

God Purpose In Marriage

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[0 : 00] We become pious so we can become prosperous, and then we become prosperous, and then we get independent from the Lord.

And so he has to humble us. But it says, he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste, but he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths. And whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord. God is shaking all things.

He's shaking Canada. I know, after having been in this great prayer conference, that he is going to be shaking this area with who knows what that is needed to wake it up, to wake up our churches so they become relevant, to speak to the conditions of those around them, and then to wake up the surrounding people who just dissolve in spiritual apathy because of the beauty and the grandeur of your surroundings here.

But God is going to make, as he did in the great Welsh awakening, he's going to make people scream into churches like this with a hunger and thirst after righteousness.

[1 : 17] He is going to bring a harvest. He is going to bring a harvest. And he's going also to motivate you to move out in the streams to bless and to help in every part of Vancouver and in Canada.

May it be so, O Lord. Lord, these are our deep concerns. These are the things we have been praying for. May they happen, Lord Jesus.

We want you to renew your creation. We want you to do this by the outpouring of your spirit. We want, as soon as possible, as soon as it is your will for you to come, Lord Jesus, in person, Maranatha.

But we simply wish to keep our attention on you. And we pray that you will assist us in looking toward you, Lord Jesus, and simply being like that great finger of John the Baptist in the painting that is pointing away from ourselves and to you.

For you must increase and we must decrease. We pray in your name. We pray in your name.

[3 : 06] Lord, teach us at St. John's to pray.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit, three persons in one eternity of love, hear us in your mercy for the honor and glory of your name.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit, three persons in one eternity of love, hear us in your love. At this season of gratitude, at this season of thanksgiving, we lift up our hearts in gratitude for love, for life and health, for love and friendship, for the goodness and the mercy of God, for the wonder and the beauty of his world.

Lord, in your mercy, hear us in your love. We lift up our hearts in gratitude for all things true and honest, just and pure, lovely and of good report.

Lord, in your mercy, hear us in your love. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

[4 : 26] Lord, in your mercy, hear us in your mercy, hear us in your mercy, for the glory of God.

Lord, in your mercy, hear us in your mercy, for the glory of God. Let us pray this morning for Christ's holy Catholic Church, a church coming alive, as we've been reminded of this morning.

We pray for our parish. And we especially remember this morning the November mission. May we be much in prayer for that work.

And this morning we remember especially Jenny and Stephanie, who have lost their husband and father last Wednesday. We pray for the unity of all Christian people.

We pray for our missionaries at home and throughout the world. We remember before God those who have departed this life and are at rest. And we pray for the whole state of Christ's church, militant here in earth.

And shall we unite all of these prayers together this morning by praying the intercession together on page 75 of the prayer book. Together.

[6 : 01] Almighty and ever-living God, who by thy holy apostle has taught us to make prayers and supplications and to give thanks for all men, we humbly beseech thee most mercifully to accept our alms and oblations and to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy divine majesty, beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal church, the spirit of truth, unity, and concord.

And grant that all they that do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy word and live in unity and godly love. We beseech thee also to lead all nations in the way of righteousness, so to guide and direct their governors and rulers, that thy people may enjoy the blessings of freedom and peace.

And grant unto thy servant Elizabeth our queen, and to all that are put in authority under her, that they may truly and impartially administer justice to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue. Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops, priests, and deacons, and specially to thy servant Douglas our bishop, that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and living word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments.

Prosper, we pray thee, all those who proclaim the gospel of thy kingdom among the nations. And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and specially to this congregation here present, that with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

[7 : 56] And we most humbly beseech thee of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succor all them who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity, especially those for whom our prayers are desired.

We remember before thee, O Lord, all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear. And we bless thy holy name for all who in life and death have glorified thee.

We beseech you need to give us grace, that rejoicing in their fellowship, we may follow their good examples, and with them be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom.

Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator and advocate, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honor and glory, world without end.

Amen. He that soweth little shall reap little, and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously. Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.

