

Jesus Defines Marriage

Holiness Code for Today

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Bible Text: Matthew 19:3-6
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The Lord granting us strength this morning, we are going to be working out of Matthew Chapter 19. Matthew Chapter 19. Before we look to the word of the Lord let us once again ask his blessing upon our time.

Our gracious heavenly Father as we once again handle your holy Word we ask that by your Spirit you would come and minister to us, you would give us strength, understanding, and remembrance so that we might be better servants of Jesus Christ, for it is in his name that we pray, amen.

This is a continuation of our study of the holiness code in Leviticus. Why then in a familiar text, Matthew Chapter 19? Well, a couple of reasons. First, I wanted to include a study of this single passage in Matthew 19, where Jesus lays out God's authority to define human beings, human sexuality, human gender, and I wanted it included in the series on the holiness code because I think it's vitally important.

Now, those of you who have been in Sunday school know that we have in times past looked at this text before, I realize that. But many people are not in Sunday school, and a particular target group that I want to make sure understands this is not in the adult Sunday school class, and that's the younger folks. And our young people need to understand the basis upon which we say God has the right to determine what is right and wrong, what is true and false when it comes to the area of man's existence. That man does not have the right to all of a sudden to determine that, well you know, up until me you had men and women, and now you've got something else because I feel that way. And our society says we somehow have to bow down and say, "Oh yes, you have the right to come up with a new gender. You have the right to come up with new human relationships that no one ever before has thought of." No, we say that that is moral revolution, rebellion, sin, and anarchy. And why do we say that? Well, because our Lord Jesus taught that. And if you die and rise from the dead you have more authority than someone who has not. It's just that simple.

And so we need to look at Matthew Chapter 19, and we want to include that in the study of Leviticus, but there is another reason. And that is, that this evening we will be in Leviticus chapter 18, and so that is inspired Scripture, that is God-breathed revelation, but

it is also on a subject that, well, let's just say in generations past you didn't have to really do a lot of discussion of it. Even if you did read through the book of Leviticus you did so quickly with some level of embarrassment, and there was no discussion of it, and you just moved on from there.

Beginning this evening, parents, we will be dealing with some difficult materials. We have read through the text before, we will read through it again, but now we will need to deal with subjects such as incest and homosexuality, and subjects like that, because the Bible deals with them. And so I want to give you fair warning to be prepared. You might want to prepare your young ones, and I leave it up to you as to how you will handle that particular aspect of things. But I didn't want to just come to Sunday morning without any warning ahead of time, and not let you know we are going to be dealing specifically.

If you recall in Leviticus 18, we dealt with the material before and after that section. Remember we talked about the fact that that section tells us that God cast the nations before Israel out of the land, because the land had become polluted, because they had done these things. Well now it's time to discuss those things. And obviously right in the middle of that section, you have one of the two primary verses in the Old Testament law on the subject of homosexuality. And so that is where we are going to be going, that's what we are going to be dealing with, and I wanted to give you appropriate pastoral warning ahead of time so that you can make preparation for that particular discussion. I am certainly not apologizing for dealing with the material. We read through the Bible, we believe it is all inspired, but at the same time we are going to be dealing with some difficult subjects--subjects that previous generations did not have to discuss quite as openly and as regularly and as we do. But we have been called to serve Christ in this culture, in this time, in this way, and therefore we need to be prepared to do so, and we will do so in this study.

In Matthew chapter 19, beginning in verse 3, we read these words: Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Now, we know the context of this text, we have discussed it many times before, but I'm going to back over some ground again, due to the fact that I cannot assume that everyone who is here now has been in the Sunday school class in months past, and also due to the fact that it is my desire, surely, that this study go out from beyond just the walls of this room to many people, literally around the globe. And so we need to recognize that the primary application of this text as we continue reading is in regards to marriage and divorce. So what has happened is that the Pharisees have sought to bring Jesus into the very middle of a very hot topic of that day. And that topic was a division between the Hillelians and the Shammites, these were two major figures in the schools of the day in regards to the grounds of divorce. And the one group had a very, shall we say, easy

