

## Luke 20:27-38

## “A Marriage (NOT) made in Heaven”

Some people have asked me and my wife, Cara what the secret is to our long and happy marriage. We will celebrate 23 wonderful years of marriage in February. The secret to our long and happy marriage is that we take time to go to a restaurant two times a week for a little candlelight, dinner, soft music and dancing. She goes on Tuesdays. (smiling) I go on Fridays. Just kidding!!

Recently, *The Atlantic* magazine asked the question, “What was the world's worst marriage?” Up for consideration were Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton – twice married and twice divorced. Britney Spears and Jason Alexander, whose marriage lasted only 55 hours. And, Henry VIII and his wives, Catherine, Kathyrn, Katherine, Anne, Anne or Jane. Did I forget to mention Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries?

Some marriages are not made in heaven. But as it turns out, according to Jesus, even if your marriage is picture-perfect, it was not made in heaven. Married life is meant to give us a taste in this world of something we will have in full from God in our life to come.

Marriage can be messy. Well, life is messy, so that’s no surprise, right? But, let's be clear, marriage can also be beautiful, and fun, and a deeply fulfilling gift from God.

Still, a great marriage takes work, compromise, patience, forgiveness – and, a whole lot more. It is a playground for mistakes to be made that can create lasting wounds, or betrayals that bruise the soul. It is also is a place where certain levels of intimacy can bring great blessing, but also great burden.

And why shouldn't marriage be these things? Think about it. **(PP)** Marriage is an institution handcrafted by God for *broken people*. It connects two individuals, and fuses them together as one, within an equally broken world. The goal, of course, is to create a union that, despite its baggage, is better together than apart. And, a vast majority of the time marriage is a great union because two persons in union together as one, help to meet deep needs, share great joy, and create much beauty.

Despite the chaos and craziness that can occur in marriage, it is still an essential and beautiful part of God's created order. And, marriage exists to meet certain needs today - needs that we will not have in Christ's future and coming reign.

But until that day, marriage remains essential. And, this is precisely the point that Jesus makes in our Scripture lesson. He is asked a question about marriage in the resurrection, and his reply pretty much says, "Hey, NO marriage in heaven (or in the life to come); so, it's better to work on your marriage in this life, than to worry about a marriage in the next one."

Now, let me add that not all people are called to marriage. Some people may not be in a marriage for a number of different reasons. Even the apostle Paul suggested that it might be better, if possible, to remain in a state of singleness, in order to be more wholly devoted to God.

In our Scripture lesson, Jesus is approached by the religious leaders of his day, who did not buy the idea of a resurrection of the dead. They use a theological riddle about marriage to see how Jesus will respond.

And, Jesus answers them by basically saying, "Look, don't use marriage in this world to disprove God's promises about life in the next one.

Marriage is a gift for today, meeting needs that will be filled in different ways in the world to come at my return.”

So, let’s talk about what Jesus is really saying...

First, **(PP)** marriage was made for life and death. In this world life is fragile. It begins with babies that are breakable, beautiful and absolutely dependent. They need mom to feed them, dad to burp them, and two committed, complementary adults creating a playground of growth, safety and joy for them.

Likewise, as we get older, moms and dads become like their children once were. They become breakable, dependent and desperately in need of the nurture and the comfort that a spouse can provide. It comes in the form of trips to the doctor's office with hands held, sitting by each other's side when one enters an assisted-living facility, and making sure their best friend maintains their dignity even as their body begins to bend toward the grave. Marriage provides a cradle for the beautiful fragility of human life.

However, in the age to come, the burden of death, and the fragility of life will be gone. Jesus promises in our future life, we “cannot die anymore” (v. 36). You will no longer need to be reminded to take your medicines, be helped up the stairs, or encouraged through cancer treatments. The cradle that marriage provides for our fragile human lives will be retired by bodies that are raised imperishable to enjoy an eternal existence.

Second, **(PP)** marriage is made for oneness and companionship. Sure, we can experience this in our relationships with friends and extended family. But when a husband and wife play together, work together, argue together, parent together, study Scripture together, share a bed

together, and forgive together – well, over the course of decades, that's what you call intimacy. Our need to be deeply known, and to have our weaknesses balanced by another's complementary strengths – it's all there in marriage.

The record for the longest marriage in history belongs to Daniel and Susan Bakeman. Until Susan's death in 1863, the couple enjoyed 91 years and 12 days of married life. Think about it: almost a century of sharing, connecting and being vulnerable with one person! Sure, they must have experienced hundreds of messy marriage moments, but one could bet that after year 75 or 80 years of marriage, Susan and Daniel could read one another's minds, and finish each other's sentences.

And yet, even that level of oneness pales in comparison to what we will experience in Christ's Kingdom to come. In this age, marriage helps fill the gap that separates us from our Creator, whom we now see, feel and know, only in part. The Apostle Paul said, "Now, we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror, but then (in the Kingdom to come at Christ's return), we will see everything with perfect clarity, for we will see Him face to face. (1 Corinthians 13:12 NLT).

It is difficult for us to grasp what that sense of wholeness in God's presence will be like. But again, marriage gives us the best glimpse. Have some of you experienced that moment when you're in the arms of the one you love, and all seems right in the world?

A sense of satisfaction fills your heart, a smile creeps across your face, and you think to yourself, "If I could just press *record* on this feeling – in this moment – I would replay it over and over and over. In fact, I would live in it forever." Perhaps *that* is a faint fragrance of the fulfillment we will know in Christ.

I know it is hard to grasp, but someday there will be a new creation. Imagine a world where there is an unshakeable love, with no hint of an underlying worship of self; a world where, as children of God, we will be blessed with and enjoy unquestionable protection, providence and care. God tells us in his Word that three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

**(PP)** Marriage, as God created it to be, is a wonderful opportunity for blessing and happiness, offering to us today the greatest glimpse of the satisfaction, the wholeness, and the stability we will experience in full, through Christ, at his return. May God bless you all. Amen.

*Sermon Notes*

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- ❖ Marriage is an institution handcrafted by God for *broken people*.
- ❖ Marriage exists to meet certain needs today - needs that we will not have in Christ's future and coming reign.
- ❖ NO marriage in heaven (or in the life to come); so, it's better to work on your marriage in this life, than to worry about a marriage in the next one.
- ❖ Not all people are called to marriage.
- ❖ Marriage is a gift for today, meeting needs that will be filled in different ways in the world to come at Jesus' return.
- ❖ Marriage was made for life and death.
- ❖ The cradle that marriage provides for our fragile human lives will be retired by bodies that are raised imperishable to enjoy an eternal existence.
- ❖ Marriage is made for oneness and companionship.
- ❖ Marriage, as God created it to be, is a wonderful opportunity for blessing and happiness, offering to us today the greatest glimpse of the satisfaction, the wholeness and the stability we will experience in full, through Christ, at his return.

May God bless you!