Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

When a perfect situation is spoiled by one thing, we describe that as **a fly in the ointment**. Have you heard that saying before? It actually comes from the Bible. Ecclesiastes 10:1 says, “*Dead flies cause perfume to stink*.” And this is so because it does not matter how aromatic or large your quantity of perfume is, one fly can spoil it all.

Well, we come today to creation week’s ‘fly in the ointment.’ For just to be clear, the events described in our passage took place in creation week. We know from Genesis 1:26-31 that the man and the woman were created on the sixth day. So, our passage is just giving us more information about the sixth day. But perhaps you are wondering: How can there be a fly in the ointment in creation week? There is no sin yet, so how can anything be less than perfect? Well, six times, in chapter 1, God saw what He had made and it was “*good*.” And in chapter 2:9, we read that God made trees spring up in the Garden of Eden that were “*good*” for food. And in verse 11, we read that the gold of that land was “*good*.” So, there is just a whole lot that is good in God’s creation. But as we come to verse 18 of our text, we come to fly in the ointment. For there we are told that there was something “*not good*” in creation: “*It is not good that the man should be alone*.” And when you read “good … good … good … good … good … good … good … good,” and then you read “not good,” you are supposed to pause and notice and reflect. This declaration is meant to grab your attention and signal that what you are about to read is *massively* significant.

So, let’s work through the four sections of this massively significant passage. And we have already considered the gospel link between the marriage of the first man and the first woman and Christ and His bride, the church. We did that in the first sermon on chapter 2. So, we won’t say much about that today. Our focus today will be marriage – what our passage reveals about the first marriage, what it means for marriage in general, and what it means for our marriages.

