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SERMON TITLE: **Why Get Married?**

Marriage Series: The Honeymoon is Not Over

SCRIPTURE: **Matthew 19:3-9**

DATE: **September 13, 2020**

View online service at www.fpcd.org/live-stream

Read also *Malachi 2:14-16*.

We are talking about marriage. Whether you are single or married, you need to see the goodness in marriage so that whether you want to marry or you've been married for a while, the honeymoon will not be over.

God's perspective helps you accomplish just that.

After all, God gives "love advice"—how- tos for a successful marriage. It's true. You heard his advice through Malachi. Let's begin there.

Here is God's key advice to those who belong to Him:

- **The LORD witnessed the vows** – so marriage includes not just the horizontal relationship with your spouse but also a vertical relationship with God
- **The LORD blesses faithful partners** – who faithfully keep their vows
- **The LORD made you one with your wife** – your union brings forth godly children
- **The LORD hates divorce** – divorce overwhelms your spouse with cruelty
- *So Guard your heart; remain loyal; do not be unfaithful*

Marriage reflects the love of God between you and God.

Picture an A-frame house. The two vertical sides of this type of house hold each other up. The horizontal foundation holds the two sides. It takes all three sides—you, your spouse and God. God vows to be a part. You say your vows to God, with the promise like this:

*I take you to be my wife (husband);
And I promise, before God and these witnesses,
To be your loving and faithful husband (wife);
In plenty and in want;
In joy and in sorrow;
In sickness and in health;
As long as we both shall live.¹*

These vows reflect the loving loyalty God has toward you when you believe in Him through Jesus.

Jesus hasn't changed the view of marriage. Hear what he said about it when . . .

Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?" "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together." "Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?" they asked. Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended. And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful." (Mt. 19:3-11)

Why would we start our talk about marriage with divorce? Many of us have experienced divorce. Both Dean and I experienced the pain of divorce early on in our lives. What God says is true. Divorce is extremely painful, and it hurts far more than the two people involved. But divorce, whether you have experienced it or not, helps us understand its antithesis—*faithfulness*.

Faithfulness means you see it through.

Marriage as God defines it is like the saving love of God through Jesus. Marriage helps us understand the gospel, because **Jesus saw God's plan through**. Jesus was faithful unto death.

The center of marriage is covenant love. That's love that commits. Tim Keller defines a covenant marriage as a lifelong, monogamous relationship between a man and a woman bringing them together into an enduring whole-life union.² This is the biblical view.

Our study is about Christian marriage. The Bible often critiques various cultural practices like polygamy and homosexuality, showing us the results. Just because the Bible shows these lifestyles, it does not mean it embraces them. Instead, the Bible points us to the stance of monogamy in a male-female marriage, even though our culture has deviated from this

¹Book of Common Worship, prepared by The Theology and Worship Ministry Unity for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, (Louisville: Westminster/John Know Press, 1993), 845.

² Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2011), p. 8.

view. (For those who do not marry, the New Testament also introduces long-term singleness as a legitimate way of life.³)

So when you think of the Bible's stance, Keller points out that it is not simply a reflection of cultural norms and beliefs but it transcends those perspectives of particular times and cultures and **paints God's aspirations for the covenant of marriage.**⁴

So far we see that COVENANT means:

- God is involved – God witnesses your vows
- Faithfulness – love to the end like Jesus
- Community – the man and woman whose union creates an environment of stability where children are born and can flourish

It's not a "ME-marriage" to fulfill my needs and desires. Covenant love is a Sacramental Commitment to the good of the other. It's about love and law.

You make a binding marriage vow before God and you stick with it. That's a covenant. That's law. That sounds tough, right? There's always a catch, you say. But I hope I can build a case for it. It's actually a blessing.

Who remembers Woodstock? It was a time of throwing off the law. Before then, you may not believe it, but free love was not the norm. People did not live together unmarried. But the sexual revolution begun by Woodstock was the casting off of the vow which curtailed your freedom. Tim Keller says this is about "current love." But when you take a marriage vow, *then your love extends into the future*. You are the recipient of love and also the giver of love. Think of Ben Harper's song, "Forever,"⁵ which Jennifer sang so beautifully.

Covenant is about love and law.

Let's see how Jesus did it:

Remember Peter when he denied Jesus three times? It was really bad and hurtful. Peter had abandoned Jesus. But the first thing Jesus said to Peter when he saw him was what? Peter, *do you love me?* The Greek word he used for love was "philia" – brotherly love to say "stick with me." Two times Jesus repeated it. Then the third time he used the Greek word "agape," God's self-giving, no-matter-what-the-failure love. *Peter, do you love me like God's faithful love?*

Let's apply that to a marriage. Your husband or wife says or does something really terrible and you don't know how you are going to get over it. Is there a way out of the hurt?

With Jesus there's always a way to overcome hurt, sin, and grievous behavior.

Once, early in my marriage to Dean, a friend was sharing a problem she had with her husband. She said, "Isn't it great that even when we disagree with our husbands, we have a lifetime to work it out?" That always stuck with me. Our marriage vows give us that time. Marriage vows make our relationship long-term and love is not subjective.

Take Abraham and Sarah. We know about their marriage because God made a covenant with Abraham that they would have a baby and the baby would lead to a long-term positive outcome. But God did not give a timeframe. God came back to remind Abraham of the promise again and again. But in the meantime Abraham's and Sarah's actions were to:

- Get discouraged
- Solve their own problems
- Try polygamy
- Get mad at each other
- Grow cynical about their old age

But when the promise came Abraham and Sarah were there together, and they even named their baby Isaac, which means "to laugh, to rejoice."

Weren't all these problems God's fault? God delayed the promise. But it took all those years for God to help them work out their marriage, to refine their characters, to make them truly one with each other and in their relationship with God.

Sometimes we are deceived into thinking love and marriage is subjective. It's all about me. But it is not about me; not about momentary attraction or sex or performance or my feelings or my being excited about someone or my happiness as an end in itself or let's just live together because I might find someone better down the road. That's consumer love and it will not last.

That's a lot of baggage which you will carry from person to person to person.

Why get married? God has a better vision for you; a long-term future.

Should you have aspirations for marriage. Don't compromise by living together in subjective, uncommitted love. Set as a goal of actually finding the right person and getting married. If you are married but having trouble, let that covenant love sustain you through it. Put your effort into living into your vow, understanding your promise, letting the Lord help you grow your love. Then, it will grow and benefit not only you, but your children and those around you.

AMEN

³ Paul embraced singleness because it gave him time to be focused on the Lord's concerns. See 1 Cor. 7:7-8, 32-35.

⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵ Check out "Forever" by Ben Harper on YouTube. Be sure to notice the lyrics.