

Untitled (49)

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[0:00] Go ahead. The biblical account of redemption begins to take shape with the story of Abraham, to whom God said, I will make your descendants as numerous as the sand on the sea or as the stars in the sky.

And through you all families on earth will be blessed. To forward this promise required that Abraham have a son.

And he had to raise that son. Hence, early on, we encounter the importance of families in the outworking of God's purposes in reversing the effects of sin.

We often think that salvation, we think of it in kind of individualistic terms. And of course, that is a necessary work of God in us individually.

But if you read carefully what's going on in the whole history of salvation, God intends to redeem all of culture. He intends to redeem the nations.

[1:13] He intends to redeem families. And this basic unit in which redemption is nurtured is that family unit.

We are social creatures. God said in looking at his creation in Adam, it's not good for this one to remain alone.

Now, we have two accounts of the creation of humankind. In the first account, God creates everything there is.

And at last, before he rested, he created us. Male and female. It's very clear at that point. And this is from what we call the priestly documents of the Old Testament.

These are accounts that have, they're like the Gospels. They give us a slightly different perspective on what's going on. And together, we have more truth than if we only had one of these accounts.

[2:27] So in this priestly account, which is very concerned for the law and what God is doing and what God is ordaining, we have human beings, male and female, created simultaneously, equally, together, they are ordained to multiply, fill the earth, and sort of superintend the earth.

This is where our theology of the ecosystem comes. We've not done a good job at this. We are just beginning to learn the consequences of not taking care of this home that God has given us.

By the way, this is where we're going to live. New heaven and new earth. The new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven.

So we can't escape this. As a matter of fact, we are intricately woven together with all that God has created, that he pronounced very good.

And this ultimately will be our home. The restoration of Eden. The restoration of God's reign. After he has dealt a death blow to the distortions of sin.

[3:57] And in working that out, he works it out within the systems that he has ordained because they're the best way for us to live. So in the first account, we see that we are one creature.

As I've said before, you may not remember, but if some alien race came and began to do an analysis of earth, they would look at both male and female and they would go, ah, one species.

We are one species expressed in two sexes. In the second account, however, there's a very interesting take on this.

Everything is created and then, almost everything, then Adam is created and it's as though God is doing an experiment.

Adam says, it's not good for this creature of mine to be alone. And so God makes the animals and brings them to Adam to name. Now, it's interesting, this naming process in the Hebrew culture, in the Hebrew mindset of that day, to know somebody's name was to have power over them, was to understand their essence.

[5:17] That's why God said, you will not take my name. You will not use my name futilely. You cannot use my name magically the way the pagans use their God's names. It won't work. I'm not a vending machine.

I don't care how many quarters you put in. I'll give you what you need and not what you want. So here, the animals are created and brought to Adam and the context suggests to see if they're compatible with him.

Do they correspond to him in a way that he can work with and have an intimate relationship? And after naming them, essentially either recognizing or sort of portioning out, meeting out their character, I'm going to call you lion.

You will have a stout heart, essentially. I will call you monkey. You will be the jokester of the case. I will call you dog. You will eventually, after you get over being a wolf, be man's best friend.

And that's what's going on there. But all that passed by. And still, there was not a creature found who corresponded well to Adam.

[6:29] And God said, ah. And he caused a deep sleep to come on Adam. Perhaps this was the first surgery, the first anesthetic. I don't know. And while Adam was sleeping, God took of his own flesh.

Now, God created everything that was created out of the dust. He created Adam out of the dust.

Why didn't he just go get more dust? Because he wanted a perfect correspondent to Adam.

This is the force of this. A perfect correspondent. And so he took from Adam himself. And brought to him Eve.

And Adam said, finally. Finally. This is a bit of humor, actually. It was like, finally, Lord. Somebody I can relate to. And although these are slightly different perspectives on the creation account, they both come down to the same thing.

These two people together make what humans are. These two together make one. So Adam didn't lose anything.

[7:42] He gained something. Something about his original self was somehow separated so that he could be both subject and object.

He could see himself. And the scripture calls it a helpmate. This is really. More like someone who is like me.

Someone who corresponds to me. And God brought them together. And then there's a commentary that doesn't belong there. It's for much later. And the commentary is.

And for this reason. A man will leave one family. His original family. And he will take his wife.

And they will be one flesh. And found a new family. We move from family to family. We're social creatures. We cannot do without each other.

[8:43] We learn best in a social context. Now, that doesn't mean that we don't need time apart, time alone, and so forth. But we recognize that extreme hermetism is a pathology.

It's not normal. We're not made to dwell in isolation. Now, you say, okay, but I'm not married. What does this mean for me?

Well, we may not be married now. But we have all arisen within the context of families. Now, in our broken world. Families are sometimes broken.

Parents are not perfect. Siblings are not perfect. And so there's a lot to be mended. But ideally, God constituted the family so that if you go to someplace like Deuteronomy 6.

Where as a parent, I am to teach the things of God to my children in the way I walk, in the way I talk, when we go to bed, when we get up, when we walk along the way.

[9:53] In families, this relationship of God, our understanding of ourselves in relationship to God, in relationship to each other, in relationship to nature.

All takes place in the family. So first, we are creatures who must have families.

And the wonderful thing about the body of Christ is there's a psalm in which the psalmist says, he puts the lonely in families.

We, of all institutions on earth, should be the exemplar of godly families.

We should be the exemplars of godly marriage. We should make marriage and family look so appealing that people are hungry for it just looking from the outside in.

[10:59] And as the pagan said of the early Christians, look how they love one another. And that doesn't mean that they went around sopping on each other all the time.

