

a sermon from HEBREWS 13:4:

MARRIAGE IS HONOURABLE IN ALL, AND THE BED UNDEFILED

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## I. A PRAYER

Let us pray, “O Thou high and lofty One, Who inhabitest eternity, Whose Name is holy, Who dwellest in the high and holy place, but with him also Who is of a contrite and humble spirit, give us Grace to bring Thee the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which Thou, O GOD, dost not despise.”<sup>1</sup> In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

## II. A PROPOSITION

The Almighty is The Author of marriage, and therefore we call it “holy matrimony.” The bond between a husband and wife therein is so close, that GOD mystically sees them as one flesh and one spirit. May The Eternal One have mercy on those who defile the marriage bed with infidelity! But blessed is the husband and wife who remain in loving fidelity to one another and to The LORD!

## III. A SCRIPTURE – HEBREWS 13:4

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers GOD will judge.<sup>2</sup>

## IV. INTRODUCTION

As we gather together to celebrate and consummate these bonds of holy matrimony of this man and woman, to join them as husband and wife before GOD and man, let us first consider what we are about to witness and enter into. From our Scripture Text, we may observe three things: First, that marriage is to be held in honor by all people. Second, that the marriage bed is to be kept undefiled. Third, that those who defile the purity of the marriage bed with sexual infidelity will be judged by GOD.

Now this may sound as too stern a message to be preached on such a happy occasion. But in this age of great promiscuity, confusion, infidelity and divorce, we would be as one standing on the deck of the Titanic after it hit the iceberg, continuing in idle chatter and blithely dancing the night away with our eyes closed, if we did not bring

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<sup>1</sup> 1, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, p 10, paragraph 1. “Liturgy of Confession.”

<sup>2</sup> 2, NKJV, HEBREWS 13:4.

a call to all here today to keep holy what GOD has called holy – that is, holy matrimony between a husband and wife. So we must not leave here today without an understanding and reverence for what The Almighty has created for man and woman to be together as one in marriage. So let us proceed.

#### V. MARRIAGE IS HONORABLE AMONG ALL

First, what is “marriage?” The NKJV reads, “Marriage is honorable among all...”<sup>3</sup> Or in The NIV, “Marriage should be honored by all...”<sup>4</sup> Whatever it is, GOD commands here that all men honor it. In The Greek, The Word here is γάμος – gamos – meaning “a wedding or marriage festival,” or more precisely, the institution of holy “matrimony.”<sup>5</sup> The Catechism of The Catholic Church declares that holy matrimony is “The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, [which] is by its nature ordered [by GOD and The Church] for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of... [children].”<sup>6</sup>

This is revealed to us in The TORAH. The LORD GOD declares in GENESIS 2:18, “...It is not good that the man should be alone; [Therefore] I will make him an help meet for him.”<sup>7</sup> So from Adam’s side The LORD created woman. While He made Adam’s body from the dust of the ground, He made Eve’s body from the very flesh of Adam.<sup>8</sup> And into both He breathed the breath of life, by His Spirit.<sup>9</sup> So Adam declared of Eve before The Creator, “...This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she

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<sup>3</sup> 2, NKJV, HEBREWS 13:4a.

<sup>4</sup> 3, NIV, HEBREWS 13:4a.

<sup>5</sup> 4, Strong’s Data, 1062 γάμος - gamos - meaning: 1) a wedding or marriage festival, a wedding banquet, a wedding feast 2) marriage, matrimony.

<sup>6</sup> 5, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1601, p 446. “The Sacrament of Matrimony.”

<sup>7</sup> 6, KJV, GENESIS 2:18.

<sup>8</sup> 6, KJV, GENESIS 2:21-22, “And The LORD GOD caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which The LORD GOD had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

<sup>9</sup> 6, KJV, GENESIS 2:7, “And The LORD GOD formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”<sup>10</sup> Let us note well, that marriage is honorable, and to be honored by all, because GOD instituted it.

This is how close a husband and wife are ordained by The Almighty to be, that Moses concludes in GENESIS 2:24, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh!”<sup>11</sup> We see this from The Hebrew Text, that man is אִישׁ - ‘YSH<sup>12</sup> – meaning “man,” the “male [of] mankind.”<sup>13</sup> In The Hebrew Text, “woman” is derived from the word for man, that is אִשָּׁה - ‘ISHSHAH<sup>14</sup> - meaning “woman, wife, female.”<sup>15</sup> As The Catechism of The Catholic Church states, “‘The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by The Creator... GOD Himself is The Author of marriage.’ The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of The Creator!”<sup>16</sup>

Saint Origen observes of the closeness, unity and sanctity of the husband and wife together as one, as The Almighty declares through Moses, that they should “...be joined together in a manner worthy of GOD..., [for] ‘they are no longer two, [but one flesh.]’ Where ever there is true concord, unison and harmony between husband and wife – when he is as ruler [in love] and she is obedient [in love] to the saying, ‘He will rule over you,’ then of such persons we may truly say, ‘they are no more two’” but one in spirit and flesh

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<sup>10</sup> 6, KJV, GENESIS 2:23.

