

“It is Not Good”

Not long ago a brother pastor and I attended the funeral of a friend who had taken his own life. We talked about suicide a lot in the days that followed – about how so much of the discussion centers around the extenuating circumstances – but in the end, it’s about taking one’s own life, and acting as if one is God.

One of the things we agreed upon was the need for the Church to clearly say to people NO – suicide is not good – don’t do it. It is sinful. It is harmful to so many people. It destroys God’s good gift of life.

So also with divorce. All too often pastors shy away from the conversation – because so many people sitting in the pews have been impacted in one way or another by divorce. Almost all of our families have had to deal with it.

Yes, there are extenuating circumstances. But, it seems like when we do talk about it – we’re always looking for ways to say it’s okay (or, okay in my situation). We go to great lengths to mention how the bible permits divorce in the cases of sexual infidelity and abandonment.

But God says it was not this way from the beginning. He says that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). And His Church needs to be clear – to say NO – “don’t do it” – it’s “not good.” It is sinful.

Like suicide, divorce destroys one of God’s good gifts – the gift of Holy Marriage. As we look at this good gift this morning, let’s clearly say what God has to say. In a world abounding in the devil’s lies, there is much confusion about “gender” – but God clearly says that He has made us to be “male” and “female.”

Homosexuality is “not good” – and “same-sex marriage” is not marriage in God’s eyes. His design in Holy Marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

“It is not good that the man should be alone,” God says. Marriage is for our good. “Be fruitful and multiply,” God says. Get married. Have children. These are God’s good gifts that we should rejoice in and receive with thanksgiving.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh.” The “one flesh” union of which God speaks is sexual intercourse – His gift to be used by husband and wife – not a gift to be used before marriage, or outside of the marriage bond.

Male, female – yes. Marriage – yes. Children – yes. Divorce – NO. “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.” Are there extenuating circumstances? YES. It’s called sin.

Marriage is God’s good gift for all creation – but as fallen, sinful human beings – and with the devil’s prompting – we don’t receive the gift as we should. The Pharisees who come to Jesus here in the text come to “tempt” Him – looking for a loophole – looking for an excuse to say divorce is “okay.”

Jesus is clear. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” To divorce is to rip and tear apart what God Himself has joined together. And let’s be clear, this ripping and tearing can take place, even without a “legal” divorce.

It takes place with the unfaithful wife, the lazy husband, the abuse of one’s spouse. These are “not good” – they are not God’s will for husband and wife – they erode God’s union. But we dare not become little Pharisees – looking for loopholes – trying to play God, declaring what is “good” and “not good” for ourselves – saying that divorce is “okay.”

God says that wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved [His Bride] the Church. And the truth is that we daily sin much – we fall short of God’s good design for our lives – but divorce is not His answer. Rather, it is the blood of Jesus Christ that heals all our wounds, and restores that which is torn apart.

Have you abused God’s gift of Holy Marriage? Have you abused it with pre-marital or extra-marital sexual relations? Have you harmed your spouse by not being the husband or wife that God has given you to be? Have you separated what God has joined together?

Repent. Repent of your unfaithful deeds – your tempting of God – looking for loopholes, making excuses, pretending that God says your sin is “okay.” Stop denying your sin, and the havoc it has created. Repent – become like little children – and do not hinder others.

The kingdom of God belongs to the repentant. The blood of Jesus Christ was shed for you – forgiving your sin – loosing you from the bonds of guilt – and strengthens you for the struggles that you will face as husband and wife.

Three times the Holy Scriptures proclaim the words of institution for Holy Marriage. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Three times it is proclaimed – because it is important – it’s foundational – it’s a vital part of God’s good creation. And what God says about His gift of Holy Marriage must be clearly proclaimed in our day – so that it may be heard, and believed, and lived – for the “good” which He intends.

You see, Holy Marriage is a picture of the very communion between Christ and His Bride, the Church. The temptation to divorce, to separate what God has joined together – is a picture of the very temptation of the evil one who seeks to separate you from Christ – and uses all kinds of lies to deceive you into believing that it is “okay.”

You have been united to Christ in Holy Baptism – united to the very Son of God, so that you are indeed a child of God. United to Christ’s death and resurrection – so that even as Christ has died, and been raised to life again – so also you have died to sin and been resurrected with Him to eternal life.

Dearly beloved, you are united to Christ now – and even death cannot separate you. “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.