

Summary:

We must not think that we compel or constrain God through liturgy or canons. All we can do is watch to see where God is acting, and do our best to follow, participate, and celebrate.

Personal understandings:

How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage?

The “sacramentality of marriage” describes God’s work as performed through a category of relationships. When we see a committed, loving, relationship of mutual fellowship, support, and comfort, we can feel assured that God is working in and through that relationship.

What is the difference between marriage and the blessing of a relationship?

Marriage is a sacrament of God: a relationship which acts as a sign of God’s gracious love for God’s people, and a means through which God delivers that grace.

The ability to bless a relationship is one way in which the church attempts to partake in God’s grace and participate in God’s actions. The solemnization of matrimony is another.

When the church chooses to participate in God’s actions in a marriage, the church can benefit from the lessons, love, and unification God offers through that marriage. When a church decides not to participate where God is clearly acting, the loss is entirely the church’s. God’s grace is not limited by the church choosing not to join in.

What is the theological significance of:

companionship in marriage?

Companionship in marriage is one of the fruits of God’s working in that relationship.

bearing and raising children?

Bearing children can be seen as participating in God’s act of creation. Choosing not to bear children can be seen as responding to God’s call to stewardship. Raising children is the ministry of parenthood, to which many are called. There are many other issues around bearing and raising children that have theological significance. None of these issues necessarily have anything to do with marriage, though the sacrament of marriage and the ministry of parenthood are often conflated.

Adam and Eve, when instructed to become one flesh and be fruitful, were called to the ministry of parenthood. They were not married, as there was no church to participate in God’s actions through

their relationship. Joseph and Mary were married, but their call to the ministry of parenthood was distinct from any expression of sexuality between them. At least initially.

the relationship between marriage and sexuality?

Marriage is a sacrament of God. The solemnization of matrimony is a liturgy in which the church participates in that action. Doing all in our power to support and uphold the marriage is a way to participate in the continual sacrament. Marriage is much more than just a wedding, after all.

Sexuality is how humans express themselves sexually.

The theological significance of relating the two is that humans are free to choose expressions of sexual intimacy as ways to participate in God's actions in a given relationship they are members of. As always, different people are called to participate in God's works in different ways, suited to how God created them and the purpose God has for them.

Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage?

A civil marriage is a ceremony where the government participates in a legal relationship that has ramifications on taxation and property ownership.

The solemnization of matrimony is a ceremony where the church recognizes God is acting through a relationship and steps up to participate in, and celebrate, what God is doing.

How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage?

Gender difference is socially constructed.

The marriage sacrament is divinely constructed.

The theological significance of relating the two is that humans are free to choose constructions of gender identity as ways to participate in God's actions in a given relationship they are members of. Again, different people are called to participate in God's works in different manners.

How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?

The Bible describes marriage as an institution between two people: the father (or otherwise legitimate guardian) of one or more daughters, and the man to whom the father is giving at least one of his daughters in exchange for a bride-price (Genesis 24, 29, Exodus 22, Numbers 30, Deuteronomy 22, Joshua 15, 1 Samuel 18). In cases of war, a bride can be taken instead of given (Numbers 31, Deuteronomy 21, Judges 21). In cases of a man raping a woman, he may be required to marry her (Deuteronomy 21, 22:28). If a man dies, all his wives are given to his younger brother (Genesis 38,

Deuteronomy 25, Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 20).

Biblically, marriage is not a sacrament through which the church is called to participate in God's actions, but a property transaction through which God may choose to act (as God is capable of acting through any context). Theologically, holding to an understanding of marriage as held in the cultures described in the Bible requires the belief that women are created to be the property of men and are not fully human in their own right. This is not a unique view in Canada, but I hope it is not one which will officially become a teaching of the Anglican church.

A more relevant question might be, "How do you interpret what scripture says about God, God's acting in the world, God's invitation for us to participate in God's actions, and the consequences for choosing not to participate?"

If God did not stop working in the world after the bible was written, and is not a puppet of the church, we need to discover what God is doing today and join in. Reasoning over scripture and tradition is good practice in learning how to seek God, and gives us useful tools for recognizing God. But once what we ask has been given unto us, what is sought is found, and the door is opened, it is time to stop knocking and enter into the kingdom of life. And all that lives must grow, change, and risk death.

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