ground for divorce, that is if there was anything displeasing in your wife, the husband had the right to divorce her. The other school had said, "No there are clear limitations here, this must be a serious defect in the sense of a sin defect, porneia, the idea of sexual infidelity, sexual sin," and so there was a great disagreement, and this would be one of the areas of common dialogue and debate on the street corners in Jerusalem among the Pharisees. And so they wanted to drag Jesus into the argument that they were having, and so they asked him, it's testing him, they were tempting him with this question. "Can a man divorce his wife for any reason at all?"

And the primary application of Jesus' words was to lay the foundation for his answer to the question that they gave, but in our day, the answer that Jesus gives is so foundational, and so basic to an understanding of who God has made man and woman to be--what their relationship is to be, and God's right to define for his creatures the parameters of their existence--that I believe it to be one of the most important texts that you and I could possibly master. And that's why I've brought it up so many times, and bring it up again as a foundation for this evening's study. This morning's exhortation is the foundation of this evening's study because when we look to the law this evening, and God says, "You shall not marry this person, you shall not have relationships with this person, there shall be no incestuous relationships, there shall be no homosexual relationships, this will not take place amongst my people." For many people today they have no ground for understanding why that is just and righteousness and why God is taking away all our fun. That's how they view the law. They view God's law as just negative prohibitions, and there's nothing intrinsically right or wrong about these things. God just said to the people of Israel, "Don't do these things." But the reality is the foundation for any meaningful understanding of law, as we have already seen in this series, is that God is God. And God is man's creator. He made us, he designed us, and since every breath we take, every beat of our heart, comes from his hand, then he has the right to say, "This is how you shall behave, this is how you shall find life. And this is not how you shall behave, and when you do behave in these ways, you will only find death. I've designed you to function in this fashion. If you choose to reject my design for you, the only possible result is death--not just the physical cessation that we associate with the act of death, but a life that leads to death, a life that is not marked by life, a life that is not marked by happiness, by fulfillment, but a life of disappointment and degradation and darkness."

And therefore when we speak to this subject, we're not speaking this subject out of bigotry, or out of hatred. In fact I would submit to you, if what we believe, and what Jesus says in this text is true, if we remain silent in a society that has chosen utter rebellion against God, we are showing not only disrespect for God and his truth, but we are not showing love for individuals who are being deceived into thinking that following their own desires, that following their own lusts, that giving in to the deception of this society will lead them to life. Instead it will lead them to destruction, and unhappiness, and death. And if we know that and we remain silent, then we are not showing true love to that individual. So we must be motivated by love for God, love for his truth, and love for individuals who are being led down the road to destruction.

And so in Jesus' words here, we have a foundation--we have a foundation for understanding, and many people today, they dislike what the Levitical law says, but there is still a hesitation on the part of some to dislike what Jesus says. It's still sort of cool to like Jesus. Many people don't know what Jesus actually said, and if they did they probably wouldn't like it. But here we need to be able to say, "Jesus directly addressed this issue." And given that I believe he is my maker, my creator, his grave is empty, and every other moral teacher's grave once they die is full, and every other moral teacher living today will end up in a grave, then I choose to believe what he has to say, and here's what he said. "And he answered and said, have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female."

As I have said, here is the fundamental difference between the Christian, and how he responds to the issues of our society, and, I'm sure most of you well know, that within just the past number of days, the Supreme Court of the United States decided to take up the issue of the profaning of marriage. And that's what it is--I will not apologize for calling it that. The profaning of marriage! That's exactly what's being described here--is that God established marriage. God established this relationship, this institution amongst man and for man to change it is to profane it. And so you know that this is right here in front of us, this is exactly what is going on every single day in our society. In Canada, in Europe, we see that this is being used as the new moral imperative to push us and our message to the very fringes of society. That's what's happening. We all know this.

