

“Breaking news! Wow!” Gen 2:18, 21-24

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Yesterday we received some breaking news. Indeed! The last Friday the Supreme Court of the US states legalized same sex marriage in all states. It made breaking news all over the world. Wow!

What exactly does it mean for us? We as Christians have this enormous privilege, we have God’s own revelation, the Creator’s own wisdom available helping us to make sense of what is going on in our world. Let’s see how we as Christians can understand current trends in our culture and what we as Christians can do.

First we’ll take a look at what marriage is according to the Creator’s design. *Then* we’ll try to summarize briefly what has gone wrong during last 100 or so years. *Finally*, we’ll try to think what we as Christians are supposed to do.

Remember, God identifies Himself as the Creator. True God is the One who created the heaven and the earth. The One who ordered them and who still holds entire creation together.

When we look at the very beginning of the Bible, we see that God Himself established marriage as the foundational institution for human flourishing and explained to us how this institution is supposed to function according to His design, so that we can abundantly receive His blessings.

God created man in His image and likeness, male and female He created them. Both as His representatives on earth, both with equal dignity and value, both infinitely precious in His eyes.

Equal, yes, but not the same. With different gifts and roles. Our Father in heaven created marriage as a complementary union between one man and one woman, for them to live together, in the most intimate relationships, based on commitment, love and trust.

For these relationships, for marriage, God gave this wonderful gift of sex, and promised to bless this union with a new life, with children. “Be fruitful and multiply!” In this union husband and wife are called to learn how to love and serve self-sacrificially, how to forgive and consider other spouse as more important.

In marriage husband and wife are called to live out and enjoy God's design for them; husbands loving their wives, as Christ loved His Church, being ready to lay down their lives for their wives.

Wives, respecting their husbands and submitting them as the Church submits to Christ, thus helping husbands to care for them. This is God's design for marriage. This is the most precious gift that God the Creator has given to humanity.

These are the relationships which in their intimacy and depth are the closest to our relationships with God. Wherever the Gospel of Christ has been proclaimed, wherever God's wisdom has been made known to His people, there marriage has always been kept in the highest esteem, and the community has flourished.

One of today's leading sociologists said. "There is one institution which is measurably beneficial for men, women, children and society... and it is marriage as life-long loving union between one man and one woman."

However, he added, he is surprised that not a single government in the West seems to care about it. Even as our cities are as bright as never before, there is a thick darkness over the Western civilization. This Friday it became even thicker.

You know that "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light", (2.Cor 11:14), even if he is "the father of lies". (John 8:44) Satan can't create anything, but he is so good in destroying God's good creation. If Satan wants to do the greatest damage, he needs to attack what is the most important among God's institutions, that is, marriage.

And this is exactly what he has been busy doing. *Let's see what has happened during the last century or so?* Several things. What Satan has done is as simple as it has been effective.

He has been trying to destroy our understanding about marriage using 'salami' tactic; slicing away one by one those blessings which God intends to give through marriage. Satan simply tried to separate them from marriage as if we could and should be able to enjoy them apart from marriage.

As one of first he planted in our minds this idea that love and marriage are separate things. Marriage is marriage and love is love. This led to the idea that love is this wonderful feeling, excitement, while marriage is some kind of difficult and unpleasant task.

Then we invented the pill. The pill which helped to separate sex from procreation. As if pregnancy was some kind of disease which you need to cure. Now suddenly sex became simply a means for physical pleasure. Just a part of recreation. Fun!

Once sex was separated from procreation, it got separated from marriage as well. If there is no 'risk' getting pregnant, then you can have sex with whom you want and when you want. Not a big deal. No risks attached.

Besides, if sex is about me fulfilling my desires and sexual dreams, then I should be able to do it in a way I want it. With opposite sex, or with my own sex, with one partner, or with several, with my own species, or with others.

At the same time when the sexual revolution was destroying marriages, radical feminism ideology came out with their 'truth claim' that men and women are essentially the same. That there are no differences. That all differences are simply inventions of our society. And they demanded to get rid of them. They still do.

Sure, God had created men and women equal. For us Christians is it given. There is no doubt about it. However, God also created us for different roles. We are equal, but not the same. Today we know it better than ever before.

But if only you repeat often enough that black is white and call those who disagree bad names, after a while people begin to accept that black is white. They also begin to believe that anyone who still thinks that black is black is simply idiot or bigot.

This ideology changed our understanding about roles of husbands and wives within marriage. Sadly enough the Church in the West sometimes couldn't see and understand what was going on.

Sometimes she was too cowardly to speak the truth and quietly settled for lies. Our church hasn't been spared from this deceit. The discussion about the office of the public ministry which has been dividing the LCA is two camps for more than 20 years comes from the same source.

From this great masterplan to destroy marriage as God given foundation for human community. How sad it is to see brothers and sisters fighting one against other, when we all had to stand united against the enemy, equipped by God's wisdom.

