

Text: Matthew 22:37-40; Galatians 5:14

Title: “Loving God at Home”

“HOME/HOPE” – VIDEO

The Book of James says that we are not to merely listen to the word. We need to do what it says. The Bible is like a spiritual mirror that helps us see ourselves the way we should. If we listen to the Word but do not do what it says James says we’re like a person who looks at themselves in a mirror and sees something that needs to be changed, but then goes on their way without correcting it. Soon he or she forgets what they look like. However if we continually look into the mirror of the Word of God and don’t forget what we see there but actually act on it we will receive a blessing.

My desire in this series of messages called “Home/Hope” is to help us hold up the Word of God as a mirror for our lives and for our marriages and parenting. We have to live our lives in alignment with what we see in that wonderful mirror of God’s Word. All of God’s Word applies to our homes, not just the passages that specifically mention marriage or parenting.

Now open your Bibles to Matthews 22:35 to one of the towering teachings of Jesus that we call the Great Commandment. As you’re turning let me remind you that tonight is our monthly Evening of Prayer and Praise. Believe or not there are more pressing issues in the world today than Bluebell Ice Cream being pulled from the freezers in our stores. That’s a disaster, but in the big picture there are many more pressing things for us to pray over. Join us at 5:30 in the Great Room. READ MATTHEW 22:35-40.

Today I want you to see your marriage, your parenting, or your search for a future mate in light of the overarching command of the Lord to love God with every fiber of your being. Then, and only then, will you truly be able to love your nearest neighbor ... your spouse, your children, your parents ... as God wants them to be loved. I want you to take your love and worship of God home with you.

You see, if God is not in the proper position in our lives everything else, every other relationship, will be out of alignment. Let’s face it: love runs out. The kind of love it takes to make it through the daily irritations at home and the major relationship catastrophes that happen is a love that has to come from beyond ourselves. Sometimes people look at their marriage and parenting issues and think, “That mountain is just too high to climb. Even if I wanted to, I just don’t have the strength to take another step.” When you think there’s no hope it’s hard to keep trying. So where does the strength come from? I can tell you this; a durable marriage isn’t rooted in romantic love, or sexual attraction or compatible personalities. It is first rooted in love for God. We need to understand ...

1. WE ARE ALL INCURABLE WORSHIPPERS.

Last week we saw how God created human beings and formed the first family. He did it all to display His glory. He created us for a relationship with Himself and with a spirit by which we can worship Him and give Him glory. We are born incurable worshippers. That’s the way God made us. And we were designed to find our greatest joy in life in loving and worshipping Him. But sin messed that up. Since we are incurable worshippers, when we don’t worship God and find meaning

in that, we will find something or someone else to worship. And that worship drives everything we think, desire, say and do.

This is what Paul had in mind in Romans 1. So hold your place here and turn to Romans 1:20. God has revealed Himself to every human being. How?

Read Romans 1:20-23. So this shows us that God has revealed Himself as the awesome Creator God by what He has created. Everyone can observe this and see that God exists and deserves to be worshipped exclusively. No one has an excuse. So people know instinctively that God exists, but when they don't worship Him they have to find something (or someone) else to worship, again, because we are incurable worshippers, created to worship.

Read Romans 1:24-25. So when we don't worship God we find other things to worship which leads to a lifestyle of sin. People begin to behave in ways that run counter to God's creation. So this sinful behavior was really driven by worship, but not worship and love for God. It was driven by worship of things that don't deserve to be worshipped ... idols.

So what does this have to do with marriage? It shows us why we behave the way we do in our relationships. If things are not right with God then we are not going to have the meaning and satisfaction that comes from knowing and loving God. And when we don't have that, we will try to find it other things or other people. We will begin to use things or people to give us pleasure ... they will become our idol because we're incurable worshippers.

Example: Here's a guy whose relationship with God is not right. He's not loving and worshipping God so his heart is not satisfied in God. So he finds his meaning in life in his work. Now work is a good thing, but it makes a terrible god. Soon he's driven and obsessed by success at work. It controls his life and he begins to shut out his wife and children. They become objects who get in the way of his god. We get angry when our gods are threatened, so there's constant irritation at home.

Example: Here's a wife whose "god" is the approval and acceptance of others. Now God puts people in our lives, but they make terrible gods. As long as everyone is pleased with her she feels great about herself. The tone of someone's voice, a facial expression or a certain body language is interpreted by her as rejection. Now if she gained her sense of well-being from the love and acceptance God has for her, that is absolutely certain and she never has to worry about being accepted. But since she looks for that acceptance from others, if she doesn't get it, her idol is threatened. So she puts unrealistic expectations on others.

So how things are vertically with God affects how things are horizontally with others. We are created as worshippers and ...

2. WE ARE CREATED TO WORSHIP GOD ALONE.

I want to talk about this in terms of FIRST LOVE and SECOND LOVE.

FIRST LOVE = LOVING GOD WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING

This is what Jesus was talking about when He was asked by the religious expert about the greatest commandment. He goes all the way back to the OT Law. God's heart hasn't changed toward us.

Matthew 22:37-38 - Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.

This what David had in mind when he said in ...