And so here Jesus address this and the first thing he says is, there is One who from the beginning made them. Made them. And so the first thing, the first thought in our mind, must always be of the fact that we are creatures--we are creations--and that the One who made us had a purpose in creating us. There is all the world of difference between a person who thinks that we are the random accidental result of unplanned, uncontrolled forces, and a person who thinks that they have been made by a wise and powerful God for a purpose, there is all the difference in the world.

And I suggest to you, that the person who would judge you, the person who would call you names, who would say that you're a bigot, that you're discriminating, that that person has absolutely no moral or ethical ground to stand on, if the best they can tell you is that, "Well, my brain is just the result of tens of millions of generations of undirected, random mutation. My brain is nothing more than atoms and molecules bumping up against one another, chemicals fizzing together. That's all my brain is, and therefore my moral judgments of you are no different than shaking up a bottle of Coke and a bottle of Sprite and letting them open. That's all it is." From the world's perspective, that's the best they've got. They have no creator. And the best they can do is, well, the last poll we took says we've got 52%, so you're wrong.

Well we've seen the results of that kind of moral insanity just this past week was the anniversary of the freeing of Auschwitz Buchenwald, and the various other death camps that were freed during World War II. And we've seen what happens when might makes right, or when polls rule the day, or when man gets to determine what's right and wrong, and some of you may recall when I debated a man who then became the president of the

American Atheists just a few years ago, and this issue came up and he had to admit when he stands at the gates of Auschwitz, when he stands at the gates of the Nazi death camps, the best he can say is well, "I wouldn't have done it that way." He cannot speak with moral outrage because he has no foundation upon which to make that kind of judgment.

And Jesus begins by saying, "He who created them from the beginning made them male and female." We have a creator. That creator has spoken, he has revealed himself. And man will remain in abject moral anarchy, as long as he closes his ears to what God has said. Is there anyone out there? One person good, good to hear it.

All right, secondly. He who created them, I can barely hear myself, so you all may be "amening" me all out the room, and I wouldn't know it, so he who created them from the beginning did what? He had a purpose. He made them male and female. There is a purpose in God's having made you the way you are.

Previous generations found that to be a wonderful thing. What I mean by that is, well, I was taught that God had made me to be a man, and therefore that meant that I had certain duties, and certain callings, and certain responsibilities, and that I was to man up, that I was to fulfill those responsibilities, that was to be the best that I could be, that I was to have that certain role with my wife and my children and my family and my society. The same thing was said of women. I'm so glad that my mother, for example, embraced her role as a woman, as one who took care of the family.

It's not involved in this idea of destroying what are called today gender stereotypes. And now we live in a day of, "It's not confusion." People call it gender confusion. No, my friends. It is rank gender rebellion against God. That's all it is. Don't get trapped into using the anemic, godless language of our society. When you have people coming up with the 14th gender concept, and demanding that the college they're attending put that on their enrollment stuff, that's not confusion, that's rebellion--that's man saying, "Oh, God made male and female; I reject God's right to define for me who I am. I reject God's right to do that. I reject God's right to determine what gifts I have and have not been given. I get to redefine everything."

That's what we are seeing in our society today. But that's not what Jesus taught. And the answer to the question regarding marriage by pointing out first and foremost that God creates us and he defines the roles of male and female, and if you remember he's quoting from the Genesis narrative here. And when God made these things, he said everything was very good up until he saw that Adam was alone. And that was not good. And so he made an "Ezer Kenegdo," a compatriot, one that is a helper, that is different and yet corresponds to man. There is a clear distinction and God intended that distinction to exist, and yet there is likewise the correspondence between the two. He made them male and female in his image. It is likewise in the Genesis text.

And so the roles of gender are given to us as a good gift from God. And anyone who says that we can change these, that we can daily change these, that we need to take the plaques off the restrooms and just put one stick figure there--we can't figure out what it is--the

insanity, the moral evil of the mayor of Houston who has shoved down the throats of the people of that city and pretty much all of California as well, the idea that there is no male and female, we need to recognize it for what it is. It is evil, it is wrong, it is a perversion of what God has designed. There is no question about it whatsoever.

