

Mark 10:1-12

What God Has Joined Together

These past 12 weeks we have been looking at Marriage and the Gospel, and we have learned that when a man and a woman unite themselves in holy matrimony to become husband and wife, they are expressing a love that is beyond themselves; a love that has existed before time, and has expressed itself in time, and forever will be known as Christ and His Church.

Marriage is beautiful, and is one of God's greatest gifts to humanity, but today this invaluable treasure is simply treated like any other thing - easy come, easy go. For a while now, and not just with the particular cultural climate we find ourselves in with the Supreme Court of the United States redefining marriage, (in reality this issue has been going on since the very institution of marriage) this God ordained institution been under attack. The attack is most prevalently seen when two people who have pledged their lives together, who are joined together by God, seek to end the marriage prematurely through divorce. Now whether it is one party seeking the divorce or both, divorce is a witness of the rupture in what God intends marriage to point towards. In other words divorce is one of humanities rebellions against what our God intends.

This rupture known as divorce is vicious. Often divorce is more painful than death because there is truly no such thing as a final divorce. In our cultural landscape that is scattered with the remains of broken families and broken lives we need a word from God and thankfully we have a Word from God. The Bible says that *long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, [this one is the one] whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world* (Hebrews 1:1-2).

So, today, whether you are married, not married, looking to get married, divorced, divorced and remarried, let's turn to Scripture to see what our God, our Creator who knows what is good says about divorce.

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The first thing that we need to know and be absolutely clear on is:

1. We Can Trust God's Word Concerning Divorce (1)

- We can trust because of the One whose saying this is.
- At the center of Mark's Gospel is the answer to this question:
- Who is this? (4:41)
- We get the clearest picture at the hinge point of the Gospel at 8:27-29
- Peter's confession
- Everything flows from this point. He has been revealed to us as the Christ, and as the Christ He teaches us how who He is and what He is doing is going to make every valley exalted and every mountain and hill made low, smooth the rough places, and make the crooked straight - in other words to change the world by redeeming the world to Himself
- What we have to understand is who this One is that is saying what He is saying. He is the Christ who in this narrative, when asked about Divorce is on His way to finish redemption - He is on His way to the Cross, on His way to resurrection, on His way to ascension and the sending of the Spirit, the Spirit being the guarantee that He who began the work will come again to receive us to Himself that where He is we will be forever!
- So, this is our One Lord Jesus Christ, the one for our sakes and for our salvation became incarnate. The One who came to bring us back to Him
- This is the one who laid the foundations of the earth in the beginning, the heavens are the work of His hands; they will perish but He will remain.

- In other words: We can trust what He is going to say
- The tendency of most hearts is to do exactly what the Pharisees do - test instead of trust.
- The place of the narrative is important.
- Notice this phrase *beyond the Jordan*
- There was an event that occurred *beyond the Jordan* earlier when John the Baptist was beheaded
- We are told that one of the reasons that John the Baptist was beheaded was because he was preaching against the marriage and his brother Philip's wife Herodias (6:14-29)
- So, perhaps these Pharisees who had it in for Jesus were using this hot button topic specifically to entrap Jesus.
- Don't be a Pharisee this morning, don't test Jesus, trust Him.

Ok, here is our opportunity this morning as we look to see what Jesus says about divorce.

What does Jesus say about Divorce?

2. What God Has Joined Together, Let Not Man Separate (2-9)

- Pay close attention to How Jesus gets to this position
- *What did Moses command you*
- They quote Deuteronomy but they had failed to remember that Moses also wrote Genesis.
- Deuteronomy 24 puts a regulation around divorce not to give someone an out but to provide some stability in chaos. When God says what He says in Deuteronomy 24 it is not to give man an excuse for divorce but to discourage divorce. God never commands divorce. There may be an exception for some cases but divorce is never commanded.
- This distinction is an important one, one that you need to remember, one that you need to get - Divorce is never commanded.
- Scripture tells a different story about marriage. Scripture tells us that marriage is a picture of the forever love that God has for His own people. Marriage is a picture of Christ and His Church. Divorce, then, is unthinkable no matter what offense has been committed, even in the case of immorality.
- Let me ask you a question: If marriage is a picture of Christ and His Church, then will He ever leave His bride? Will we ever lose salvation?
- 2 Tim 2:11-13

*The saying is trustworthy, for:
If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.*

- Romans 8:35-39

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?
As it is written,*

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- When Christ divorces His bride then you can divorce your spouse.