Psalm 37:4 - Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Today the mantra seems to be, “Delight yourself with the desires of your heart—and hope the Lord approves.” If we are not delighting ourselves in the Lord we will never find our desires fulfilled. We are created for worshipping God alone ... with every fiber of our being. That's FIRST LOVE.

SECOND LOVE = SERVING (SACRIFICIAL) LOVE OF OTHERS

Matthew 22:39 - And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

This love means that we can love another as much as we love ourselves. What an amazing way to live. I can live with my wife or husband, my children or my parents, and be as concerned about their needs as I am for my own needs. It doesn't say that we shouldn't love ourselves or be concerned about our needs. It's talking about a lifestyle where I'm equally concerned about the needs of others. So here is the next thing...

3. WHEN LOVE FOR GOD IS THE DOMINANT DESIRE IN LIFE WE CAN LOVE OTHERS AS WE LOVE OURSELVES.

So I can never have this SECOND LOVE if I don't first have the FIRST LOVE. Difficulties in marriage don't come because we don't love each other enough. They come because we don't love God enough. But if FIRST LOVE is in place in my life, then I am satisfied in God. I don't have to worry about my needs because I am secure in the fact that God will take care of me. I don't have to defend my turf because God has everything covered. I can give myself away in sacrificial, serving love to others knowing that I am fully loved by God. So FIRST LOVE takes you to SECOND LOVE ... to loving others as you love yourself.

I love the way Paul David Tripp applies this in his book *What Did You Expect:*

WORSHIPPING GOD AS CREATOR CAUSES US TO VALUE OUR MATES.

Your mate, your children and your parents are the creation of a good Creator God. He created them with their temperament and personality. He chose to make them a certain height and with a certain body shape. He created them with certain natural talents, or without certain natural talents. He created the way they sneeze or the pitch of their voice. They didn't choose those things, God did. God is the Divine Artist. And if we are worshipping and loving Him then we can value what He has created in our mates, even if they are really different than we are.

ILLUSTRATION - Stop to think about how God creates beauty by putting things that are different next to each other. It's those bluebonnets up against some rocks. It's those trees hanging over a stream. It's the moon over against a black sky. And God puts different people next to each other to display His creative beauty. So you can value and honor your mate for the creation of God that they are. Worshipping and loving God as Creator causes us to value our mates.

When we don't worship God as Creator we will try to re-create others into the image we want them to be. That's dishonoring to God and to the person He created. Or we criticize and resent things about people that they can't change. God made them that way and we should value them as God's Creation.

WORSHIPPING GOD AS SOVEREIGN CAUSES US TO CELEBRATE OUR DIFFERENCES.

God rules over the whole course of our lives. He controls the family and cultural circumstances that shaped us. He controlled the family values that helped shape us, even the bad ones. He moved you and your family from place to place, which resulted in you and your mate meeting one another.

ILLUSTRATION – Nan's family moved to Wichita Falls because they had three daughters about to be in college at the same time and they needed to be near an affordable college. My dad was in the Air Force and we moved all over the place. Nan and I look at our lives today and know and believe that God brought us together, that we were meant for each other. But long before we knew that, God knew it and had orchestrated everything to cause our paths to cross.

So God uses all the circumstances of our lives to shape our outlook on life. And, of course, in a marriage we often don't share the same outlook, and that's where arguments and conflict can arise. And we can either use that as an opportunity to worship God as our sovereign Lord and celebrate the way God has made us different, or we can dishonor God by complaining and being resentful. Loving God for His sovereign activity in our lives helps us to not be irritated by our differences. Instead we can celebrate them. God created you both and presided over your development.

WORSHIPPING GOD AS SAVIOR CAUSES US TO REJOICE IN WHAT GOD IS DOING IN OUR MATE.

Obviously we don't excuse sinful behavior and attitudes in our family by simply saying, "Well that's just the way they are (or I am)." No, we should desire our loved ones to be saved and sanctified in Christ. But even here we worship God. He is the Savior. All family problems (marriage and parenting) are really people problems. And God's solution for all people problems is the Gospel, the Good News, of Jesus Christ. So there's Good News for your marriage, no matter how bad things may be.

Remember what we learned last week: If you're married you're a sinner married to a sinner. If you have children, you are a sinner who has begotten a sinner. This is what we learn from Scripture. The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. You ask, "Well, what about after we are saved? Are we still sinners?" Yes, we are in that we still live in a body that is part of a world that is broken by sin. God saves us from the *penalty* of sin so that we can be forgiven and go to

heaven; that's a done deal. But He also saves us from the *power* of sin. This process, called sanctification, is a lifelong process for the believer. So we are sinners who are still being saved, and that won't be done until we get our new resurrection bodies when Christ returns. He who has begun a good work in you will bring it to completion. And that is true in your mate, if they are a believer.

Listen, when we worship God as Savior we can celebrate God's transforming grace at work in our lives. We are not perfect and our spouse or children are not perfect. But God isn't through with any of us. He uses our families to show us that we all need grace, and that we all are agents of His grace at work in the lives of our loved ones. That means that you can respond to your spouse's sin, weaknesses and struggles with hope knowing that our Savior God is working in their lives.

The kind of love necessary to make your marriage durable ... able to endure a thousand hurts and weaknesses ... able to endure the inconveniences and annoyances ... is SECOND LOVE that flows out of FIRST LOVE.