From the beginning he made them male and female. We did not make ourselves male and female; we did not have a vote and because we didn't have a vote in the beginning doesn't mean we get to have a vote later on. These are things that God did and they are good. They are proper, they are right, they are what brings life when we as the Holy Spirit leads us in repentance and faith to embrace Christ our Savior. When we are in submission to God we recognize that God's gifts and God's commands are right, and that means that those who call themselves Christians, and who yet are promoting this kind of rebellion, either have no idea what it means to be a Christian or they are in a massive state of confusion and will be judged thereby.

Just this past week yet another major church, I think this time in Tennessee, an evangelical church, has said, "You know what, we've changed our views. We're gonna let..." and then you start, you know, the LGBTQ--I've lost track of how many letters you can pile behind that, it'll never end because we know within the next decade you're going to have to add to the end of that: polyamory, incest, pedophilia, bestiality, it's all got to go there, there's no way to stop all of that from flying through the door as well. And so another big church, and there's all these people who call themselves evangelicals, just, "Oh isn't this wonderful!" And the tsunami of apostasy continues.

But Jesus said from the beginning he made them male and female, and said having made them in this way: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. They are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate." So here you have once again, Jesus' own understanding of the centrality of the creation narrative to our understanding of mankind. If we do not have any idea where we came from, why God made us this way, and how God would have us to live, then it's an absolute free for all. Whichever nation gets the biggest armies and weapons gets to tell everybody else what to do; there is no moral right, there is no moral wrong, and if we learned anything from history we have known that a nation that loses any kind of meaningful moral core will eventually collapse. Of course we don't pay much attention to history anymore because those people didn't have all the technology that we have, and therefore couldn't have been that smart--that's how many people today think, but that's very unwise.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother..." Here you have the family. Some people say, "Well there are times when there isn't a father anymore. There are times of war, sometimes there isn't a mother--she dies in childbirth--there are exceptions to the rule." Yes, we understand that there are tragedies. We see historically, entire societies recognize that a young man that loses his father in war is a tragedy. And the community would come together because now you have this person, and he's lost his dad. And there would be other men, a family who would try to take that role, give that role model. A mother who dies, you have the women in the family naturally caring for

that child who has lost his mother. But never in human history have we been so blind, never in human history have we been so deceived that we would purposefully bring about those kinds of situations--purposefully put children in a situation where they have no father, or they have no mother. That's child abuse. And yet we're doing it now. That is a level of societal degradation almost unknown even among the pagan peoples. We think of how horrible it was that those disgusting Amorites, and Canaanites, would offer their children in sacrifice to Molek. How many abortuaries do we have around us? How many children do we abuse, by placing them in situations today where they have two mothers? No they don't. Two fathers? No they don't. Such abuse!

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife.” Say, well, wait a minute, there was polygamy in the Old Testament! Look what happened every single time it happened. Look at the pain and agony that came into David's life because of polygamy. Look at what happened to Solomon, preacher of wisdom, heart turned away. Was never ever God's ideal, was always a step down from what had been in the garden, that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife--singular. And the two shall become one flesh. The man leaves the proper family situation, father and mother, he has been raised, he has had the proper role models, he has been able to see in his father a proper role model as to how a man is to behave, how man is to work, how a man is to love his wife. He's been able to see in his mother that needed balance that will allow him to be able to love his wife in the proper way--to recognize that woman is not a man, and a man is not a woman, and that's good. And that's proper.

And he's joined to his wife and the two become one flesh. The union of man and wife--that very same mystery that Paul draws upon to describe the relationship of Christ and the Church has so many aspects that we cannot even begin to mention them here. But one thing is certain: the union of a man and his wife, normally, in the course of human events, leads to more life. Because that father and mother that the man left, they were once children themselves. And so this is the very source of the continuation of the human family. This is where life comes from, and if you despise the way God has chosen to create life, what's the only thing you have left? Death.