All these trends change the whole idea about what marriage is for. According to God's design, marriage is the place where you learn to deny yourself and to serve others, to love others more than yourself.

The question to ask about marriage used to be "What can I bring to it? How can I serve other person?" Now marriage became about me. The questions became "What can I get out of marriage? What can this person do for me?" It became all about me, about me satisfying my needs, my desires.

The other person was important only as long as he or she advanced my goals. Which meant that marriage is not anymore about life long union. If this person doesn't serve my purpose anymore, I'm leaving in search of someone better. So we

got new laws about 'no-fault' divorce. And because we didn't want to commit to other, for being together with someone had become all about me, we began to live together without even getting married.

Because we are such smart people. Progressive. We have evolved. We are smarter than God. We know better. And thus within a couple of decades living together without marriage became a norm in our society.

Why would you marry someone? What if you will dislike them or find someone better? Why would you put such obstacles, as marriage, on your way to happiness? On the other hand, you can still live together, share living costs, have sex, and no commitment. For everyone does it...

Saying 'we don't need this paper (marriage), if only we love one another' were used to cover lies. That, in fact, people cared more and more about themselves. Other partner was useful only as long as I wanted him or her to be here for me.

With technological advances also procreation and children got separated from marriage. Children were no longer God's gift to marriage, but commodities, which we could obtain using artificial fertility technologies.

So if you want to have sex, have sex. If you want to live together, live together. If you want to buy a puppy, buy a puppy, if you want a child, obtain a child.

You can see in this brief excursus how within less than hundred years society's understanding about marriage has totally changed. Marriage is not anymore for the benefit of children or community, it's not anymore loving life-long a union between one man and one woman.

You can love without marriage. You can have sex without marriage. You can live together without marriage. You can obtain children without marriage. You can do whatever you want, at least people believe so, without getting married.

It seems that marriage is not about any of these anymore. Let's redefine it! This is what happened in the US on Friday. The Supreme Court of the US, five judges against four, decided that they can change God's design for us. There obviously are no limits to human arrogance and foolishness.

This is important - all these destructive and damaging trends were introduced in one certain way. It is simple and very effective. No one said, 'let's get rid of marriage, or let's abandon responsibilities of spouses, or let ignore the needs of children, or let us delve into adultery. No...

All of this was introduced as something very good. All these destructive trends were introduced as pursuits of love, of freedom, of justice, of choice, or equality, of

rights. All the best things. Who could be against? But these wonderful words were used to mask coming destruction and pains.

So called marriage equality is neither about marriage nor about equality. It is human rebellion against God's design. It is about broken people who are desperately seeking for happiness in a wrong place. It is about deceit, about blind passions, about hysteria of mob, about hatred against everyone who dares to disagree with this new order...

Those who think they are fighters for justice, equality and love, in reality are victims of the one who disguises himself as an angel of light. They fight for their own end and celebrate when it comes closer.

You don't have to be a scientist to see what the fruits of these trends are. Sexual promiscuity at early age, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, guilt, depressions, lack of trust, cohabitation, broken relationships, broken families, suffering children, wounded and broken hearts and lives, anger, bitterness, crime, violence, addictions, suicides, and so on.

As Paul the apostle said: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap." (Gal 6:7) We see it happening right now.

Now, what should we as Christians do in this brave new world where unrestricted desires determine your identity? We can't blame the world. It would be easy to blame them.

But they had never had God's wisdom. They had never known what is God's design for our lives, how wonderful could relationships be when lived following God's wisdom in fellowship with Christ... We can't blame them.

Instead, *we* need to repent. *We* need to repent for we haven't done our best. We, to whom God's wisdom is entrusted, we haven't appreciated it, we haven't taught it well enough.

We haven't lived according to it. Instead of listening to God, we have listened to the world. We have embraced the world's fallen ways. How different are we from the world? We are afraid to be different.

We are afraid to confess God's truth. If the world says: "Jump!" – we jump. If the world says: "Bow!" – we bow. If the world says this is right, we say "Ok, let it be as you say!"

We need to repent. "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves ... If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and unrighteousness... and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

Repent, and then - be ready to suffer. Listen to Peter the apostle: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

Listen to John the apostle: "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." (1 John 3:13) Listen to Jesus: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 14:18-19)

The last thing. Rejoice and be ready for the time of great opportunities. We know what marriage is. The world doesn't. But they all in their hearts desire what our Father gives us in marriage. True love, commitment, trust, self-sacrificial care.

Be ready to pray for those who hate you. Be ready to show true compassion to anyone who is tempted by sexual sins, whatever they are. Be ready to share God's wisdom and build up again the society which has decided to destroy itself.

It's not going to be easy. Not at all. The darkness is thick, and the thicker it is the more light is needed. You are the light of the world. Make sure it shines bright!

And remember: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Amen.