

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Beloved by God, especially you Gus and Lizzy, on this the solemn and joyful day of your union, as man and wife.

It's that idea of union, or unity, that we are going to focus our attention on today, which seems fitting not only for the rite of Christian marriage, but also for Trinity Sunday.

Our text for meditation today is from ...*as follows in Jesus' name:*

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

When the Lord created Adam, He made a completely unique creation, similar to others in some ways, but distinct from others in important ways.

We have animated and mortal bodies like the animals, but we are not animals.

We have eternal souls/spirits, but are not identical to the angels.

We are a unique creation... in fact, we humans have the distinction of being the crown of God's creation.

The Lord took special interest in our creation, forming Adam from the Adamah, the ground/earth.

And after placing him in the garden,

and after declaring the rest of His creation on the other days "good," or complete, the Lord made an mental note, "**it is not good that the man should be alone.**"

And noted His plan, "**I will make a helper fit for him.**" ^{Genesis 2:18}

As Adam then named all the animals, he found that none of them was compatible/comparable to him.

It was only after the Lord had caused Adam, too, to see and appreciate this, that the Lord formed the woman from the flesh of Adam's side.

So when the Lord brought her to the man, He was simply reunifying what He had just separated, but it was indeed a much deeper union.

And after recognizing his loneliness and waiting all of less than a day, Adam noted:

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..."

(So while Adam was a full-grown man, perhaps we see some of the eagerness of youth, after all, he was only a day old.)

But from this account, we have a "therefore" statement... an adverb linking a cause to its effect:

God declared: **Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.** ^{Genesis 2:24b-25}

So from this time forth, Gus and Lizzy, so long as you are both still alive on this earth,

the Lord knows the reality that there are two souls, but He identifies you as a one flesh union.

... When asked about divorce and God's giving of the law about divorce

Jesus went back to this Genesis account and said of it: "...**they are no longer two but one flesh.**

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ^{Mark 10:8-9}

Noting that just as God brought the woman to Adam and unified them, so God is doing here today.

God is joining you together, uniting you.

That you are here today, and will be standing before God and this assembly, to make your vows is a reflection of your understanding about this union.

But there is a mystery here, as well, St. Paul tells us,

there is a reality here that we can know, but not completely understand,

and that mystery has to do with our Christian marriages being a reflection of Christ and His union with the Church.

Now we can easily recognize the wisdom of our text today:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.

For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow....

Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone?

What two people can accomplish working together is greater than

what two people can accomplish independently, or what might even be impossible for each to do.

But taking a cue from Solomon, we also recognize that marriage, especially a Christian marriage, is not just made up of 2 individuals or 2 roommates combining their resources for mutual benefit.

Solomon declares: **a threefold cord is not quickly broken.**

While he is not specifically speaking about marriage in our text,

the Church has often recognized that a Christian marriage has a third strand in its unity.

A Christian marriage is not only united by God, but also with God, as both man and wife are brought together not merely for their physical/earthly well-being,

but also their spiritual well-being and eternal life, as well as that of their children, if so blessed.

This world is very evil and our own corruption runs deep.

There is good reason that our marriage rites have us recognize the reality "**for better, for worse;**

for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; ... until death parts us."

The trials and afflictions that you will face, the crosses that the Lord will graciously give you to bear, will test you and the devil will use those same tests to tempt you.

His purpose is simple, to separate what God had joined together,

just as he did with Adam and Eve,

but not only to separate you from each other,

but, most diabolically, to separate each of you from the Lord.

And your sinful nature is no less willing.

It wants to exert itself over the other, for you, Gus, to rule over Lizzy for your own benefit,

for you, Lizzy, to refuse to submit in churchly fashion to your head.

Having known each other from a young age and having lived with each other as brother and sister, you are not unaware of each other's weaknesses and tendencies.

You will now have the rest of your life to know those even better,

but no longer to exploit and weaponize those weaknesses as a brother and sister often do.

Do not forget what Jesus told those who asked about divorce,

it was for **the hardness of our hearts** ^{Mark 10:5} that the Lord made such a provision.

That hardness of heart dwells in each of us until death do us part.

While still remaining brother and sister in Christ,

you are now undertaking very different roles, as husband and wife.
You now have different responsibilities for each other to care and tend for the other
according to the duties God has given to husbands and wives.
To love and honor each other and build each other up.

You are being given to each other:

so that if one falls, the other will lift you up;

so that if one's love grows cold, the other can warm you;

so that if the devil would prevail over one, the two of you, through meditation & prayer
can withstand him.

But note especially, how it is that you can withstand him:

not by the power of your might, not by your toughing it out, not by your separating ways,
but by the third strand of the threefold cord, which is not easily broken.

You are here today to sanctify your marriage with God's Word and devotion.

You are here in God's presence to hear what He in His Word tells you about your new vocation,
and to pray for yourselves and for us to pray for you, that He would bless and keep you.

But most importantly, you are here to hear how Christ has already united Himself to you,

having cleansed [you both] by the washing of water with the word,

so that He might present [you both] to Himself in splendor,

Ephesians 6:26-27

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that [you both] might be holy and without blemish.

Know that the one to whom you are now being united is Christ's own.

He has lived and bled and risen to life again for the person sitting next to you, just as He has you.

Like the red, blood-colored cord that hung out and saved Rahab and her family,

Christ's blood-stained strand, weaved within everything that you do together,

will save you and your family, through *better & worse; richer & poorer; sickness & health;*

until death finally parts you in this life.

But even that parting will only be a temporary/physical separation since Christ is the Head
of His bride, the Church, both in heaven and on earth.

And while you will not be married to each other after this earthly life,

you will be more perfectly joined together, along with all the faithful, with Your Savior.

The Lord bless and keep you.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria