

Empire Church of the Brethren  
Sunday Service Sermons

26 May 2024

The Covenant of Marriage

Text: "The Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant,"

*Mal. 2:14* From *Malachi 2:10-16*.

The King and the Nation have forsaken their first love and broken the covenant between them and God.

The message of the prophet Malachi opens with the people's expression of doubt about God's love.

Wrong views of God and false forms of worship inevitably lead to fractured social relationships.

The situation in Israel demonstrated this reality.

Marriage is one of the first relationships affected by wrong relationship with God.

The prophet pronounces God's displeasure on two practices: marriage with heathen women and the prevalence of divorce.

His remarks express the Lord's hope for marriage and the crucial role marriage has in God's work in the world.

Marital choice can mar God's covenant.

The priority of faith.

Israel is told that they have "profaned the covenant" because of marriage to "the daughter of a foreign god".

*Exodus 19* describes the covenant established between Israel and the Lord.

*Exodus 34* forbade marriage with pagans; the practice of other religions in the home would provide temptation to break faith with God.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (*Amos 3:3*)

2

It is disturbing to witness the trend of marriages that relegate faith and relationship to the Lord to a low priority.

Differences in religion or the absence of any commitment to God is pushed into the background with the remark, "We love each other and so this will work out."

Love Christ first, give priority to faith, and then chose a mate.

A partner with faith.

The best solution is to choose a spouse who shares your commitment to Christ.

Ideally this individual should come from your same Christian heritage.

Certainly the person should be a saved and growing believer.

To do less is to weaken your own covenant relationship with the Lord.

The character of marriage.

Malachi offers an amazing description of marriage, closely akin to the spirit of Jesus and definitely in tune with all God's hopes for marriage.

If you decide to marry, what does God expect of marriage?

The prophet cites four characteristics of a godly marriage.

A covenant and not a contract.

"The Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth . . . She is . . . Your wife by covenant".

It has become fashionable to enter into marriage with a contract.

3

A covenant implies commitment and faith; a contract implies convenience and fear.

A covenant relationship declares that two have agreed to discover God's will together and work together to do that will.

A contract stipulates what one will do if the other does certain things.

A covenant declares we will achieve and fail together, laugh and cry together.

In a covenant one is constrained from doing anything that would endanger the love of the other.

Companionship

"She is your companion"

The Lord said, "It is not good that the man should be alone."

David Mace wrote, "Parenthood, therefore, may enrich marriage, but it will not sustain marriage. Neither will sex. There is much more in marriage than the physical love-making".

In the daily living together of husband and wife amid all the changes and accidents of human life, what will matter most of all is that they are true and trusty friends."

Creation.

"What does he desire? Godly offspring" *Mal 2:15*

The command to Adam and Eve was to "be fruitful, and multiply. And replenish the earth".

Part of God's purpose for marriage is to provide the best possible environment for the growth and development of a child.

Mace notes that procreation means "creation for and on behalf of another".

4

For two Christians parenthood is a way of sharing on the creative work of God.

Adoption and foster parenthood are avenues open to those who are unable to have children.

Continuity.

It takes time to build a covenant relationship.

Time is involved in deepening companionship; time is required to see the results of creative parenting.

God's ideal is for marriage to last.

He says, "I hate divorce".

Jesus said, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder".

Although the Lord loves the divorced individual, he hates divorce; it violates his ideal.

Too many approach marriage lightly, thinking that divorce is available to them if necessary.'

Yet divorce is not always a happy solution, for 59 percent of second marriages fail.

Divorce should be regarded as the last recourse rather than the first option.

The trend will not be reversed until individuals committed to Christ accept their duty and privilege to set the example of devotion and fidelity.

Decisions involved in marriage are crucial for personal and community well-being.

The strength of the church is also affected.

Marriage should honor the covenant relationship with God.

The choice of a non-believing spouse can mar that covenant.

5

With a Christian mate determine to maintain a covenant marked by love, companionship, and creativity.

As the union continues until death, it will be blessed by the Lord.

And if you have become one with each other and God, the relationship does not end with the death of one mate.

For then part of you is in heaven while part of you remains on earth.

And the part in heaven will enhance the part remaining on earth.

And the earthly part will have even more resources to be a part of the coming Kingdom of God than before.

I am anxious to see how it works in heaven when the two are reunited once again.  
If there is no marriage in heaven how will it work out for the two who have remained one for all these years.

It will be glorious I am sure.

Maybe the best friends part will become the whole.

If your marriage lasts you have become friends for sure.

Kathy and I started out as friends so we had that strong friendship as a basis for our relationship all through the years.

And it is still strong and in place.

I do not feel separated from her.

She is still a part of me.

Just like God, Jesus and the Spirit are part of me, so is my life mate.

I did not expect this but it is most comforting.

Together forever, I like that.

However it works out.