<sup>11</sup> 6, KJV, GENESIS 2:24.

<sup>12</sup> In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter א ayin = “

<sup>13</sup> 4, Strong’s Data, 0376 אִישׁ - ‘YSH - meaning: 1) man 1a) man, male (in contrast to woman, female) 1b) husband 1c) human being, person (in contrast to God) 1d) servant 1e) mankind...

<sup>14</sup> In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter א aleph = ‘ and the letter א ayin = “

<sup>15</sup> 4, Strong’s Data, 0802 אִשָּׁה - ‘ISHSHAH - meaning: 1) woman, wife, female 1a) woman (opposite of man) 1b) wife (woman married to a man) 1c) female...

<sup>16</sup> 5, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1603, p 447. “Marriage in The Order of Creation.”

within the covenant of holy matrimony.<sup>17</sup> As Wycliffe adds, "...the closest human relationship, marriage, ought to exhibit to all the graces of the Christian life!"<sup>18</sup>

So Matthew Henry comments on the purity and chastity called for between a husband and wife to one another and to The LORD within holy matrimony, that GOD ordains the marriage covenant to be ..."honourable in all, and ought to be so esteemed by all, and not denied to those to whom GOD has not denied it. It is honourable, for GOD instituted it for man in [The Garden of] Paradise, knowing it was not good for him to be alone. He married and blessed the first couple, the first parents of mankind, to direct all to look unto GOD in that great concern, and to marry in The Lord..."<sup>19</sup>

Gentlemen! The Almighty commands you to honor marriage! So when the clergyman, standing in the place of The Lord, demands of you as the bridegroom this solemn question - before you answer "I will!" - consider carefully the vow that will bind you to your wife before GOD and man for the rest of your earthly days! "Will you have [this woman] to be your wife, to live together in the holy bond of marriage? Will you love her, honor her, and care for her, under all conditions and circumstances of life, and through The Grace of GOD, approve yourself a faithful Christian husband to her, so long as you both shall live?"<sup>20</sup>

Ladies! The Almighty commands you to honor marriage! So when the clergyman, standing in the place of The Lord, demands of you as the bride this solemn question - before you answer "I will!" - consider carefully the vow that will bind you to your husband before GOD and man for the rest of your earthly days! "Will you have [this man] to be your husband, to live together in the holy bond of marriage? Will you love him, honor him, and care for him, under all conditions and circumstances of life, and

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<sup>17</sup> 7, Dictionary of Early Christian beliefs, "Marriage," p 426, 1<sup>st</sup> entry. "Origen (c.245, E), 9.506."

<sup>18</sup> 8, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, HEBREWS 13:4, p 1426, paragraph 1.

<sup>19</sup> 9, Matthew Henry Notes, HEBREWS, Chapter 13, Verses 1-7, IV, "To purity and chastity," v.4, 1.

<sup>20</sup> 1, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, p 116, paragraph 4. "The Solemnization of Marriage."

through The Grace of GOD, approve yourself a faithful Christian wife to him, so long as you both shall live?”<sup>21</sup>

## VI. AND THE BED UNDEFILED

Second, what does it mean to be “undefiled?” The NJKV reads, “...and the bed undefiled”<sup>22</sup> In The NIV, “...and the marriage bed kept pure.”<sup>23</sup> How does keeping the marriage bed pure keep it undefiled? In the Greek Text, the word used is ἀμίαντος - amiantos – meaning “not defiled, unsoiled, free from ...[being] deformed and debased.”<sup>24</sup> So what GOD has created and declared to be holy, man dare not defile, debase, tear asunder or make unclean! GOD is The Author of the marriage covenant between a husband and wife. GOD have mercy then on they who defiles the marriage bed!

The marriage covenant is so highly esteemed and sacred in The LORD’s sight, that he speaks of the bond between JESUS CHRIST and The Church in terms of the marriage covenant between husband and wife! As Fausset observes, “In marriage husband and wife combine to form one perfect human being; the one is the complement of the other. So CHRIST makes The Church a necessary adjunct to Himself. He is the Archetype from Whom, as the pattern, The Church is formed... He is her Head, as the husband is of the wife...”<sup>25</sup>

Recall what Saint Paul declares in EPHESIANS 5:23-25, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as CHRIST is The Head of The Church: and He is The Saviour of The Body. Therefore as The Church is subject unto CHRIST, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as CHRIST also loved The Church, and gave Himself for... [Her].”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, as Wycliffe offers, “Chastity

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<sup>21</sup> 1, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, p 116, paragraph 5. “The Solemnization of Marriage.”

