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The Drama of Marriage — Open Secret

Ephesians 5:22-33

PowerPoint Presentation: None

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SermonAudio blurb: After the fall of man sin entered the world and most certainly into marriages. But too often though this is true it is forgotten, or just ignored. It is an open secret that needs to be acknowledged so that through the gospel couples might battle well against their common enemy, sin.

I. Introduction.

- A. We continue in our series on marriage. My first sermon made three key points out of Genesis 1:26-31 by way of introduction:
 - 1. First, it was a particular act, an unique work of creation.
 - 2. Second, both are image bearers of God.
 - 3. Finally, they are equal.
- B. The second message spoke of the challenge that is often found in our marriages—godlessness.
 - 1. A lack of orientation toward God.
 - 2. Instead it is a marriage filled with a lot of things, perhaps good things, but they are not founded and focused upon God.
- C. The third message took us to the second chapter of Genesis where we saw the creation of man and woman and the establishment of marriage in greater detail.
 - 1. To the man God gave a clear task of cultivating and keeping creation.
 - 2. He created the woman to be his helper. Not in a diminutive sense, but in a complementing sense. In himself Adam was not complete.
 - 3. The reality is that the man is oriented toward the task and the woman is oriented toward the man to help him fulfill that task.
- D. Today we learn the open secret that lies behind and in and through all marriages. Frankly through all relationships.
 - 1. It is sin.
 - 2. Something we know and yet somehow we don't know and that messes us up in so many ways in the marriage.

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- E. We will approach this in two steps. First is the biblical teaching on it and second is several practical applications to take away.

II. The Fall of Mankind and The Fall of Marriage.

A. Genesis 2:25 - 3:1-7.

- 1. Just one verse given after the creation of man and woman that gives only a tiny glimpse of what was lost.
 - a. No shame.
 - b. This idea of nakedness often sounds strange to our ears and it is because of the shame of nakedness built into us.
- 2. Satan and sin.
 - a. The serpent is identified elsewhere as the devil. Notice how he approaches Eve. Important to note that it is Eve and not Adam to whom Satan approaches.
 - (1) “Has God really said. . . .” A calling into question the words of God. Implication that there is something wrong in what God said.
 - (2) “You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?” Here he is setting up the lie that is to come by purposely distorting what God told Adam.
 - b. Eve’s response fails to properly state what God has said. What she should have done is not even get into the conversation but she did.
 - c. vss. 4-5, Now the serpent completely contradicts God’s word.
 - (1) Notice how in vs 5 he is wording it to create a sense that God is somehow withholding something good for them.
 - (2) God doesn’t want to share His greatness and knowledge with them.
 - d. Now we see Eve look at the tree that she knew was forbidden by God and redefine it in her mind (6).
 - e. Finally Adam enters the picture and it is not pretty.
 - (1) He does not lead, she does.

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- (2) He high-handedly eats of the fruit. Full knowledge and by making the choice of his wife rather than God. And that is the same sin every person makes to this day.
 - f. And at that moment all of creation broke and became twisted.
 - g. vs. 7, Adam and Even went beyond the limits that God had set for them, and in so doing, they simultaneously discovered their nakedness and experienced shame.
 - (1) Now they begin the same process we all do, they try to clean up their mess. They try to cover themselves now that they are experiencing shame.
 - (2) Their innocence is gone. The hook was set and they are now forevermore caught.
 - (3) What they need is someone to rescue them.
- B. Genesis 3:8-15.
- 1. Note the sadness of vs 8.
 - a. They hear YHWH coming and they hide. This is likely not an anthropomorphism. Rather, it is likely the Son of God who they would meet and speak to.
 - b. With that in mind just wrap your mind around the loss they are experiencing. What was once a sweet time is now a time to run and hide.
 - c. Like guilty children they are hiding in the very garden made for them.
 - d. This hiding is very basic to the human nature. We see this in many places in the bible:
 - (1) John 1:5 Jesus is the light of the world but the world did not overcome it/comprehend it.
 - (2) John 3:19 “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.”
 - (3) Ephesians 5:8 “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.”
 - 2. Hear the grace of vs 9.