[9 : 12] The offertory hymn is number 491, cometh of influenza.com. How firm a foundation. Congratulations. And we thank you for giving. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[13 : 23] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. You see what I mean? That we are living in a sinful, fallen world. And that terrible sense of aloneness, that inescapable sense of aloneness, will belong to us all the days of our life. You will never escape from it. And it will become, rightfully speaking, I think, it will become the greatest sense of blessing to you. As long as you don't disguise it. As long as you don't hide from it. As long as you can understand that it is something that God has given us in anticipation of something infinitely more that he wants to give us when we can receive it. And so back in the time of man's innocency, as the marriage service says it. Ah, you get the words, it's not good that man should be alone. So then God goes on to say, I will make him a helper fit for him. In other words, God is going to prepare a companion for man. Something that is utterly and completely appropriate. So he goes to work. Verse 19, this is how he goes to work. Out of the ground, the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to man to see what he would call them. Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. Only a few verses before, you will see that man himself was created out of the dust of the ground. And so every living creature, birds and beasts came from the same source as man. And it's been somewhat to our annoyance to discover that God could use the same material to make an elephant as he uses to make you, even

though the comparison may not always be obvious. But it's the same basic material that God has used. And it's probably one of the great sorrows of our lives to recognize that out of the dust of the ground we have come and to the dust of the ground we shall return. And so animals come from that same source. Out of the ground, God has formed every beast of the field, every bird of the air, and brought them to man to see what he would call them. So that the difference is, you will see, between you and the baboons or the chimpanzees or the peacocks or the elephants or the alligators or the kangaroos, the essential difference is that all the animals are brought to man and man identifies who they are. Their name comes out of their relationship to man.

That may not seem to you very profound, but perhaps if you've read *Watership Down*, you will see what happens when people are all named with reference to rabbits. And that has a certain reality, but it's copied from the reality of what's said here, that they're brought to man and man named, and man identifies. And if any of you have heard what a fascinating thing it is, that it's certainly not enough for men to say that a yellow-shafted flicker and a red-shafted flicker are the same thing. And it's a sign of ignorance that you don't happen to know the difference. Or what the difference is between a chestnut-sided chickadee and an ordinary chickadee and some other. It's all, there's just infinite sort of, there's room for, in a sense, that infinite imagination in the whole of every beast of the field and bird of the air being brought to man to see what he would call them.

[18:41] And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. Isn't it fascinating that, you know, the whole of the science of botany and biology and zoology and all these things come out of this verse.

Man trying to decide who these creatures are and what they mean and to understand them. Well, that's a peculiar relationship.

The objective God was seeking was to find a helper fit for man. And his first attempt seems to have been to create the whole of the orders of beasts of the field and birds of the air.

And brought to him and man naming them. In verse 20 it says, The man gave names to all cattle and birds of the air to every beast of the field. But for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.

I would like now to talk about little old ladies and their pet cats.

[19:53] Only because, in a sense, there is a strange affinity between people and animals, aren't there? And when it gets to the point that animals are infinitely preferable, I'm sure it says something about the twisted nature of creation.

That something has gone wrong when you find more companionship in a cat or a dog than you do in another person. I have an esteemed brother-in-law who, when he was a small boy, lost a very male dog who went by the glorious name of Lioness.

And Lioness came to the end of his time and my brother-in-law who was a small boy was heartbroken. He confessed to me that that dog meant to him way more than either of his sisters. Well, it was, I mean you've seen that. I don't, you all undoubtedly experienced the relationship that often exists between a young woman and a horse that she has fallen in love with.

Or a boy and his dog, or a farmer and his team. I suppose, I saw last week about the Indonesian highland elephants that are given a trainer and that's a lifelong relationship because the elephant lives as long as the trainer does.

[21:29] And, uh, in these, these peculiar relationships that come out of the, of the order of creation. And, uh, it would be lovely to go through this congregation and find out what in the time of your childhood meant the most to you in terms of a dog or a cat or a rabbit or a guinea pig or a canary or a horse or a calf or whatever it may have been.

But there's a tremendous bonding that takes place between children and animals. The reason I mentioned the older lady and her cat is that I think that there's something abnormal about that. Something close to second childhood. Uh, I wouldn't condemn it for the moment. I just want to observe it as a phenomena and, uh, to suggest that perhaps there's something missing in that relationship.

Because it isn't the answer to that word that echoes through the hearts of man. It is not good that man should be alone. That will not substitute or represent an answer to that question.

And so you find that these animals coming and the relationship between them. And, uh, how that relationship has broken down.

[22:49] Well, then, having, uh, done that, it was established that among all the birds of the air and the cattle and the beasts of the field, there was found no helper fit for man, no companion.

