

“Marriage and Divorce – Part 3”
Mark 10:1-12
(Preached at Trinity, December 26, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we began **Chapter 10** we found that Jesus has departed from Galilee, and has crossed the Jordan River and is now in the region of Judea north of Jericho. He is once again surrounded by crowds of people. The Pharisees approached Jesus with a question that was designed to trap and discredit Him. Their question was whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife?
2. Jesus begins a discourse on the topic of marriage. He began by stating God’s great plan for marriage that transcended the Mosaic Law.
Mark 10:5-9 NAS - "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ "But from the beginning of creation, *God* made them male and female. ⁷ "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh; consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."
3. Jesus takes us back to creation.
We’ve been looking at God’s purpose for creating the two distinct sexes: male and female which also sets forth His purpose for marriage.
 - a. For the purpose of providing a companion for the man
 - b. For the purpose of establishing a union between the male & female that would form a bond stronger than they were as individuals
 - c. For the purpose of providing the means through which the human race would multiply
4. The ultimate question Jesus was dealing with is can this wonderful union of marriage appointed and established by God ever be dissolved?
 - A. The Pharisees assumed that the Law of Moses gave permission. Their question in the Gospel of Matthew was:
Matthew 19:3 NAU - "*Some* Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"
 1. Jesus’ response was a rebuke of their lack of understanding regarding the Scriptures.
Matthew 19:4 NAU - "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning **MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,**"
 2. Jesus makes it clear that it was never God’s purpose for a man to divorce his wife.
Mark 10:5 NAU - "But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."
 3. First of all, this law was a civil law that tolerated what God condemned.
Mark 10:5 NAU - "But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."

4. Jesus said that it was because of their hard hearts – in reality the law was for the purpose of controlling divorce not advancing it
It actually placed limits on divorce which was a common practice in ancient cultures
 - a. The husband had to show an actual defect in the wife described in the Mosaic Law as "indecency"
Deuteronomy 24:1 NAU - "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house,"
It refers to sexual indecency – it can also be translated “nakedness”
 - b. He had to write her a bill of divorcement
- in other cultures all he had to do was throw her out of the house
 - c. If he divorced her and she remarried he was not permitted to marry her again - it placed importance on marriage - you could not walk in and out of it at will
 5. The Pharisees had taken this temporary concession and turned it into license for indulging their carnal desires
- B. Jesus makes it clear that divorce is not God’s plan – in Malachi we find God attitude towards divorce. He hates divorce
Malachi 2:15-16 NAU - "Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel"
1. Jesus says to divorce and then go to another is to commit adultery
Because there has been an inseparable union – the two have literally become one
Mark 10:9 NAU - "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."
 2. This is a permanent union that men have no authority to dissolve
5. Marriage is a wonderful gift from God and by God’s design it must never be terminated as long as the two are alive.
No matter what the civil authorities allow, God forbids divorce and declares His hatred of it.
Malachi 2:16 NAU - "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel"
- a. This means that for the vast majority of the so-called divorces taking place today they are still married in the sight of God.
 - b. The civil government does not have the authority do usurp the law of God.
6. If a couple chooses to separate they are not permitted to marry another because they are still married in the eyes of God.
1 Corinthians 7:10-11 NAU - "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband ¹¹ (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife."

7. When we talk about a Biblical divorce we are speaking of a marriage coming to an end in God's eyes. Only then is an individual free to enter into marriage with another person. The reasons for a marriage to end are very few and very clear. If a person leaves a marriage and remarries for any other reason they are guilty of adultery—perpetual adultery.
 8. We have to understand that marriage is permanent. I always tell people considering marriage to consider it carefully.
 - a. You only get one shot. This means you had better be sure you are prepared to spend your entire life with the one you choose.
 - b. You had better be prepared to work through the problems that are bound to occur. You must be prepared to give yourself in love, patience, and sacrifice and commit your life under the rule of Christ.
 - c. You must be prepared to work hard at building a strong marriage. Strong marriages don't just happen. They are built.
I have been married for 39 years and we are still giving great energy to building a strong relationship.
 9. God's expectations are so strong that we should tremble before them. To our Lord's teaching on marriage and divorce the disciples exclaimed:
Matthew 19:10 NAU - "The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry."
The restrictions are so clear and so firm some might fear to ever enter into such a relationship.
 10. Are there no exceptions at all to God's prohibition on divorce? This is the subject we will now begin to address.
 11. The Bible does give us some possible exceptions to this unalterable rule. It gives us some conditions where a marriage may come to an end. When I refer to a marriage coming to an end I am referring to its ending in God's eyes. In such a case an individual is free to be joined to another.
In all other cases a married person must remain married to his or her mate.
 12. It is essential that we approach this with clarity and caution.
Tonight I want to begin to examine the Biblical reasons a person is free to marry another person.
- I. The first reason, of course, is death
 - A. Marriage is a temporal institution
 1. We are blessed with our mates until death separates us
Paul uses this reality to describe our relationship to the Law
Romans 7:2-3 NAU - "For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ³ So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man."
1 Corinthians 7:39 NAS - "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."