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- a. God calls out to them. From this moment on this is what you will see of God, coming to sinners who are in rebellion to Him.
 - b. But also notice who He is calling to. Not Eve but Adam.
3. Hear yourself in vss 10-13.
- a. Adam sort of owns up, but it is more about him being afraid than him having disobeyed.
 - (1) Before their sin there were things they simply had no idea existed, like being naked.
 - (2) Even today there is a level of innocence you can raise your marriage and family in that is good.
 - b. God directly questions him and he immediately shows his self-centered heart.
 - (1) Shifts the blame to Eve.
 - (2) But truly shifts the blame to God who gave her to him.
 - (3) And husbands continue this folly to this day.
 - c. God speaks to Eve and the same shifting and wiggling occurs.
 - d. We will deal with vss 14-15 in a bit.
- C. Genesis 3:16-19.
1. So this married couple has listened to Satan rather than their Creator and God. Sin is now rippling through the universe. Their relationship with each other is now a broken one. And it is here that God gives the curses due to sin.
 2. “. . . greatly multiply your pain. . . .” She was still to be fruitful and to multiply but it was now in pain.
 3. "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."
 - a. Here we have the battle of the sexes.
 - b. What do the words "desire" and "rule" mean?
 - (1) It is tempting to read a modern understanding to these terms.

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- (2) Desire does not mean the wife is wanting/coveting her husband. Rule does not mean the husband is imposing dominance on his wife.
 - (3) Desire here is more of a spirit of controlling. Rule carries the idea of both dominance and governing.
 - (4) To help see this a parallel passage is Genesis 4:7.
 - (a) Sin is described as an animal crouching at the door. Sin's desire is to enslave Cain—to possess and control him, but the Lord urges Cain to overpower sin, to master it.
 - (5) Similarly, the woman desires to overcome her husband and to control him.
 - (6) Sin corrupts the creation order by encouraging her to control her husband. And she goes from being made to be a fit helper to one who seeks to control.
 - (7) Yet the order God had established from the beginning is reemphasized. The husband is still to lead. He is not to let her control him.
 - (a) This is something that brings so much strife into the homes today and most don't even recognize what is going on.
 - (b) The husband must still lead. But sin now makes this a very difficult thing to do for he can do it right one moment and in a very sinful manner then next.
4. Notice what is said to the man in vs 17. "Because you listened. . . ."
- a. The bible puts the blame squarely upon Adam not Eve. He was the head of the marriage. He was the one who would make the final decision. He should have corrected his wife, but he didn't.
 - b. "Cursed is the ground because of you" He is still to bring about dominance over all of creation, but just like his marriage, so too will creation fight back.

III. Application.

- A. Satan will work to cause you not focus on the Word as the sole point of reference regarding God's will.

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1. Add to this your own sin and this is the point of a real battle.
 2. Parents are to be preparing their children to, 1. Trust in Christ and 2. Know the Word. Prepare them to be a husband or a wife.
 3. Once you allow this world, which is controlled by Satan, to define what you do and don't do, then your marriage will begin to be redefined in your heart just like Eve with the tree and forbidden fruit.
- B. Sin corrupts vertical and horizontal relationships
1. Vertical:
 - a. In Romans 5:18 it says, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men." This couple felt great guilt before God because of their disobedience. The relationship with God will not be the same.
 - b. Sin makes us want to hide much like they did. We deflect attention away from ourselves onto everything and anything.
 - (1) Proverbs 28:1 The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But the righteous are bold as a lion.
 - (2) We have a perfect savior and full forgiveness in Jesus Christ yet it is common for us to find ways to hide and run. But as you run from God all you do is fall again into the ways of Satan and threaten your marriage.
 - (3) Don't ever be deceived into thinking that the sin between you and your spouse is only about the two of you. Any sin between the two of you affects your relationship with God. Remember what John says, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20).
 2. Horizontal:
 - a. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve experience complete openness and vulnerability, trusting and loving each other.
 - b. After the Fall, their marriage was twisted into selfishness, bitterness, and distrust. They could not even accept their responsibility for the situation. Everyone quick to imply failure on others and pass the guilt down the road.