<sup>22</sup> 2, NKJV, HEBREWS 13:4a.

<sup>23</sup> 3, NIV, HEBREWS 13:4.a

<sup>24</sup> 4, Strong’s Data, 283 ἀμίαντος - amiantos - meaning: 1) not defiled, unsoiled 1a) free from that by which the nature of a thing is deformed and debased, or its force and vigour impaired.

<sup>25</sup> 10, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, “Marriage,” 2330.01.

<sup>26</sup> 6, KJV, EPHESIANS 5:23-25.

in the bonds of marriage constitutes strong Christian witness.”<sup>27</sup> And it most certainly is a grave offense against CHRIST and The Church when it is not!

Matthew Henry says here of marriage, ““It is honourable as a means to prevent impurity and a defiled bed. It is honourable and happy, when persons come together pure and chaste, and preserve the marriage bed undefiled, not only from unlawful but inordinate affections.”<sup>28</sup> Our Saviour repeats The very Words of Moses from GENESIS 2 on marriage, adding a warning to all who would dare to give cause to - or be responsible for - the defiling and destroying of the marriage covenant!

So JESUS warns us, for the hardness of our hearts in MATTHEW 19:4-6, “...Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore GOD hath joined together, let not man put asunder!”<sup>29</sup>

Gentlemen! Consider what you vow in your solemn oath before The King of the universe, all of creation, The Church and mankind – that you covenant to keep the marriage bed undefiled and pure! “I take [this woman] To be my wedded wife; and I do promise and covenant to be your loving and faithful husband; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; so long as we both shall live!”<sup>30</sup>

Ladies! Consider what you vow in your solemn oath before The King of the universe, all of creation, The Church and mankind – that you covenant to keep the marriage bed undefiled and pure! “I take [this man] to be my wedded husband; and I do

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<sup>27</sup> 8, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, HEBREWS 13:4, p 1426, paragraph 1.

<sup>28</sup> 9, Matthew Henry Notes, HEBREWS, Chapter 13, Verses 1-7, IV, “To purity and chastity,” v.4, 1.

<sup>29</sup> 6, KJV, MATTHEW 19:4-6.

<sup>30</sup> 1, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, p 117, paragraph 1. “The Solemnization of Marriage.”



promise and covenant to be your loving and faithful wife; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; so long as we both shall live!”<sup>31</sup>

## VII. BUT FORNICATORS AND ADULTERERS GOD WILL JUDGE

Third, what of these forbidden things, to be a “fornicator” or an “adulterer?” The NKJV reads, “but fornicators and adulterers GOD will judge.”<sup>32</sup> Or from The NIV, “for GOD will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”<sup>33</sup> In The Greek Text, we find the word Πόρνος - pornos – meaning one “who prostitutes his [or her] body to another's lust for hire,” one who – not being married – “indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse.” Indeed, any sexual intercourse outside the bonds of holy matrimony is unlawful. The one-night fling, the long-term sexual relationship, those who are cohabitating, even those who are engaged but not yet married – if there is intercourse in any way contrary to the marriage covenant – it is all the unlawful sin of “fornication!”<sup>34</sup> And GOD help them, for they need to confess and repent urgently, and sin no more!

We also find here the word μοιχός – moichos, meaning “an adulterer, that is, one who is “faithless” towards his or her spouse, or a metaphor for “one who is faithless towards GOD.”<sup>35</sup> For if a husband and wife have sexual relations with ones other than each other, they are committing a faithless sin against both one another and against The LORD, Who is The Author of the marriage covenant! They are not simply “finding themselves” or “testing to see if they truly love their spouse!” They are sinners. They are adulterers! And GOD help them, for they also need to confess and repent urgently, and sin no more!

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<sup>31</sup> 1, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, p 117, paragraph 1. “The Solemnization of Marriage.”

<sup>32</sup> 2, NKJV, HEBREWS 13:4b.

<sup>33</sup> 3, NIV, HEBREWS 13:4b.

<sup>34</sup> 4, Strong's Data, 4205 Πόρνος - pornos - meaning: 1) a man who prostitutes his body to another's lust for hire 2) a male prostitute 3) a man who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse, a fornicator, to sell oneself as a whoremonger.

<sup>35</sup> 4, Ibid., 3432 μοιχός – moichos, meaning: 1) an adulterer 2) metaphor [for] one who is faithless toward GOD, ungodly.