It means that in their daily lives, they showed forth Christ toward each other and toward the community in such a way that it was different and it stood out as different.

It's like someone who's been living on junk food suddenly discovers a Thanksgiving dinner. And you go, whoa, what is that?

Just the fragrance is enough to make you put down your Cheetos. You didn't realize you were hungry until you encountered real food.

You didn't realize there was anything better than these things that you get out of vending machines that can be a hundred years old and they're still edible, sort of.

[12:02] They wrap themselves immediately around your cholesterol center and pump that number up like crazy. It's not real food. But when you encounter real food, you sort of know it.

And if you're really hungry and you're really starving, like a person who's been lost in the Adirondacks for a week or two, when you encounter real food, it's something like an epiphany. You suddenly realize that you're a frail creature who has a need that goes beyond merely snacking in between meals. You really do need water.

You really do need protein. And the church should be showing people where the water and the protein is and how we live, how we treat each other, how we constitute and reconstitute families. Because we do live in a broken world. And divorce does happen. And thank goodness there is healing and forgiveness when we come to the Lord.

[13:07] We have the ideal. We know what that is. A day is coming, folks, when that ideal is going to be fulfilled. All the tears will be wiped away.

All the hurts will be healed. But we can be showing that forth now because we are kingdom people. We live in the kingdom. Secondly, God made us able to form families.

And he made us able to nurture families. And we can be about that. How many of you have had aunts and uncles who weren't really aunts and uncles by blood?

Am I the only one? And grandparents. And sisters. And brothers. And of course, in the church, we have that to a degree that we haven't even experienced yet.

You've got brothers and sisters all over the world. And if you came together under the right circumstances, you would sense that and you would be, you would work together. It really happens all the time on places like the mission field.

[14:17] Third, family is necessary for human flourishing. That is, it is the target of God's redeeming work.

Yes, there is individual salvation, as I said. But it comes to us through the redemption of families, culture, nations. First, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Then the twelve patriarchs. Then the nation of Israel. And David's house. And the king's. And now the church. Through Jesus Christ, the son of David.

The son of God. The son of man. It wasn't by chance that he was born into the household of Joseph.

And that he was conceived in the Virgin Mary. God was very particular about choosing that family. And you get the idea just from the way Joseph responded to the events and the way Mary responded that God chose well.

[15:21] God chose very well. In terms of the earthly nurture of our Savior who carries our flesh. Carried it in his life and carries it now transformed in heavenly fashion.

And sits at the right hand of the father. So with Abraham's heir, Jesus of Nazareth, son of David, son of God. God once again points to the role of family in the redemptive work.

That he is involved in. So marriage is not first a civil act. And here is the only way I feel is the right way to approach this whole thing vis-a-vis our culture.

It is not first a civil act. It is not first a social construct. You know what social constructs are. Social constructs are things that we have put in place.

They're dated. We put them in place at specific times in history for specific purposes. So there was a time when this nation ordained slavery.

[16:35] We no longer do that. We came to understand better. There was a time when women did not have the vote. We call it women's suffrage. We came to understand that that was stupid and we no longer have it.

There are lots of laws like that in this kind of a democracy. When we find that they're not working, we change them. And oftentimes we change them as society changed.

So let me tell you something. I don't blame people who have dissociated marriage from God if they want to tinker with what civil marriage is.

Because civil marriage has grossly subsumed marriage under God and in the church. Marriage is of the church.

There isn't anything civilly anybody can do to make a one flesh union. That is only from God. But if we treat it as though it is merely a civil act, then we tinker with it.

[17 : 44] We make an ordinance of God into our own image for our own purposes. Rather than letting God's purpose in marriage and by extension families shape us.

And that's what it should be. And this is what we must show forth to the world. If marriage then is not simply a human social construct, if it's ordained by God, we as Christians have a calling. Because it is through this ordained union that God will dispense grace and mercy and redemption and salvation.

As Christian families live out the very graces and life and goodness of Christ.

We should let these things change us. Whether we're single. Whether we're in broken families.

Whether we're in blended families. Whether we look forward to making new families.

[18 : 53] Someday our model is rooted in the ordinance of God. For redemptive purposes. This way we flourish best.

Children flourish best. People flourish best. People flourish best. In the context of the family. And the church is a wonderful place for a culture like ours.

Where there is so much brokenness. Because we can work to support each other. And help each other. And affirm each other. Even in our brokenness.

And we can point to God's ideal. And with the help of the Holy Spirit. We can attain that ideal. We don't need to beat each other up. We're pretty beaten up all by ourselves.

In the way life goes. So where are we today? You know it's interesting that the relationship of marriage becomes something of a parallel.

[19 : 57] To the relationship of Christ and his church. Isn't that interesting? With Christ being the bridegroom. And we being the bride. You talk about a family.

Wow. And we have a history. And we know what the outcome is. This body. This bride.

Being perfected. Being purified. Being cleansed. And on the way. And on the way. Salting. And lighting. The earth. Toward.

Really what. Is unimaginable. And. So today. Will those around us. Will those around us. See God's purpose and grace for the family.

If they don't see it in us. How will the world learn to cherish the vows of marriage. The accountability of parenting. The accountability of parenting. The blessing of holy family fellowship.

[20 : 57] If not from us. How will the culture come to understand that marriage is an ordinance of God. And not a mere social convenience. Unless they see in us.

The blessedness. Of godly unions. And godly families. We have a high calling. And we all have. Some work to do.

Don't we? But with God. All things.

Are possible. Let us pray.