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- c. If you were to sit for a day and just jot down all of the sins that could affect your marriage you would quickly become weary and discouraged.
 - (1) Whether it is pride or laziness, bitterness or arrogance, immaturity or selfishness; the list could go on and on.
 - (2) But this is not to be and you two must battle that every day. You cannot let sin become comfortable in your marriage.
 - (3) Embrace that you are in a battle and engage it. Often the first step is owning your own sin rather than shifting it to your spouse.

- C. Competing voices.
 - 1. So many voice are out there and sadly too often the Church does not help you discern them.
 - 2. Satan would like nothing more than to undermine Christian marriages. He hates a godly marriage for it brings to this world an image that is desperately needed, of Christ and His Church.
 - 3. Add to Satan also the myriad of voices of this age as well as our own sinful nature and you should be very sober about how easy it is to listen to what you should not.
 - 4. The messages that the world gives us. The world tells you that your needs and happiness are the point of marriage. It says nothing about holiness, servant-hood, or anything else that would make you think like God.
 - a. The lies that we tell ourselves. Self-justification of sin and rationalizations are common tools of our sinful flesh.
 - b. If you haven't thought about this then do so. What are the voices competing with God's Words for your marriage?
 - (1) Whatever they are, get rid of them. They will do you no good.
 - (2) Nothing that stands opposed to God and his word will ever help you with your marriage.

- D. Trying to be God.
 - 1. At the core of the Fall of mankind was a desire to be "like" God.
 - a. And we still do this in many different ways, mostly when we set up our own standards and activities contrary to God.

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- b. It flows from the idea that we know better. And we are fools as we do this.
 - c. We act like God when we are not content with how God tells us we should think or live.
2. You begin to think that your marriage and your home is actually yours. So you try to function like some little god doing things your way.
- a. The husband who decides he will rule that home with an iron fist and make his wife respect him has fallen for this lie. The same with the passive man who will not pick up his calling to lead his home and just sits there.
 - b. Or it is the wife who has decided that things just are not getting done so she will take over and run it. She knows better. She rejects the providence of God and does not truly believe that God's plan is best.
- E. Because of sin the standards and roles are messed up.
- 1. Before sin, there was no battles. Adam led without being a jerk and Eve came alongside with no resistance.
 - 2. Now we can't even define what a marriage is. Or if we do it is based off of human standards rather than God's.
 - 3. A God-honoring marriage is one where both of you are consistently growing in how you live out God's call for you as a husband or wife.
- F. Because of sin you are both sinful and therefore both of you will fail.
- 1. Grasp this well. When you said, "I do" it was to a fellow sinner.
 - 2. The question for you to ask yourself is where are you possibly failing? Why is it a failure? How do you resolve that?
- G. And it is here that we can finish with how God resolved the fall of mankind into sin and the breakdown of marriage.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Genesis 3:14-15 21-24.
 - 1. Explain this first declaration of hope, a good word, the gospel.
- B. Genesis 3:21-24.
 - 1. Then, having given them hope and also discipline God now deals with them as sinners who hope in Him.

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2. He properly clothes them.
 - a. I say “properly” because they had already tried to cover up themselves and their shame.
 - b. Now God does it for them, through the death of innocent animals.
 3. He graciously denies them the tree of life.
 4. Because of sin He expels them from the Garden.
 - a. Sin has consequences. Don’t forget this.
 - b. But this also then begins the story of God’s redemption. From the first garden to the final, eternal Garden when sin, death and Satan are destroyed.
- C. My simplest but most important counsel.
1. Your spouse is not the problem, sin is. And if you both will grasp that then you can fight the sin together rather than with each other.
 2. As you prepare for marriage or are involved in your marriage you will struggle with sin. What do you do?
 3. You fight it and you keep fighting it.
 4. But always fight it with the gospel close to your heart. Take those struggles always to the cross for it was there that you were forgiven.
 5. Keeping the gospel close will remind you that your wife or husband is but a sinner like you. It will soften a heart that you may have let become hard.
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Community Group Questions

- **What are the competing voices that are affecting your marriage? If you are single, voices are still seeking to be heard. Are you conscious of them and how?**
- **What lies do you tell yourself that distract you from God and hurt your marital relationship?**
- **Do you see the dynamic described in Genesis 3:16 in your marriage? If so, think about how to change/break that dynamic.**
- **Talk about how you can keep the gospel close at hand as you progress through life and marriage.**