O what a fearful thing - for sinful man to fall into the hands of an angry GOD! Let us note well, that GOD is neither distant nor blind, but sees all such sins. And if we break our marriage covenant with our spouses, we must answer not only to them, but also to The LORD Himself! As Saint Paul writes in ROMANS 14:10-12, "...for we shall all stand before The judgment Seat of CHRIST. For it is written, As I live, saith The Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to GOD. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to GOD."<sup>36</sup> Dare we think that we might escape the eye of GOD's wrath for such sins? That hope is in vain, for all "...licentious people must someday face their sins and practices before GOD!"<sup>37</sup>

As Matthew Henry observes, "GOD knows who are guilty of such sins, [for] no darkness can hide them from Him. He will call such sins by their proper names, not by the names of love and gallantry, but of... [fornication] in the single state and adultery in the married state. He will bring them into judgment..., either by their own consciences here, and set their sins in order before them for their deep humiliation and conscience..., or He will set them at His tribunal at death, and in The Last Day; He will convict them, condemn them, and cast them out for ever, if they die under the guilt of this sin!"<sup>38</sup>

Let the husband and wife not give themselves license to offer up themselves to others! Nor let them say after they have engaged in sexual infidelity, hoping to coddle their guilt in hardness of heart, "I will divorce my lawfully wedded spouse and run off with my lover!" Instead, let them keep themselves true to each other and to The Almighty, Who is Giver and Witness of their union and all the blessings therein! Let them think instead of the portrait of marital fidelity and joy that Saint Tertullian paints of the faithful and loving husband and wife, who are joined together truly as one flesh and one spirit, for "...Together they pray; together they prostrate themselves [before GOD].

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<sup>36</sup> 6, KJV, ROMANS 14:10-12.

<sup>37</sup> 8, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, HEBREWS 13:4, p 1426, paragraph 1.

<sup>38</sup> 9, Matthew Henry Notes, HEBREWS, Chapter 13, Verses 1-7, IV, "To purity and chastity," v.4, 2.

They perform their fasts together, mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining” each other in all things! <sup>39</sup>

“Together the godly Christian husband and wife, with their obedient and happy children, “...are both equally in The Church of GOD; equally at The Banquet... [Table of Holy Communion]; equally in straits, in persecutions... Neither has to hide from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. [As one in their outflowing love] ...the sick are visited and the poor are relieved... There is no stealthy [dishonesty,] no trembling greeting, no mute benediction [between them]! PSALMS and hymns echo between the two... [And O does] CHRIST rejoices when He sees and hears such things” from the one flesh and spirit held tightly together by husband and wife in the undefiled and loving marital covenant! <sup>40</sup>

Gentlemen! Remember that GOD will judge all the sexually immoral! So as you place that wedding ring on your beloved - kissing her tenderly before The Presence of The Creator and all those assembled in The House of GOD for the first time as your wife - remember what you swear to, and to Whom you shall answer if ever you break your marriage vows! Gentlemen, speak these words to her then in fear and in joy, with trembling and rejoicing hearts, “This ring I give to you, in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love!” <sup>41</sup>

Ladies! Remember that GOD will judge all the sexually immoral! So as you place that wedding ring on your beloved – kissing him tenderly before The Presence of The Creator and all those assembled in The House of GOD for the first time as your husband - remember what you swear to, and to Whom you shall answer if ever you break your marriage vows! Ladies, speak these words to him then in fear and in joy, with

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<sup>39</sup> 7, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “Marriage,” p 425, 7<sup>th</sup> entry. “Tertullian (c.212, W), 4.48.”

<sup>40</sup> 7, Ibid., “Marriage,” p 425, 7<sup>th</sup> entry. “Tertullian (c.212, W), 4.48.”

<sup>41</sup> 1, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, p 117, paragraph 3. “The Solemnization of Marriage.”

trembling and rejoicing hearts, “This ring I give to you, in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love!”<sup>42</sup>

### VIII. IN CONCLUSION

So we have peered together into The Words of HEBREWS 13:4, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers GOD will judge!”<sup>43</sup> As we gather to celebrate the marriage of this man and this woman together as one in flesh and spirit in holy matrimony, let us all take to heart The Lord’s stern warning and Command as in MATTHEW 19:6, “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore GOD hath joined together, let not man put asunder!”<sup>44</sup>

For The Almighty is The Author of marriage, and therefore we call it “holy matrimony.” The bond between a husband and wife therein is so close, that GOD mystically sees them as one flesh and one spirit. May The Eternal One have mercy on those who defile the marriage bed with infidelity! But blessed is the husband and wife who remain in loving fidelity to one another and to The LORD! In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

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<sup>42</sup> 1, Hymnal of The Moravian Church, p 117, paragraph 3. “The Solemnization of Marriage.”

<sup>43</sup> 2, NKJV, HEBREWS 13:4.

<sup>44</sup> 6, KJV, MATTHEW 19:6.

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