1. So, first off, **in this “*good*” creation there was something “*not good***” – the man was alone.
   1. And we learn this in two ways:
      1. The first is **the pronouncement of God**. He straight out says it, as we have noted: “*It is not good that the man should be alone*.”
         1. Now, this “*not good*” situation is not about sin or something evil. What is in view here is **incompleteness**. Think of a puzzle with a missing piece, for example. It is not evil, it is just incomplete.
      2. But God wanted Adam to see and understand this incompleteness for himself. And that is what the naming of the animals account is all about; it occurred, in part, to reveal to Adam his need for a suitable helper. So, Adam’s naming of the animals is **the second way** that we learn about this incompleteness.
   2. So, let’s next see how the naming of the animals would have revealed this incompleteness to Adam.
      1. Some Bible versions have verse 19 as “*out of the ground, the Lord God formed every beast of the field…*” And some Bible commentators have latched on to this as **another disagreement** with chapter 1, which says that the animals were created *before* mankind. But the ESV and NIV more accurately capture the original here, which is that “*the Lord God had formed every beast of the field*.”
      2. And **paraded the animals and birds** before Adam and he named each kind.
         1. And naming **implies authority**. In chapter 1, we saw God name the things that He created. And so, because the man is created in the image of God and is the crown of creation, his authority is recognized and reinforced as he names the animals.
         2. And just in case you are thinking about **all the different types** of animals and birds that there are in the world, remember that we are talking about the *original* *kinds*, not all the different species that would eventually come to exist. And notice also that there is no mention of fish or insects here. Also, the term used here is the “*beasts of the field*,” whereas in chapter 1 it is “*the beasts of the earth*.” So, it may have been just a subsection of the animal world. But even if it was every kind of animal and bird, creation scientists estimate around 2,500 kinds. And they were paraded before Adam by God. So, by way of illustration, if he named one kind every five seconds, and took a five-minute break every hour, the whole thing would have taken just under four hours. And remember also that in his pre-fall condition, Adam’s stamina and intelligence and memory was far greater than hours. So, this was a perfectly manageable task.
         3. But as Adam named the animals, what are two obvious things that Adam would have noticed as he performed this task?
            1. The first one is that **he was the one doing the naming, not the animals**. For we can be sure that at no time did any of the animals approach Adam and offer to take over and give him a break. And neither did any of them jump up and object to Adam assuming this role and demand that he stand back and let them name him! No, Adam is the namer! And none of the animals or birds are equipped to join him in the task that God has given him to do. In other words, Adam can see that none of the animals or birds are made in God’s image and called to exercise dominion over creation.
            2. But what is the second most obvious thing that Adam surely noticed as he named the animals? **Males and females** of every kind of animal and bird. So, they are all able to be fruitful and multiply. But not Adam!
            3. One commentator observed that it is possible for a human and an animal to have great fellowship. And if you have pets, you will know what this is about. You can spend many enjoyable hours with them. You can play games with them. You can even show and share affection. But the fellowship must be at their level. Right? Because they can only communicate at their level. So, as enjoyable as naming the animals would have been, it would have revealed to Adam that he needed a ‘made in the image of God companion’ like himself but of the female variety. But there was no such creature. And this was not good.
2. And so, in the next section, verses 21-22, **God remedies this “not good” situation by creating a woman**.
   1. We see in verse 21 that God “*put Adam into a deep sleep*.”
      1. And just by way of an aside, back in the 1800s, when James Simpson read about God putting Adam to sleep, it inspired him to see whether it was possible for humans to put each other to sleep, so that surgery could be performed without pain. And he eventually discovered that this was possible with chloroform. And so, the study and practice of **anaesthesia** began.
      2. But the fact that God put Adam into this deep sleep is important. For it emphasizes the reality that **God made the woman**, just as God made the man. So, she too is a made-by-God and made-in-the-image-of-God being. In short, she is his equal. She is not *less*. She is not *inferior*, in any way. She is his equal.
   2. And this is further emphasized from the fact that God **formed her *from Adam***. We are told that “*while he slept, [the Lord] took one of his ribs … and made it into a woman*.”
      1. Some of you will surely have heard **Matthew Henry’s famous quote**: “The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.” Isn’t that beautiful?
      2. But we can say more than this. The Hebrew word translated as “made” is more literally **“built” or “fashioned.”** And so, a woman was the last of God’s glorious creation works. And we have spoken about human beings as the crowning glory or pinnacle of creation. Well, in **1 Corinthians 11:7**, the male of the species is described as “*the image and glory of God*,” and the female of the species as “*the glory of man*.” And you have heard me quote this before, but one Bible commentator explains that this makes here ‘the glory of glories,’ in the same way that while the inner room of the temple and the outer room were both holy, the inner room was called “the holy of holies”! So, with the creation of the woman, God has added value to humanity in all that makes her a woman. She is *most* glorious!
      3. And we have already referred to this in previous sermons, but **this is the answer to the pandemic of ‘gender confusion’ that grips our world**. God is one God in three persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And all three persons are equally God and equally glorious. And likewise, as males and females, who are made in God’s image, we are equally human and equally glorious. But in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons, and they have different roles. And we humans too are male or female, and we have different roles. And the idea that the Son would want to become the Father, or the Father would want to become the Holy Spirit is simply inconceivable. And similarly, it ought to be inconceivable that male wants to be female or female male. The sex that God has assigned us is intentional and purposeful and meaningful and glorious!
         1. And congregation, **don’t buy into the concept of gender**. It is an invented concept. Do you know when the term gender was first used to refer to human identity or roles? In 1955! Just 70 years ago! Before that, gender was only about verbs and nouns in grammar! Before that, there was just our sex – male or female.
         2. And it is the beauty and intentionality of God’s design for male and female that needs to held before our children; not powerful drugs and invasive surgical procedures, which do not actually change what God has made them to be.
   3. But we can’t stop here. We must also see what this passage reveals about the roles of male and female.
      1. For notice that the woman **was made *from Adam***. And he also named her, as we see in verse 23. And she is described as “*a helper fit for him*.” And this is in no way a derogatory term, for God is described as our helper in the Psalms. The key point here though is repeated in **1 Corinthians 11:9**: “*Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man*.” And most obviously of all, she was *created second*, after him. This is the point made in **1 Timothy 2:13**: “*For Adam was formed first, then Eve*.”
         1. What these realities mean then is that she, as a human being, was, in a sense, a descendant of Adam. She was connected to Adam as her covenant head. **Romans 5:12** says, “*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men*.” So, even though she took the forbidden fruit and ate from it, herself, she also inherited sin’s corruption from her covenant connection to Adam.
         2. But Adam was also Her covenant head **as her husband**. And this is the point made in **1 Corinthians 11:3**: “*But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband*.” This is not ‘the patriarchy.’ This is not misogynism. This is the teaching of Scripture.
            1. In fact, far from this being a put-down in any way, this is a reflection of who God is. You see, when it comes to the Godhead, we distinguish between the **essential** Trinity and the **economic** Trinity.

