions, we tend to just live, doing what pleases us and what is most expedient for us as an individual.

Like I said earlier, we will dive into this next week, but for now, let’s just look at the ideal.

What are the roles God has established for us?

How should things function within the family?

SLIDE 6 (The Roles within the family)

Let’s start with a quick refresher course on the Trinity, or the Triune nature of God.

The Wheatland Bible Church Statement of Faith has this to say regarding the Trinity**:**

**“We believe there is one and only one living and true God, and infinite Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love; and that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.”**

This is a pretty good statement and is completely in line with scriptural teaching and mainstream Christian doctrine.

What it is saying is that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4) and that within that “one” there is multiplicity, meaning that within that One essence, there are three distinct co-existent persons, co-eternal, and co-equal.

They are one and the same, but they perform distinct roles.

This is a great mystery to us as finitely minded humans.

It is unfathomable, actually, and it is a reality we can accept only by faith.

If all of God’s truths were openly revealed to us, there would be no need for faith.

He is not subject to our limited human reason.

The family is a picture or an image of the nature of God.

Father, mother, and children are all one, until such time as the children leave to form their own entity.

This product replication or family reproduction relates to God’s command to produce fruit and multiply.

Regarding the roles within the singular family unit, we will start with the Father, since that is where God began in His creation.

The Father bears the responsibility for the well-being of the family, and for any dysfunction within the family.

It is inescapable.

Ephesians 5:23 tells us that **“...the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church...”**

and verse 25 goes on to say**,**

**“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church.”**

As Head of the wife, it goes without saying that the husband is also head of the children.

As I have already said, we will amplify commentary on these roles next week, but for now it will be enough to know that the responsibility for the family rests on the husband, and that his function is to love his wife (and kids) as Christ loves his church.

The woman’s role as with the husband’s is delineated in Genesis.

The man, or husband, bears the responsibility for his family and all that that entails, but he cannot possibly fulfill his task alone.

A head cannot survive without the body.

Adam and Eve were mutually dependent, as are all husbands and wives.

The wife, or woman’s role is that of a helper.

Remember, I’m not talking about a person who simply takes orders and gets bossed around,

I’m talking about a helper fashioned after the Holy Spirit – equal parts counsel, comfort, and an enabling force.

The wind beneath the wings, so to speak.

A Complementary, equal help.

As the hands are to the head, so the wife is to the husband, the mother to the father, the woman to the man. It is a mirror of our relationship as believers to the One we believe in, Christ.

Children, both male and female, are in training to one day be men, husbands and fathers, or women, wives, and mothers.

This fact should dictate their behavior as well as that of their parents.

More on this next week.

This family arrangement, the Godly institution, was established before the fall.

What we have described today is perfection.

We all know that things are different now.

The expectation of God regarding families is unchanged, however.

The way He set it up is still the template we are required to follow.

The problem is that sin makes perfect families an impossibility.

If we were all honest, we could all say that we have failed to attain this standard in some way. For instance, I have been a poor example of a father much of the time.

I have rejected my God-given role and I have failed to accept the responsibility of taking leadership of my family.

Because of this, I have forced my wife to take that role, one which the curse indicates she would be more than willing to take, to the detriment of our family.

Things get out of whack when I don’t do what I am commanded to do.

But there is correction from the Lord, and His offer of reconciliation and regeneration.

No situation is beyond fixing if we are willing to submit to Him.

Next week we will discuss in much greater detail the purpose of families, roles within families, how we fail as families, but most importantly, God’s grace to us in regard to our families.

Remember, there is no condemnation in Christ, but in order for this to be the reality in our lives, we must be found in Christ.

How is this possible?

Let me tell you...

SLIDE 7

Application:

1. Understand God’s Definition of Family (Genesis 2:24)

2. Intentionally focus on God’s Purpose for the Family (Genesis 1:28, Deuteronomy 6:1-7)

3. Fulfill Your God-Given Role in Your Family (Ephesians 5:22-33, Ephesians 6:1)