And so the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. Some wonderful anesthetic. And while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

And the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her for the man. Our Wednesday morning Bible study never got beyond that verse.

Uh, it, uh, it, uh, it, uh, it was stuck on. And, uh, mostly it was a certain sense of, uh, uh, indignation that God should, uh, make woman out of a rib.

Surely he has more orthodox methods of doing what needs to be done. And, uh, that particular method was unacceptable to, uh, a number of people who were at breakfast.

[24 : 04] I tried to assure them, because I find some considerable comfort in it, uh, that since it was a once and, uh, for all event, that, uh, God had considerable latitude as to just how he wanted to do it.

Uh, it, uh, and, uh, the fact that it doesn't happen to work out the way we would like it to work out, uh, and the fact that we could endlessly speculate upon what it might mean, uh, to our rational and scientific minds.

Uh, I'm not sure that we're going to know the answer to questions like that. But that, uh, that something happened whereby God, uh, out of the rib of Adam created woman and brought her to man.

So the Lord God took one of his ribs, closed its place, and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into woman and brought her to the man. Then the man, as Derek Kidner says in his commentary, became a poet.

The first poetry in the Bible is when the first man meets the first woman. That's a lovely touch, isn't it? He must say.

[25 : 26] Uh, perhaps complete with a guitar, but I, there it was. And he, he breaks into this song and recognizes something very profound.

The man said, this is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.

And, uh, so you have this, I think, lovely picture of how, as many, many times the father brings the bride down the aisle and presents her to the bridegroom standing here.

So God, the father creator of the whole of the universe, brought this whom he had made from Adam's rib and presented her to Adam.

Adam, in the ecstasy, which has probably been at least echoed in the hearts of many young men who have stood here while their brides have been brought to them, echoed what, uh, what Adam said.

[26 : 33] And said, this is at last bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman. And that sort of, I suppose in many ways, uh, becomes the kind of ultimate experience of human life.

And that, uh, that, uh, that you should meet that person who, in the purpose of God, is designated to be your companion.

Well, uh, that's how it, that's how it happened. And that's how it's recorded for us in, in this, in this story.

But now, I, uh, I want you to see that, uh, that there is a, a loveliness to this story in that, uh, what, uh, the purpose of the relationship was fundamentally to me a tremendous aloneness which was in the heart of man.

And reflected, I'm sure, in the heart of woman. It's not good for man to be alone. Somehow God was trying to meet that need, or was meeting that need.

[27 : 56] And he brought this woman whom he had created from the rib of Adam. And, uh, they had some reality in their relationship. So that Adam immediately recognized that, that this is, is what I need.

And she no doubt recognized the same in Adam. That they, they were meant for each other. And, uh, something wonderful happens when, uh, when Adam cries out, this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

And, uh, there's a tremendous promise of fulfillment. There's a tremendous promise of fulfillment. A promise of fulfillment for which we all long deeply in our hearts.

Probably the most significant event of our personal human history is this moment.

As it is, it is reflected from generation to generation in the hearts of people. This, this moment. And, uh, very sacred moment.

[29 : 19] But, you see, the difficulty is, it doesn't work. It doesn't happen to everybody. And to many people to whom it does happen, it turns out to be a bitter, bitter, bitter disappointment.

And it doesn't bring the fulfillment or the companionship that he promises. And somehow, instead of finding a lifetime of fulfillment, we go on in that unhappy state of being alone.

And that happens when people are divorced. And when marriages break down. And it happens when people face a life of celibacy. And all of us recognize that that's not going to happen to them. What are you going to do about it? How are you going to live with it? How do we cope with it? And I, I have a number of things which I think are mostly in the area of atrocious statements.

That I'd like to make to you in order to provoke you, having come thus far, into proper indignation.

Ah. Only for the purpose that you will examine more deeply the content of what it says here.

[30 : 47] Ah. It says here, for instance, that the two shall become one flesh. You see, that's what's wrong with divorce.

The reason for divorce is that divorce isn't two people going their separate ways. It's a oneness that is ripped violently apart.

And both the parties to that oneness are permanently and incurably wounded for the rest of their lives.

And for people who, I mean, I don't, I don't think that there's any other way of looking at it. And I, I will contest that with you if you want.

But it's something I want you at least to consider. And, ah, and you see, for people who have never come into that union and have had to find a oneness, a fulfillment of their loneliness apart from marriage, there's always the possibility that something that is really essential to life has been missed out on.

