

One of the serious problems we face in today's marriage is that, many people do not see the important meaning and value of marriage.

Example:

I recently watched a short documentary about "Marriage trend" in Japan, And the rising trend (not only in Japan but also in other developed countries) is that, The number of marriages is steadily declining.

And it is mainly because many young people see marriage as a stumbling block. When they think about this from a woman's perspective, getting married, and having children means that, she has to give up her career and profession, So marriage becomes a stumbling block for their career.

And the other reason we also see is that people are just afraid of making long-term commitment through the marriage relationship.

Even when we look at the people who are already married, the clear proof that our society is not honoring the marriage, is the fact that one third of marriages in Australia end up in divorce.

So, while our society is treating marriage as something with no value. Today's passage provides profound reasons of why we must honor our marriage. And how we can honour our marriage.

So, the first question, why do we must honor our marriage?

And in answer to this question,

we see, Paul is providing 2 distinctive reasons of why we must value and honour our marriage.

And the first is that, Paul here is explaining our marriage in the context of Creation.

When we look at verse 31 for example, Paul says that:

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother / and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

This is from Genesis 2:24, And obviously, Paul here, is mentioning the husband and wife relationship in the context of Creation,

And what we can further draw from this is that,

our marriage is not a social invention, (it is not something made by ourselves),

BUT, it is God who gave marriage to the entire human race.

And when we look at this verse,

it does not only highlight the fact that, God is the creator of marriage

But it also provides a clear definition of the marriage, where it indicates that, "marriage is between one man and one woman."

When you look at verse 31 again, it says: "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife." And note that, both of the words, "a man" and "his wife" are in singular form.

So we see that God's grand design of marriage is not between

one man and 3 or 4 women, or it is not between "man and man" or woman and woman

But it is between one man and one woman.

So, based on this truth, the reason that the same-sex-marriage is fundamentally wrong and sinful is because, it redefines and perverts God's good creation of marriage.

But when we see, Paul explains our marriage in the context of Creation, our marriage is something that is instituted by God alone, and for this reason Nobody has the right to redefine what God has Created, but we are to honor and protect this definition of marriage.

Now Secondly, the reason that we must honour and value our marriage is because, we see there is far more important purpose in our marriage.

When we think about the purpose of our marriage,
We often think that, it is just for our own personal benefits.

But we see that, our marriage is not merely for our personal benefits, and there is far more important purpose in our marriage, and it is to display the relationship of Christ and the church.

So, when we look at the passage, we see that, our marriage is described in the relationship between Christ and the church.

- verse 23, when it says the husband is the head of the wife, it is described in the headship of Christ.
- verse 24 says that, as the church submits to Christ, wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
- And in verse 25 again, it says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church"

So, we clearly see from here that, our marriage is described in the relationship between Christ and the church, which further means that, our marriage is to demonstrate this noble relationship of Christ and the church.

So, The Book of Common prayer really summarizes this really well, where it says that:
marriage is an honorable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and his Church.

So, as we see the important purpose of our marriage is to display the relationship between Christ and the Church, the next big question we can accordingly ask is,

How do we actually demonstrate his mystical union relationship? In other words,
How do we value our marriage, by demonstrating this mystical union between Christ and the
Church?

And in answer to this question, we see that Paul is drawing very clear applications for both
husbands and wives.

Paul is firstly speaking to the wives and the main idea we find is 'submission'

So what does it mean by the fact that wives have to submit to their husband?

What I am about to say now, might be very controversial in the eyes of today's culture,
And when I preached with passage at Canterbury, I asked one of the elders,
If we have any female members with strong feminist view, as it will certainly upset them.

but it means that, wives are to submit to the authority of husband.

As we are living in post-modern world, we see
our society is becoming more and more anti-authoritarian,
many people see authority as something out-of-date, and
it is something that oppresses one's freedom.

But, on the other hand, I really want to highlight the important role of authority.
And that is, for the sake of unity and order of any nations, groups and even in a family
we see that governing authority is something we really need.

For example,

-In a family context, for the proper functioning of the family, the children need to submit to the authority of their parents,

-In schools, the students need to submit to the authority of the teachers,

-And as we are living residents of Australia, we need to submit to the governing authorities.

Just imagine, what would happen if people are not submitting to the governing authorities??

What would happen if people are not submitting to the rules and to the authority of police?

There will be chaos.

This is something we clearly see when we travel to developing countries.

when we are traveling to developing countries is that,

The moment you get out of the airport, the first thing you see is the massive traffic jam,

It's just chaos.

And the reason of why such traffic chaos is common in these countries is simply because, they are not submitting to the traffic law,

They illegally park everywhere, they ignore the traffic lights,

And as the result of not submitting to the traffic law and the authority, we see such traffic chaos as the result

And same principle would also apply to a family, and a marriage relationship.

For its order and its unity, there must be leadership,

and the responsibility of leadership is that of the husband and father, ...

and for this reason, his authority must be accepted.