In regards to the essential Trinity, who God is, always, the three persons in the Godhead are the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”

The economic Trinity has to do with the relation of the Godhead to creation. And so, when He was on earth, the Son submitted to the Father. And the Holy Spirit submits to the Father and the Son as they send Him to dwell in each believer.

* + - * 1. And marriage parallels these relationships. As a reflection of the *essential* Trinity, the man and the woman are equal in dignity and responsibility and value and salvation. But as a reflection of the economic Trinity, and as we heard in our earlier Ephesians reading, wives are commanded to submit to their husbands in all things lawful.

And just to be clear, this is not a command for *all* women to submit to all men; this is a command for wives to submit to their husbands.

And husbands are also commanded to love their wives, as Christ loved the church.

* + - 1. But this creation principle is also why **it is men who are to hold office in the church, not women**. For in speaking about life in the church in **1 Timothy 2:12-14**, Paul said, “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet*.” And the reason he gives for this instruction is that Adam was formed first, then Eve. So, it is a *creation* thing. And that is why it is wrong that so many churches have written off this verse as just for that culture and time, and permitted woman to hold office in the church. And again, this is not ‘the patriarchy.’ This is God’s design.

1. But there is more that we can say here as we move into the third section of this passage, which is where **Adam Receives and Recognizes the Goodness of this Woman**.
   1. In the first part of our passage, Adam was prepared for the woman as he came to see his need for a helper that was “*fit for Him*,” or suitable, or matching. And in the second part of the passage, God prepared the woman for Adam. And at the end of verse 22, God brought her to him, and then we read **Adam’s response**. And a more literal translation of the Hebrew here would be: “*This* *is* the *proper* step! bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh!' for *this* it is called Woman, for from a man has *this* been taken.” This, This, This! A more modern way to express this would be: This is it! Yowzer! Adam is over-the-moon *ecstatic*! His words are a love poem, which is why they are laid out as they are in our Bibles. As Adam saw her, and perhaps spoke to her, he knew immediately that she was the made-by-God, made-in-the-image-of-God, most beautiful, female version of himself, who was the suitable helper that he needed. So, now, together, they could fulfill the calling to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth and exercise dominion over all creation.
      1. And I do want to add here that this is not to suggest that we cannot serve the Lord well if we are single. We can! Really well! But in the same way that a relationship of oneness is essential to the three persons of the Trinity, it is the union of a husband and wife, in the one flesh relationship of marriage, that most fully reflects who God is.
2. So, with all that in place, we can transition to the fourth and last section of this passage, verse 24, which is where **God Reveals and Makes Rules for a Good Relationship**. And I have called marriage a good relationship because **Proverbs 18:22** says, “*He who finds a wife finds a good thing*.”
   1. And verse 24 is not Adam speaking; this is the Holy Spirit, through Moses as the human author of Genesis, explaining the institution of marriage. And the Lord Jesus referred to these words in **Matthew 19:3-6**, when he responded to a question from the Pharisees about divorce. He said, “*Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*” And that point, already, is important. Marriage is not a human invention or a purely legal arrangement or just a nice cultural tradition; it is **instituted by God**.
      1. And we have already noted in a previous sermon that this means that marriage is designed to reveal the more ultimate marriage of Christ and His bride – the church. And this is why the passage that we read in Ephesians earlier points to Christ and the church as the pattern for how husbands and wives ought to live together in marriage.
      2. But as our marriage form explains, God instituted marriage to allow a man and woman to serve the Lord together.
      3. Marriage is also the basis for a stable society and ordered family life.
      4. Marriage is also the most profound and deep and delightful of relationships, allowing a man and woman to know one another with all tenderness and delight, and to encourage each other in Christian growth.