2. Our hearts will forever be near to our mate but death ends the marriage.
 - a. We should always make it clear to our mates that they have our blessings of remarriage after our death
 - b. A husband and wife in a second marriage must be sensitive regarding feelings towards a previous mate.
Death doesn't end our love for our previous mate.
But wisdom should rule. Comparisons must be avoided.
 - c. It would be possible for a man or woman to have several marriages in this life, each ending in death.
- B. Jesus made it clear that there would also be no marriage relationships in heaven
Matthew 22:30 NAU - "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."
1. Although there is not marriage in heaven, we have every expectation of seeing our loved ones in heaven
 2. Although there will be no marriage in heaven surely there will be great joy in having our former mates there.
- II. In this passage Jesus gives no exceptions – **Verses 10-12**
- A. We must stress again. Marriage is sacred. It is permanent. No one has the right to leave a marriage.
1. Jesus states it so plain as not to be misunderstood. A person is not allowed to leave their mate.
Mark 10:11 NAU - "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her"
 2. No matter how lax the law of the land, no one can refute this law explained so clearly by our Lord
 3. The one breaking this command by putting away his or her mate and marrying another is guilty of adultery
 4. This should cause every person to consider the weightiness of marriage
 - a. Young people should consider their selection of a mate carefully
They must carefully guard their hearts until God presents the right one. This is one of the dangers of the dating model. It makes the guarding of the heart difficult.
 - b. And married couples need to work hard in strengthening their marriages. This seldom happens automatically. Couples need to see their marriage as a precious gift worth protecting.
When your car ceases to please you you can replace it.
When your house no longer fits your needs you can seek another
But you only get one mate.
- B. While Mark's Gospel presents no exceptions in Matthew's Gospel Jesus adds a single exception
Matthew 19:9 NAS - "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."
1. God permits divorce in the case of adultery - and then it is only allowed and not commanded
 2. When a person commits this terrible breach of their marital vows the innocent party is allowed to terminate the marriage and marry another.

3. This interpretation isn't universally accepted because the word doesn't actually mean "adultery."
 πορνεία The word for adultery is μοιχεία
 - a. Their argument is that this is referring to unfaithfulness in betrothal and not marriage. Usually fornication is addressing sexuality activity outside of marriage.
 But context must rule our interpretation of this passage. This passage isn't speaking about betrothal but marriage and divorce.
 - b. The word πορνεία refers to fornication which in the context of marriage is adultery. It should make us consider very carefully other forms of unfaithfulness such as pornography.
 While pornography is not grounds for divorce it is a serious breach of marital fidelity.

C. Why is the sin of adultery so serious as to destroy a marriage?

1. Because it tears apart the union formed by God. In marriage the two become one flesh. Marital relations are a reflection of this union a husband and wife share together.
 - a. Adultery destroys the very substance of the marital bond – a bond of commitment, trust, and honesty.
 - b. When Adam and Eve sinned they saw their nakedness and tried to cover themselves. Nakedness exposes our vulnerability. In marriage a couple have trust and confidence to reveal what they hide before others. I will trust you enough to reveal myself to you. Adultery is a betrayal of this mutual trust.
2. Because it is inconsistent with Christianity
1 Cor. 6:9-10 NAU - "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God."
3. This doesn't mean that divorce is automatic. A trust has been broken. Terrible robbery has occurred as a person takes that which belongs to their mate and gives it to another. Healing is painful and sometimes impossible. But it is possible for mercy and grace to prevail.