[31 : 59] And I would like to say that human sexuality is a great imposter because it promises a fulfillment that it can deliver.

And I don't think, essentially, that the disciplines of God-given celibacy are any harder than the disciplines of God-given marriage.

I don't really think that there's any difference. I think the thing that makes it a very heavy problem for us today in the 20th century is that the possibility of sexual fulfillment in a relationship between a man and a woman, or a man and a man, or a woman and a woman, or whatever combination seems to be the source of fulfillment for which we're living, that promise of fulfillment isn't there. It's an imposter. And it's an imposter, I think, in the 20th century, because somehow we have lost sight of the spiritual dimension of our lives.

Somehow we've lost sight of what the Lord meant when he said, it's not good for man to be alone. And we have seen in terms of that sexual relationship and sexual fulfillment, the answer to which so many people spend the whole of their lives looking and frustrated because they have not found it.

[33 : 46] And if anything belongs to human life, then that particular fulfillment does. And I don't think it does. And I don't think it's necessarily promised.

And I don't think even when it's given, it's any more than a gift to create in you an appetite for an even greater gift.

A greater fulfillment to that longing which is created by our aloneness in the world.

And when Thomas Howard was here last year and got onto the subject of the Sadducees questioning Christ about the woman that married a man and he died and she married his brother and he died and she married the second brother and on and on it went.

And when all the seven brothers got to heaven, whose wife would she be? And Christ said to him, you don't know either the scriptures or the purpose of God. Men and women are not given in marriage in heaven.

[34 : 55] Thomas Howard said, because God has something infinitely better than marriage. And part of the problem of our world is we can't conceive of anything, humanly speaking, better than the fulfillment which marriage offers.

But there in the New Testament is a tantalizing problem that indeed there may be something better. And that probably the only thing that we are offered in terms of this life is a kind of gift from God which may be marriage and it may be celibacy.

It may even be a marriage which doesn't work. It may be any of those things. But if it is God's gift to us, then God's grace to receive it is necessary to us.

Because such a gift can so easily destroy us if we don't have the grace to receive it. And we so much need it.

And so many people in the course of their Christian lives are followers of Jesus Christ, seeking the fulfillment which he promises and the companionship which he promises.

[36 : 31] And then when they find through marriage or even through some other relationship, they find a kind of sexual fulfillment.

And the terrible temptation is to say, that's all I want. If I'm given this, I don't want anything more. They stop at that point, being the disciples of Jesus Christ.

The very point in which he has given them something which seems to them so valuable that they don't want anything else.

And that's why I think human sexuality can so often be the great imposter. And it's such a complex kind of gift that can be so fulfilling on the one hand and can wound so terribly on the other hand.

But you see, this story that we're reading in Genesis 2 comes, again let me remind you, in the time of man's innocence.

[37 : 45] And when we read these words, I think we're given an insight into what God intended in marriage, what God purposed in marriage.

And in this area of our lives, I think we are so meanderthal in our attitudes and our understanding, so far back that we haven't even begun to appropriate what it means.

And to see what it is meant to be, a foretaste of the ultimate answer, which God has for the problem that it is not good for man to be alone.

And so, Adam says, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. A man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife.

They become one flesh. He is not flesh. There is that, that leaving which is, which is a process of maturity.

[39 : 15] You see, whether, that's the first thing really, to leave. And, uh, the difficulty is that, you know, lots of family counselors will tell you that that leaving has never been done by so many men and women who have entered into marriage.

And the family counselors that I'm most familiar with, and they think it's mostly men, never leave their father and their mother and after 15 years of marriage or more, turn out to be near children still without any maturity.

And that leaving of father and mother behind them. And that leaving of father and mother behind them hasn't been done. And so they are children.

That's the first thing that has to be done. And then it says that, that having been done, then the two become one flesh.

He cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh. And that those whom God has joined together, that there is a oneness there.

[40 : 42] A oneness which is beyond all the, the, the, the attempts of the modern feminist movement to, uh, create or to recognize, I think, the profundity of that state.

And that there is another kind of, there is another kind of order of humanity as well. A man and woman who have become one. In our fallen and broken world, that doesn't often serve.

You don't often see it. Even though the underlying reality of it is there, how does it find expression?

