

Genesis 2:18-25 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man^[a] there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called Woman,^[b]

for out of Man^[c] this one was taken."

²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Mark 10 (READ 6-9)

He left that place and went to the region of Judea and^[a] beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them.

²Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." ⁵But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,^[b] ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

1 Corinthians 13:4-13 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly,^[a] but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Anne Wulf and Jason Shapiro

Wedding Message, June 27, 2015

You may have noticed that the first two scripture readings, the one from Genesis and the one from Mark sounded a lot alike. There's a reason for that. Jesus is quoting from Genesis to make a point. The part I didn't read is the part that tells you *why* Jesus was reiterating a text from the ancient Torah. The truth is - and it's a little bit embarrassing on a day like today - Jason and Anne picked a teaching on divorce to have read at their wedding. We typically don't talk about that part when this reading is included – but I think there is reason to mention it, even now.

But that may be because of my own warped sense of humor. My husband and I served “Alimony Ale” at our wedding reception. He's a bitter beer lover, and at the time it was labeled, “The bitterest brew in America.” And with reason! Bad humor aside, divorce is a terrible wounding to the soul. No one really wants to think about divorce on the day of their wedding, and this lovely couple didn't exactly ask me to mention it either. But there are likely a few people here today whose marriages didn't end in “as long as we both shall live,” or in the older language of the vows “til death do us part.”

So the religious “somebodies” come to Jesus to ask him his opinion. What do you think about divorce? Is it allowable? The law tells us we can do it. Jesus

tells them that it is indeed permissible according to the Law of Moses. It's permissible because we humans are inclined to hurt one another, in fact to deeply wound one another, and we all know that there are some wounds that simply cannot be mended. And yet, he chooses in his explanation to go back deeper than the law, to the very foundations of creation to get at the answer we'd expect from a loving soul like Jesus. He quotes Genesis, saying, "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh." Then he adds his own Midrash, his own interpretation of the text, saying: "Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."

That's why we've gathered here today – to bear witness to this mystical union of two people who are pledging their lives to each other. Marriage is more than just a legal certificate, binding, but breakable. It is a sacred promise to endure the sacrifices the two must make in order to build this inexplicable oneness that goes all the way back to the primordial awareness of creation. The wedding is a spectacular day – full of celebration and joy. Today you are the center of attention for family and friends. They wish you well, and want every day forward to be the wedded bliss you imagine that it could be. But this community is also here today to be your support when it isn't all sunshine and roses. They have promised to be

your people in times of trouble. Count on them. Trust me. Having a community helps!

The wedding is the symbol; but the marriage is the real deal. I can promise you that it will be a life-long blessing, but that blessing comes only by taking it one day, one step, one moment at a time. Marriage is hard – sometimes especially hard for smart, dedicated, driven, successful people like Jason and Anne. Equality in relationships is not a given in our culture. Shared responsibility takes conversation and negotiation, and a heaping dose of sometimes doing the things that we “LEAST” want to do. Then in due time, perhaps children enter into your care, and they require more of your energy, imagination, and resources than you ever thought possible. Brace yourselves!

Which brings us to the third reading - also an important one. In writing to the church at Corinth Paul draws on the wisdom of his time, some of it Hebrew, some of it Roman, to record this love poem that is likely more an edit of multiple sources than his own original draft. God may join a husband and wife to one another, but in order for that inseparable union to really take hold, love has to be at the center, and love requires much of us, sometimes the qualities that are hardest for us to give. Patience and kindness are in short supply when we find ourselves stressed. We long to be right. We long to be needed. We long to be supported. And

in order for those things to happen to us, we also have to give our praise, and affection, and encouragement.