

John 2.1-11
2nd Sunday after the Epiphany of Our Lord
20 January 2019
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

+ INI +

Beloved in the Lord: grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

In 1520 if you wanted to be holy, this is what you did. You left home. You left behind the community you had grown up in. You got your head shaven. You took a vow of poverty, obedience, and celibacy. No possessions, not even your clothing. No more connection to family. The abbot had become your father and the monks your brothers. And certainly no wife or husband. Because celibacy isn't chastity.

And all of it a travesty of the Lord's created order. A travesty of what the Lord had created and given: The 7th Commandment, You shall not steal, as if owning property were a sin. The 4th Commandment: Honor your father and your mother. And the 6th Commandment, protecting your very own husband or wife. Why would the good Lord have given the 6th Commandment, You shall not commit adultery, if He didn't want you to lead a chaste—not celibate—and decent life in word and deed? And for husband and wife to love and honor one another? Why would the Lord have done that if marriage itself, and all that pertains to it, weren't a dear and good thing given to you for your benefit.

No, in 1520, instead, all of this, the Lord's created order declared unholy. Put on a monk's cowl. And spend the rest of your life in self-flagellation and prayer.

It boggles the mind, doesn't it? Why? Why trade in all these good things the Lord created and ordered for ... something else? Anything else?

Because this is how it always goes. Always. Whatever the Lord has created and called good, we call bad. Whatever the Lord has given us for our benefit, we think little of it. And in the absence of those things we think little of, we ... well ... we invent our own ways to seize and capture our good. And don't think the devil isn't laughing all the way to the bank. This is his stock in trade: to make the good creation of God appear bad.

That was 1520.

I'm not sure if it's funny or just predictably depressing. But 2019, almost 500 years later, haven't we done the same thing all over with marriage? Only this time around it's not the prudish celibacy of the Medieval world. That was at war with the very nature of human beings who were created male. And female and made sex completely prohibited.

It's the license and freedom of modernity. That's the destruction of the very nature of human beings who in their maleness and femaleness were created for marriage. In the 1520s it was the non-use of God's gift. In 2019 it's the wrong use of God's gift. And like using your curling iron when you're in the shower, it doesn't ruin the curling iron. It ruins you.

All you've gotta do is look at yourself in a mirror. You're either a girl or a boy. "Male and female He created them," Genesis says.

And in that wonderful design of the human mind and body the Lord has already written your destiny: you're destined, created, for marriage with a person of the opposite sex. And destined and created to use your own sex only within that marriage. Not before it. Not alongside of it. Not with someone of the same sex. But with your very own God-given wife. With your very own God-given husband. Till death do you part.

Whether it's *prohibiting* your use of sex by prohibiting marriage, the highest holiness in 1520. Or whether it's *liberating* your use of sex, the fashion of 2019. It doesn't matter.

At their root the holy monkishness of 1520 and the fashionable promiscuity of 2019 are just the same. It's not just crossing an arbitrary line drawn in the sand. It's a destruction of the order the Lord God Himself created. It's a repeat, all over again, of "Did the Lord really say?"

If that's you, don't excuse your sin. Confess it. And turn from it. Put it behind you. Because the longer it goes on the greater the damage. To you. To your partner. To your family present and future. To your neighbor. To our society. In other words, reform your ways.

The Word of God has that way with things. Reforming, that is.

That's exactly what happened in the 1520s. The Word of God was brought to bear. And the fashion and holiness of the day were overthrown.

The Reformers in Wittenberg read a passage like the Wedding at Cana, and it set everything straight for them. Why? Because it's not human fashion and human holiness that have the last word; it's God. And His Word. And here in His holy Word in His only Son Jesus Christ, God shows His joy and pleasure in this most primal of His created orders. Fellow-redeemed: Jesus loves marriage. Jesus loves for you to be married and to remain married. Jesus loves for you to live faithfully and chastely and decently with your spouse. Before marriage. During marriage. And after it.

That's why the Lord Jesus is even at the wedding. The Lord and God of heaven and earth who breathed life into Adam's nostrils. And then took a rib from his side and gave him his wife—here He returns. And just as He walked in the Garden in the cool of the day with the first married couple, Adam and Eve. And spoke to them the first words of Gospel, that He would crush Satan's head, so does He come to these latter-day, no-name Adam and Eve at a wedding party in Cana in the midst of their own marriage. The Crusher of the serpent's head. Not as promise, but as fulfillment.