And then it says, a man and a woman were both naked and were not ashamed.

I couldn't imagine such a thing. And, uh, remember the, the secret of the world. And, uh, that, that sentence has bothered me since I first read it as a, as a, as a relatively small boy.

[42 : 00] And, uh, that the man and the, and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. I couldn't imagine such a thing. And, uh, remember the, the sequel to that story in chapter 3.

After man has disobeyed God and hides from God. And makes the excuse that he is naked. And, uh, God, the Lord says to him, he told you you were naked.

Well, he had to be taught that. He had to be taught shame. So around the, the mystery of the, of the union of man and woman, there is so much guilt.

And there is so much shame that our world has taught us. And so much embarrassment that we find it very difficult to accept who we are in our fleshly existence.

To accept that, to accept the relationship that God has given us. And, uh, it's always just eroded in shame and guilt and, uh, deception.

[43 : 23] And, uh, only just, uh, a foretaste of something infinitely more that God wants us to know.

And, uh, so that sexuality always, I think, is God's gift to point us beyond our sexuality.

Not to become an end in itself. Not to become, as it seems to in the center, you will become the end in itself.

Not to become a gift to the end of the world. And, uh, of all human existence. Not to become a gift of all human existence. Not to become a gift of all human existence. But, uh, beyond what it is, beyond the great gift that we recognize that it is the promise of, of heaven to something infinitely more. And something which, uh, in Jesus Christ, is the ultimate and eternal fulfillment. And something which, uh, in Jesus Christ, is the ultimate and eternal fulfillment.

of God providing an answer to the human dilemma that, uh, is not good for man or woman to be alone.

[44 : 46] It is God's purpose to, to answer that question. To answer it in a very profound way. If you experience alone, then I would be bold to say even if it's bitter, angry, alone.

It's not given to us as, I'm sure, it's not given to us to find some cheap and superficial answer to it. It's given to us as a kind of sharp knife of God. The hollow out in our hearts.

That, that space which He alone can fill. And, uh, which He will be.

Which it is our faith that He will be. And, uh, and, uh, I'm sure that, uh, that, uh, that, uh, that's the most powerful.

[46 : 00] And, uh, that, uh, that's the most powerful. That's the most powerful. That's the most powerful. You know, when, uh, that's the most powerful. When way back at the very dawn of history in Genesis, chapter 2, you read it in verse 18, the Lord God said, it's not good for man to be alone.

And so, that very statement was the, was the, uh, the promise of a fulfillment of the deepest longings of the human heart, which go far beyond anything that man has known today.

Anything that the heart of man can even begin to imagine. Reading a biography of, of, uh, Bernard of Clairvaux, when he called men to become disciples of Jesus Christ, he knew that he had to give them a passion.

And, uh, that, uh, even marriage couldn't fulfill. And, uh, that Christ alone could fulfill.

And I hope that, for the married and for the single, that we celebrate faith, and for the widow, to the widow, to all of us, God will use the sharp knife of our aloneness to create a deep, deep longing for a wonderful gift that he has prepared for us, and that he is preparing us for.

[47 : 58] And, uh, that gift that he has. And, uh, that gift he has. And, uh, that gift he has. And, uh, that gift he has. And, uh, praying by faith. In the person of Jesus Christ.

In the person of Jesus Christ. A way that he probably can't begin in. Let's just pray for him. Father. Father, these are, in so many ways, deeply disturbing words and deeply disturbing promises when we bring them up against the day-to-day circumstances of our life.

And the aloneness which is echoed from so many parts of our world and our society, which echoes in the caverns of our own hearts, indeed it is not good to be alone.

Yet that very aloneness is what you called us to come to terms with in order that you can wonderfully and graciously meet that aloneness in ways which we could never have anticipated.

If you have met that aloneness in Jesus Christ, in a way which we need needly to come to terms with, we need to have great compassion one over another.

[49 : 40] We need to do Jesus Christ to one another in the relationship that we have together.

We need to do Jesus Christ to one another in the world. And all the confusion and the chaos that surrounds our sexuality may come into some kind of order and be the means of your fulfilling.

By your grace, the obedience to your commandment, we must come to love you with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and body.

By your grace, the love which will be reciprocated beyond all that we can think through. I ask this in the name of your Son and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[51 : 35] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Help these eyes. Amen. Amen. Amen.
[53 : 46] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.
Thank you.