

“Marriage and Divorce – Part 1”
Mark 10:1-12
(Preached at Trinity, November 7, 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 begin a new chapter we find that Jesus has departed from Galilee, and has crossed the Jordan River and is now in the region of Judea north of Jericho.
In the last half of **Chapter 9** Jesus was alone teaching His disciples privately but now He is once again surrounded by crowds of people and, as was His custom, Jesus taught them. Jesus was always in teaching mode.
2. While some of the crowd came to hear the teaching of Jesus the Pharisees came with a different agenda. They came to test our Lord’s doctrine in an effort to trap and discredit Him. Their question was whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife?
Matthew’s Gospel records for us the actual question:
Matthew 19:3 - "Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"
3. Tonight I want to address the subject of marriage and divorce.
This is a subject which is very timely in our day. Anytime in history when holiness has been at a low the sacred institution of marriage has also been held in low esteem. As testimony as to just how wicked our society has become marriage is at an all time low.
 - A. More and more have chosen not to marry at all choosing instead to cohabitate. 40% of births in our nation are illegitimate. Among some minority groups the rate is over 60%. In addition to this 1.2 million babies each year are murdered in their mother’s womb.
 - B. There is a major push today to redefine marriage. Our current president has ordered his administration not to recognize the DOMA passed under the Clinton Administration. Several states have already legalized same-sex marriage.
 - C. And the divorce rate is still at all-time highs.
100 years ago divorce was a rarity; it was seen as a shameful thing. Most children in school came from traditional two parent families. Today, three out of five marriages end in divorce. It is easy. And for many who remain married, they know nothing of God’s standard for the institution.
Statistics tell us that 70% of men and 60% of women commit adultery.
What does the Word of God have to say on the subject?
4. Anyone who has ever given serious attention to the study of this subject has discovered that it is filled with difficulties.
This is why a systematic study is so important and why we must approach the subject carefully and honestly.

I. In **Verses 6-9** we find God's standard of marriage.

- A. Jesus begins by showing them the whole premise of their question was wrong
1. The Pharisees were focusing their attention on Deut. 24:1
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,"
 - a. They thought they had Jesus trapped. If He spoke against divorce they would accuse Him of violating the Law of Moses. Jesus defeats them with their own argument.
 - b. Jesus declares that Moses' provision was not God's ultimate plan for marriage.
 - c. Even in their day there was dispute over how this should be interpreted.
 - According to some the focus was upon the phrase "some indecency" - it had to be a case of unchastity – adultery.
 - According to the Hillel school the emphasis was on the phrase, "that she find no favor in his eyes." A man could divorce his wife for cooking a bad meal.
 2. Jesus declares God's purpose in marriage from Creation: **Verses 5-9**
 - a. The Pharisees were always boasting of their knowledge of the Law The problem was with their narrow understanding of the Scriptures.
 - b. Jesus takes them back to the beginning to examine God's purpose for humanity
- B. **Verse 6** - "God made them male and female"
1. God made the two sexes separate and distinct from one another.
 2. It is important for us to remember why God made the two sexes of human beings
 - 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

II. We need to look more particularly at God's purpose for marriage

- A. Companionship – God said it is not good to be alone
Genesis 2:18 NAS - "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."
1. Science has confirmed this – married people live longer, have fewer health and mental problems
 2. This is not to place any moral condemnation upon being single – some remain single for various reasons
 - a. For some God has not chosen to provide a mate – remember this is a God ordained institution and God must provide the partners. In such cases God often provides a unique gift of celibacy.

- b. Some have chosen to remain single for the sake of the Gospel Paul speaks of this in **1 Cor.**
1 Corinthians 7:32-35 NAU - "One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; ³³ but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, ³⁴ and *his interests* are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. ³⁵ This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and *to secure* undistracted devotion to the Lord." This must not be insisted upon by the church as some have done. Paul called this practice a doctrine of demons.
- c. Some choose to delay due to temporary life circumstances such as education
 If a man is to provide for his family he needs to adequately prepare himself to do so
3. God's ultimate purpose for human beings is that they marry
 "It is not good for the man to be alone"
Proverbs 18:22 NAS - "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the LORD."
Proverbs 19:14 NAS - "House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the LORD."
4. A single person desiring a mate must be careful to be content in Christ.
 The pursuit of a mate must never become our chief pursuit.
- B. The second purpose for the two sexes is for the purpose of establishing a union between the male and female – a bond stronger than the individual parts
Mark 10:7-9 NAS - "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."
 This union has several aspects
1. The sexual aspect – not only for procreation but for the enjoyment of the partners – Sinful man perverts all of God's blessings for the satisfying of animal-like lusts
 - a. Fornication – can rip apart the marriage. It is not God's design that sex would ever occur outside of marriage
 This is at the heart of the Seventh Commandment.
 - b. Homosexuality is a perversion of God's created order
 2. The intellectual aspect – the two share hopes, dreams, concerns –
 - a. A husband and wife should encourage one another and provide continual support – we must never do or say anything that would reflect negatively on our mate (remember you are one flesh)
Ephesians 5:28 NAU - " So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;"

- b. A husband and wife should maintain a continued atmosphere of trust.
- c. They must grow intellectually together.
- 3. The moral aspect – the basis of the family and the teaching of values
 - a. This includes a sense of duty towards each other according to the Law of God--Wives honoring and submitting to their husbands and husbands loving their wives.
 - b. The family provides the basis for passing on God’s values onto the next generation.
- 4. The spiritual aspect – the two labor together as one to display God’s glory upon the earth.
- 5. It is God that makes such a union possible
 - Mark 10:8-9 NAU** - "And the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.""
 - a. Jesus is making it clear that marriage is a divinely appointed institution that goes all that way back to creation
 - b. Like the Sabbath, it is a creation ordinance that will endure as long as this present world exists

C. For the procreation of the human race

Genesis 1:28 NAS - "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it"

Having and raising children is an important part of adulthood. It is a part of becoming mature and giving yourself for the sake of another.

In an interview on CNN Albert Mohler said:

“Parenthood is a part of helping to create adults,” Mohler said. “We grow up by having children. Without that responsibility, we have a generation of perpetual adolescents just growing old.... This is really about avoiding responsibility and I find that tremendously sad. We have to understand that parenthood is to be understood as a part of marriage itself.”

III. Can such a union appointed and established by God ever be dissolved?

- A. The Pharisees claimed that Moses had given permission
 - 1. 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."
 - 2. 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 here as "uncleanness"
 - 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

3. 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 that God 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

Conclusion:

1. We have to understand that marriage is permanent. I always tell people considering marriage to consider it carefully. 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. And 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.
2. But are there no exceptions to God's prohibition on divorce? We will deal with this question next time.