      5. So, **Proverbs 18:22** is right when it says, “*He who finds a wife finds a good thing*.”
   2. Now, this verse in the context of this passage could easily be a whole series of sermons or lectures. In my preparations, I read a sermon on the four-pronged attack on marriage in our society today. It was very helpful. And there are principles here that are essential to pre-marriage counseling and marriage-crisis counseling, as well as a healthy understanding of the goodness of marriage. But we will just end our time today by listing the main principles and applications of what we see here:
      1. First, **marriage is to be between one man and one woman**.
         1. God **did not create a Steve** to bring to Adam, He created an Eve. As a female, she fitted him. Emotionally and physically and spiritually, she complimented him. Only a man and woman can procreate and provide the environment that children need for stable and healthy and balanced nurture. So, the very notion of same-sex marriage is not possible, by God’s definition and design and decree. And without going into the physiological details, it needs to be said that God has designed a man and woman’s bodies to fit together. And that is not the case with male-male or female-female.
         2. But notice also that God did not create **two Eves or three Eves**. He created one Adam and one Eve. So, marriage may not involve *more than one* spouse. And we will see why and discuss this more later in Genesis.
      2. But secondly, marriage requires the husband and wife to **leave father and mother**. Another word that could be used here is “forsake.” For what is in view is an *active* *turning* *away* from your parents as your focus and priority and primary sounding board and inspiration and encouragement and complaints department and social life and refuge when life is tough.
      3. But leaving father and mother is not the full picture. For husband and wife must **“*hold fast*” to each other**. Having turned away from their parents in all the things I mentioned, they must turn toward each other to provide and receive all these things.
         1. In other words, the day of your wedding is the day that your **PhD course** in your spouse begins. You must study them and learn them and encourage them and support them and listen to them and learn from them and inspire them and cause them to grow as a person. It is the hardest PhD course that exists, but it is also the best and most rewarding, as the happily married among us will attest!
      4. And alongside the emotional and spiritual holding fast to each other, they shall also “**become** **one flesh.”** And sexual intimacy is in view here. And again, this topic could be a series of sermons. But clearly, sex is a good gift of God. It is meant to deepen the union of husband and wife. They are meant to delight in each other. And they are meant to delight in each other, regularly.
         1. But this is *all* and *only* for within marriage. Sex is not for outside marriage. That means it is not for before marriage or with someone who is not your wife or husband.
      5. And it follows from all this that, just like God, **we should hate divorce**. Are there circumstances when divorce is permissible? Yes. But the key word is permissible. Jesus said, “*Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so*.” And I know there will be those among us who have known the pain of divorce or who know the pain of a difficult marriage. And again, we simply don’t have time today to consider every circumstance, but, in general, God’s design and desire is for marriage, not divorce.

Well, the passage ends with the comment that “*the man and his wife were both naked and not ashamed*.” And RC Sproul has some really helpful lectures and articles on the significance of this phrase, so Google them and have a listen. But in short, these words prepare us for chapter 3 where sin and nakedness and shame will be a prominent part of the Fall. At this time though, the man and his wife felt no shame. It’s hard to imagine, isn’t it. I am sure the worst nightmare for any of us would be to somehow end up naked in a public space and have people staring at us.

And I want to take this reality as an opportunity to spiritualize this for a moment. You see, the Bible describes the believer as one who is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. So, when he or she stands before God on judgment day, he or she will not be ashamed. But if you are not a believer, you will be spiritually naked before God. Your sin and corruption and wickedness will be on full display. And that will make physical nakedness seem like a walk in the park. So, if you do not want to be ashamed on the Day of Judgment, repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. Amen.