That's the only other way. And when we see man rebelling against God's ways in our society, what do we see? Death. Death all around us. We see the killing of life in the womb. How many unique individuals, unique in the contributions they could have made to human society, have been snuffed out before they ever saw the light of day. How many Mozarts? How many Beethovens? How many Nobel science winners? How many scientists that might have been able to have cured cancer have been snuffed out on the altar of erotic freedom and selfishness?

When we look at the profaning of marriage, so now you have two or very soon three, four, five men, women, where is the life? Why is it that the life expectancy of those who live that lifestyle is so much shorter than those who live as God would have them to live? Why is the rampancy of disease so great amongst male homosexuals? Because once you reject life the one thing left is death. God didn't design man to function that way. God did

not design woman to function that way--physically, mentally, or spiritually. And no two men can ever become one flesh. No two women can ever become one flesh.

Jesus interprets these words. He says, "So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate." God blesses with life, with order in society, the joining of one man to one woman in marriage. We see God's blessing all over marriage in common grace in our society. It is a blessing upon a society to have many stable families in that society. But God has never--and God will never--bless the self-proclaimed union of two men claiming this blessing. It's not possible because he didn't design it. They can't become one flesh. God has not joined them together. God has never joined two women in marriage. God has never joined two men in marriage, and he never will. And it is a blasphemy of the highest order for any man, not alone, any woman, to stand behind a pulpit in a Christian church and to invoke the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit upon such a profaning of God's intention for marriage.

Our society says, "That's narrow, that's unloving." And I say to our society, "How dare you rebuke God's great gift in marriage. How dare you think that God can give us this great blessing and because you want to change it, demand that he do what your almighty will says to do. Who are you to stand before your God in such a fashion? I fear for you when you stand in judgment." Jesus said, "What therefore God has joined together...." Marriage is divine. That means God gets to define it. "What God has joined together, let no man separate." Clearly, from Jesus' perspective, marriage is a divine ordinance, it's in the divine realm, and man has no authority in it to change it. When Jesus says, "Let no man separate," we better hear what he has to say. We better hear what he has to say.

What do we take from this text? What do we understand from what Jesus has taught? We must think these things through, my friends. Because everyone sitting in front of me, I don't care what your age is, the youngest in this room today, if you're listening to me, is probably already well aware that this subject is being discussed amongst your friends; it's on television, it's in films, it's in the books, the magazines, it's all over. You cannot avoid it! We cannot help but interact with a society that is rapidly coming to the conclusion that to believe what Jesus taught here is to be a bigoted, discriminating, hateful person.

We already know that you cannot head up a major corporation and believe what we believe. Two weeks ago, the California Supreme Court decided that you cannot be a judge in the state of California and do volunteer work with the Boy Scouts because the Boy Scouts discriminate against homosexuals. In Canada, the one Christian university that has a law school just got a small victory, but is in court in every other district of Canada, because they have a morals clause that precludes practicing homosexuality amongst their students. And so, though their students can pass the bar, can pass with flying colors, it matters not, because it has become accepted without debate, and without evidence, that homosexuality is just what you are. You're just born that way.

Well, if you accept the idea that man is simply an animal, and that your DNA absolutely determines what you are, I guess that's all you've got. Guess that's the only place you

can go. Of course, initially homosexual activists wanted to try avoid that argument. You know why? Because if it's genetic then it can be fixed too. Now they've never found a "gay" gene. And in all probability the factors are considerably more complex as to why it is. I don't question that there are some men who feel attraction to other men. I've talked with those people, I've talked with Christians who told me that is their experience, and that they choose celibacy because they know it's wrong. That doesn't mean that even the vast majority of male homosexuals or female homosexuals, or pedophiles, or any of the rest did not make a choice to enter into that lifestyle for various and sundry other reasons. But, what if there are people who naturally have a propensity towards sexual sin? Well, are there not all sorts of sins that we have natural propensities towards? I mean, I do not have a natural propensity toward arrogance as an NBA basketball player because genetically God didn't put me in a situation where that was really a problem for me because I could never be an NBA basketball player. But, I can guarantee you something: I see a bunch of NBA basketball players that have a huge propensity toward sexual sin, toward arrogance, toward greed, because they're seven feet tall. Well, those are natural things God gave them. I guess that's just okay to do those things. No, it's not.