- What a wonderful opportunity this gives us to worship. Do you understand how radical this obedience to our Lord's command is? No one said that obedience would not be difficult or without many hardships. But Christ's call to us is a call not simply to follow Him but to take up our cross and follow Him.
- You say wait just a minute now, when Matthew records this he records an exception clause. I believe that Matthew and Mark and Luke, and Paul, are saying the same thing and not contradictory because of what Matthew and Mark also say together. Both mention this phrase *hardness of heart*
- Israel's condition, humanities condition has always been a heart condition
- And Christ has come to give us new hearts as Ezekiel tells us
- *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to one my rules. (36:26-27)*
- So then we who are his are formed by His love, and we remember it was His love that found us when we were unloved and seemingly unlovable because of our unfaithfulness to Him who is Love, and yet He came seeking and saving us to make us His very own.
- Don't let this phrase easily escape your thinking
- *What God has joined together*
- God is the one responsible for your joining together and even if you couldn't see how your marriage could get worse He is still the one who can take the calloused stony heart and put His Spirit within it.
- God being the one that has joined your marriage together means that God has a purpose for your marriage. His purpose for all of our marriages, no matter how close or far from His glory we are is that our marriages would express His love!
- This is your marriage and despite all the circumstances that have surrounded your marriage and that now surround your marriage our confession, the reality is this - *God has joined us together*. He is then the one who can raise the dead back to life and the one who can make a melody of praise out of your marriage, but you must believe!
- What Jesus is doing here is made even more clear in verses 10-12
- Jesus is calling us to a wholehearted commitment to look to God's purpose as He laid out in creation, a purpose that Jesus has come to bring about in the world through His own life
- This saying is tough, so tough that some overreact and say what the disciples say in Matthew 19:10
- *If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry*
- They were overreacting and their line of thought may have been it is better not to marry than to risk a lifelong of unhappiness
- Jesus then comes and says you are missing the point - the point is worship not your happiness.
- This is the point of your marriage. Yes marriage is for you, marriage is for your children, marriage is for society, but marriage is not ultimately about these things - marriage is ultimately about expressing the forever covenant love of God, a love that will never leave us, never forsake us, no matter what.

Now the question that we are faced with after hearing the Word of the Lord today. Do you trust Him? Are you going to accept His teaching and so prove to be His disciple? How can you do that?

Here is what I would think would be the minimum:

- 1 - If you are married, seek Christ. Go ahead and wipe divorce from your vocabulary
- 2 - If you are married, start directing your marriage to live out God's purpose for you - to bring you closer to Himself, to make you fall more in love with Jesus
- 3 - If you are divorced, know that you are cared for and loved. I want to encourage you to remember that your satisfaction comes from Christ and not marriage, seek Christ.

4 - If you have remarried and your remarriage would constitute adultery, stay married, but seek Christ. Their needs to be a period of confession and repentance before God asking Him to forgive you and sanctify your marriage. There is no reason for you to think that you are living in ongoing adultery if you have sought the Lord now, no matter the circumstances then. Once that has been done, focus your marriage to express the wonderful love of God for us.

Remember this, our marriages are expressing eternity. What a tremendous task that has been laid before us. But we are not alone, even today if you are in the deepest and darkest valley, walking in the valley of the shadow of death, we have this truth that comforts us: He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. As the good shepherd, his rod and staff comfort us.

Do you believe? Will you believe? In your marriage live out God's purpose, a purpose that will one day be known and lived as the knowledge of the LORD covers the earth as waters cover the sea!

I can tell you that in this sermon the final word concerning all the intricacies of divorce and remarriage have not been said, but I can tell you that the final word for divorce has already been said, and it was said nearly 2,000 years ago from Christ on a Cross as He said - It is Finished. Divorce one day will be no more and our hearts long for that day!

Until then, you can come to Him, hurt, wounded, guilty, and full of shame. He will accept you just and you are and begin changing you into all that He desires you to be! But you must come.