Yes, the Lord Jesus loves marriage. And He loves for you to be married.

And there could almost be no better place for Him to have come than right here.

Returning right back to where sin started—in marriage.

It was there that the first sin of omission took place. It was, after all, Adam's job to jump up and scream "No!" as the devil fed Eve with lies. But he didn't. It was there that the first temptation to sin took place. It was Eve, after all, who enticed Adam to eat. She shouldn't have. It was there that the first attempt to

excuse sin and blame someone else was made. Self-justification, we call it. “It was the woman You gave me,” Adam said. He should have simply confessed his sin and turned from it. But he didn’t.

And what the Lord had created very good was turned into what Pr. Kerns would call hot mess.

But that’s never what the Lord wanted for His creation. At all.

Instead, He came to earth in the flesh born of Mary to confirm the goodness of His creation. To redeem it from the self-destructive futility to which it had consigned itself. To restore it to its former goodness.

That’s what’s so amazing about the wedding at Cana. Jesus doesn’t avoid the hot mess that sin made of marriage. Instead, He walks right into it.

Just as He wants to walk right into your own marriage.

Why? Because He came to deal with precisely the thing that has made such a hot mess out of marriage—sin. He came to call those trapped and caught in sin to repentance. Just as He called to repentance the monks of 1520. And calls you to repentance today in 2019. Repentance over marriages that have grown loveless. Repentance over sins of omission and commission. Repentance over whatever travesty you’ve made of marriage. Repentance, yes.

But He also came to forgive repentant sinners.

Maybe you missed it.

“This Jesus did as an archetype of signs, and manifested His glory.” That’s how John rounds out the Wedding at Cana. It’s the archetype of Christ’s signs. It’s the demonstration of His true glory.

And it’s pure Gospel. For the glory of Jesus is nowhere so clearly revealed as in His holy Cross. His hour hadn’t yet come at Cana. That’s what He told Mary.

But it was to come. And that hour was the hour of His death. The hour at which what Cana could only point to was fulfilled. The hour at which the Lamb of God who bore the world’s sins became the Scapegoat for the world’s sins. And was put to death. So that every sin that rested on Him—whether sins against God or man—was expiated, paid for, done away with, removed. The hour at which every water used for ritual cleansing by the Jews was superseded by the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all unrighteousness. The once for all sacrifice for sin. The hour at which glory of God in Christ is revealed to be this: that God gives *Himself* for you. His death for your life. His sacred body as the last, final, and only-availing offering for your sin. That’s His glory.

That’s what His disciples saw. And they believed. They believed in Him.

In 1525, at age 42, the former monk Martin Luther, whose monk’s life had made a travesty of the Lord’s created order, finally got married. To Katharina von Bora. A former nun. Luther didn’t really “desire” the marriage. He even admitted he didn’t at first find his wife very attractive. Instead, he said he did it to spite the pope. That’s just another way of saying he did it because *Jesus* loves marriage. And he did it to turn away from a holiness and godliness of his own making. Because here, in God’s holy ordinance of marriage, he had found a holiness and godliness of *God’s* making.

A holiness in this world that is for the good of his neighbor: his wife Katy was a disowned, run-away nun. She needed him.

But even more, he knew and believed what the disciples believed at Cana. Even though he was turning from his own righteousness to embrace God's holy ordinance, there would still be plenty of sin to go around to mar his marriage. Just as it had every other marriage.

But the same Lord Jesus who attended the wedding at Cana would also attend his. And what the Lord Jesus would bring was not only His pleasure in marriage. He'd even visit his marriage and Katy's with the forgiveness of sins. With the same forgiveness of sins that this archetype of signs signified. The forgiveness of sins in the blood of the Son of God.

You have that, too. Every one of you. Married or unmarried. No matter the mess you've made of God's good order.

Repent. Yes. But for the love of God: know and cling to this: the Lord Jesus has come to forgive sins. Even yours. That's His glory.

Amen.

pax domini, etc.

jsb
sdg