There are some people that are really given to appetite. God says, "Control it." There are some people really given to anger. God says, "Control it." You see we're made in the image of God. And we are not defined by our desires. We are defined by the fact that God has made us in his image and he says, "Here's my law; do it." Which means we have the ability to hear and to understand. And we may be enslaved to sin, but God still holds us accountable for doing what our hearts desire to do.

And so, it has simply been accepted without fight and without argument, it's just natural. And because of that, what's going to be accepted is polyamory, incest, pedophilia, bestiality--there is no logical way to avoid it. If it's just all genetics, you can get enough psychiatrists, psychologists together, to sign a paper--it's all a rule. And if you go there, you have no basis any longer for the condemnation of any of these behaviors. It is moral anarchy and no nation can survive that.

Reality is that from the Christian perspective we recognize that man is much more than our society is allowing him to be. And that's one of the things we need to say to people. We need to say, "I cannot lower man to the level you are demanding me to lower him to." If you want to buy a few seconds to explain your position, if you want to stop the conversation from going down the CNN road that it always goes down, start off with something like that. Start off with something, "Well, you're asking me to believe that man is significantly less than I believe him to be." I believe that man is actually capable of making choices, and man is capable of ruling over his desires, that just because a person becomes angry doesn't mean he has to shoot somebody, that we are not simply the sum total of our genes. And as a result, I have to look to what my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said, and he said that "We are made in the image of God, that we are made male and female, that a man is to leave his father and his mother, not his two fathers and not his two mothers; and be joined to his wife and not to another man. And that's the only union that God will bless."

We have to think these things through. We can't be thinking them through for the first time in the classroom, or in the work area, or in the supermarket, or over the back fence with the neighbor. These are things we need to think through beforehand so that we can express ourselves with clarity. All of these do give us the opportunity then, all these subjects that are facing us give us the opportunity of presenting the Gospel as a solution to man's problems as well. Never be satisfied to simply win the debate, silence a critic. When we have these opportunities, we should press forward. It's one thing to identify homosexuality as a sin--it is. But once we've identified it as such, don't we want to introduce and proclaim the powerful Savior? These are things we must be thinking through.

But let me make one final application here and close. This evening we will hear the law saying, "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife. You shall not uncover your sister's nakedness," or so and so forth. "You shall not approach this person or that person..." and if a person just looks at those texts alone without a context they just look like cold laws, codes--thou shalt not. But when we interpret Leviticus 18 in the way that Jesus interpreted Genesis 1 and 2 here, what we see is that those are not cold thou shalt not; they are the guide, the guide posts, the guard rails on both sides of the road that is life. Here are the guard rails. You go beyond these, and the only thing out there is death. Therefore they are gifts. They are acts of grace. And what we see today are people who are expressing their true and utmost hatred for God, even for the extension of his grace in giving to us his law. And so you and I must not be embarrassed to present God's law because we recognize that it is good and it is gracious and it demonstrates his love for us, for God has not left us to walk in moral darkness. He has given us his light.

Let's pray together.

Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you that we still have the freedom to say these words. We know that there are already many places not far from us where these words would not be allowed, where there would be grave results, negative results. We know that very possibly in the not-too-distant future there will be a cost to pay for speaking these words. We pray that in accordance with your truth because we've sought to honor your truth in your Word. Lord, we pray for revival in our land. We pray that you will bring your truth to bear. We pray that by your Spirit you will bring conviction of sin and a desire for righteousness. Lord, our land needs your Gospel, it needs your truth. Lord, as long as you see fit to allow your judgment to stand upon this culture, may we your people be found to be faithful in being salt and light. May we count the cost; may we stand firm; may you be honored and glorified. We pray in Christ's name, amen.