Paul here also gives us important reason, why wives need to submit to their husbands,

In verse 22, pay closer attention, how wives should submit to their husband,

it says, Wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord.

So, what does it mean that they have to submit as to the Lord?

Paul here is NOT leaving room for husband to play God,
What he is saying is that a Christian wife's submission is not really to her husband
but it is ultimately to the Lord.

So I think this (in some sense) really gives a big relief to the wives

When a wife has a good and perfect husband, she wouldn't really have the problem of submitting
to her husband,

but the problem is that
there are no such thing as a perfect husband,
for we are all sinful, all husbands do silly things,

And, in such cases, the tough question that the ladies will face is that,
'Do I really need to submit to a husband like him?'
(I mean, does he really deserve my submission?).

But Paul really reminds us here that, a Christian wife's submission is not really to her husband
but it is ultimately to the Lord.

So even though your husband may not appreciate your submission,
it is the Lord, who highly receives your submission to your husband.
Indeed, 1 Peter 3:4 reminds to the wives that,
wife's gentle and quiet Spirit is very precious in God's sight.

2nd point I want to make when we understand submission is that:
being submissive does not necessarily means you are inferior

When we hear the word “submit” we naturally think it in ‘master and slave’ relationship. So when it says wife must submit to her husband, people usually think that, they have to submit because they are in inferior position.

But one of the clear point I am trying to make is that when someone subjects to a higher authority, it does not necessarily means that, the person is inferior than the person in higher authority.

For example: Children are not inferior to their parents simply because they are under their parents’ authority,

This is also well revealed when we understand Trinity, the Son submits to the Father, and the Holy Spirit submits to the Father and the Son, (So, in the economy of redemption, we see this rank of The Father on top, The Son, and the Holy Spirit)

But this does not mean that, the Son and the Holy Spirit is not inferior to the Father Because they are equal in essence power and glory.

So we need to be extremely clear that, as wives submit to their husband, they submit, not because they are inferior, but it is just a way to honoring our marriage.

Now, we see applications for husband from verse 25, where it says “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”

Given the fact that we are the head of the relationship with authority, We further see that it is not a position to be oppressive and bossy, But it is a position to love and serve.

We accordingly see the perfect example from Jesus.

When we look at John chapter 13 for example,

It is a story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples,

And before Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, we see that, such authority of Jesus is highlighted in verse 3, where it says:

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God”

So, we see from this verse that, such authority and his divine nature is really highlighted in this verse,

And what does Jesus do, with such authority? He serves the disciples by washing their feet as a servant, where it further signifies his ultimate serving on the cross as the atonement of our sin.

From this perfect example of Jesus, we really see that, our authority as a parent and husband, and, our authority as the elder of a church, is not really a position to take advantage of other people who are under your authority, But it is the position to love and serve.

And today's passage further reveals the practical ways of loving your wife,

Where verse 29 says that, to are to love our wives by nourishing and cherishing.

(Explain the meaning of nourish and cherish)

Ray Ortlund provides very helpful exegesis on these words, where he writes that,

Nourish - it involves the sense of dignifying purpose and care and attention.

When we make shepherd plan for the church, we often place our own families in the last,

And too often our wives are neglected

BUT, when today's passage tells us that we are to love our wives by nourishing them,

This means that, our wives are the most important member of your shepherd plan.

Cherish, contains the meaning of comforting someone by heat or warmth. –

so, in English expression, heartwarming conveys the sense, -- emotionally support.

So we see here that, the two practical ways of loving our wives , and it is y nourishing and cherishing our wives.

The other important matter that is also worth mentioning from today's passage is that, It also tells us the 'secret ingredient' to love our wives.

When we look at verse 30, we see, he is providing a profound ground for us to love our wives, Where he says that "Because we are members of his body"

So, the question we can ask is,

What does it mean by the fact that we are members of his body, and how does it become the fundamental ground for us to love our wives?

John Calvin comments on this verse that,

Our Lord Jesus calls us to himself and tell us that we are so joined to him, that he does not have anything of his own which he does not share with us.

In other Words, this means that, we are now in intimate union with Christ, that forms this deep personal relationship with Him, and in that relationship,

it is Christ who nourishes and cherishes us,

And as the result of the benefit we enjoy in union, we are to love our wives accordingly.

So, loving our wives is not something we can do by our own strength,

but it is something we can do in response to the grace we enjoy in union with Christ.

So, if you really want to love you wife,

The question we must ask ourselves first is,

are we in intimate, loving, union relationship with Christ?

Conclusion:

We all struggle in our marriage, marriage is tough...

And there are times we often be disappointed in our own marriage.

What's worse, we are living in a culture that is not honouring marriage as well.

So, it is so easy for us to be pessimistic and have negative view on marriage.

But despite all the struggle we may have in our marriage,

We see this glorious meaning and value of marriage.

Which is that our marriage is to display the reality of the gospel,

(the relationship between Christ and the church)

And for this reason, we are to honor, lift up and protect our marriage,

And we can only do this when we are in nourishing relationship with Christ,

For we are members of his body.

Amen