

God's view of Marriage Mark 10

1 Peter 3:1-17

1 Corinthians 7:10-17

Responsive Philippians 2:1-11

Today we are going to be starting out in chapter 10, and diving into some fairly controversial subject matter about marriage and divorce. So let us start this morning by reading the first 12 verse of chapter 10. As we work our way through these verses this morning we must remember the overarching theme of discipleship that is running through Jesus' teaching while he and his disciples are making their journey on to Jerusalem. In chapter 9 Jesus taught his disciples about their reliance on him. They were unable to cast a demon out of a boy and were likely getting mocked by the scribes who were present and Jesus tells his disciples that this kind only comes out by prayer and fasting and then proceeded to cast the demon out of the boy.

It isn't mentioned but I think it is implied that the disciples were probably relying on their own ability, at this point they had been doing this for a while already so when they were unable I am sure there was some confusion. And we can see that pride had started to creep in by their discussion on the road Capernaum where they were arguing who would be the greatest among them. So taking all this together I think we can get a pretty good picture of the mindset of the disciples as they were attempting to cast out this demon. And as always, Jesus uses this moment to teach a valuable lesson that those who follow him need to trust in him and not thinking they can do things on their own ability. Being a disciple of Christ, a believer, means that we are but humble servants seeking to do the will of God in ministry and in witness. It is when we think that we can go it alone, when our pride wells up inside of us that we fail and we must come crawling back to God repenting of our pride and arrogance and once again realigning our focus on him.

So in the first half chapter 9 he taught about humility, servitude, and our reliance upon God, then in the last half his focus became more personal talking about sin, temptation, and warning to those who would lead God's children astray. So what we see here in chapter 10 I think is rather a continuation of this type of teaching, being focused on specific certain aspects of the life of a disciple. Having covered the basic principles we see that he has moved into a very personal aspect of life. As we can gather by reading this text the issues behind marriage and divorce have not changed much. It was something that existed not only in Jesus day, but is referenced back even to Moses and the establishment of the nation of Israel. We must remember thought that marriage was something entirely different in those days then it is today as well. Marriage was seen by the Jews not as it is today, it was not regarded as a union of equals for the mutual benefit of the husband and wife but rather it was an institution that was established for the continuation of the family, and whose chief enemy was childlessness.

In a patriarchal male dominated society it was understood that the men were expected to uphold the Torah in all necessities of life, including marriage. But that is not what we see in Jesus teaching here, he does not lay the responsibility on just the husband, but it falls equally on the wife as well. We see this in verses 11 and 12 where both are held under the same standard. In Jesus teaching here, it is a picture of discipleship through marriage, both the husband, and the wife leave their family and become one flesh, they become a new family. No longer committed to their families, but committed to each other in a life long relationship. And in this new creation of God, it is both husband and wife who are equally responsible to practice discipleship and life long obedience. Sounds like the new birth does it not? Scripture often likens Christ to the bride groom, and the church, his people, his bride. That is why the

Christians' conduct in marriage is so important, because it is a picture of Christ and the church.

Divorce was something that was fairly common among the Jews, as we know there were many different factions among Judaism split around the observance of the law, some much more strict than others and it is the same with divorce. In Matthew chapter 19, we get a more detailed record of this account and it says in verse 3 that the Pharisees asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?" The passage in the Mishnah states if he has found indecency in anything then divorce is lawful. There were some who believed that divorce was only permissible in the case of adultery understanding the idea of indecency in anything having to do with unfaithfulness in the marriage, but there were also those who believed that they could divorce their wife for any reason at all. For it says, finding indecency in anything. Understanding that to mean that anything that would make a man unhappy, or angry was grounds for him to divorce his wife, including if he had found another woman whom he would rather marry.

The Pharisees were not really seeking an answer to this question, they were not truly curious as to what Jesus' answer would be, for as we see in verse 2 it says that they were testing him. They were once again laying a trap to see how they could discredit him, or catch him in an inconsistency or breaking a law. But Jesus knowing their intention directed them to Moses' teaching. But it is interesting because in doing so he is not bowing authority to what Moses allowed for divorce but rather says that it was allowable because of their sin and hardness of heart. And he then goes on to explain that from the beginning marriage was to be an everlasting covenant. The Pharisees ask Jesus what is permissible but he answers them not in what is permissible but what was commanded going to the creation text superseding that which was given by Moses.

In his answering of this question and pointing to the original intent and meaning of marriage Jesus does not do as the scribes and Pharisees do appealing to the authority of the law, but instead he uses the principle of interpreting scripture through scripture and goes behind the authority of the law and appeals to the fundamental authority of the creation order. Verse "In the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female." Jesus points out that marriage is a God-ordained union between one male and one female. A few things to note on this. First, is the fact that despite what people want to say today, Jesus did in fact teach on homosexuality and this is one of the passages. Explicitly stating that marriage is between one man, and one woman. This destroys the idea of polygamy that some believe is permissible in the Bible, and it also eliminates the acceptance of a homosexual marriage. Just as he appealed to the creation order for marriage, the same can be done in reference to homosexuality. It is a perversion, it is outside of God's intended purpose.

And if that is not enough, we see the God-intended family structure is repeated again in verse 7, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife." Jesus did not say that for this reason man shall leave both of his fathers and be joined to his boyfriend. It is pretty clear and concise what the biblical view of marriage is despite people's attempt today to twist it and make it suit their own desires. The 2nd is that it is God-ordained. It was not uncommon for marriages to be arraigned by the parents which may be one of the reasons that divorce seemed to be rather prevalent. But just as Jesus appealed to a higher authority of the creation order over the Mosaic law, he is appealing to the authority of God over man saying, "What ever God has put together, let no man separate."

Jesus teaching on marriage sets forth a new understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both the husband and the wife. In the patriarchal Jewish society and law the power over marriage and divorce rested in the hands of the man. As we had discussed before woman and children were seen as secondary to the men in Jewish society but Jesus teaching here places them as equals both being created by God uniquely male and female in the creative will of God and it is foundational for marriage. Having both been created by God, for God woman is not man's subject, nor is man, a woman's subject but both have been created equally for God's purpose and plan. This equality in God is taught in his further teaching here from the creation order declaring that a husband's obligation to his wife surpasses his obligation to his own parents. One of the 10 commandments is to honor your mother and your father which is second only to the commandment to honor God, but here we see Jesus declaring that a husband's allegiance to his wife in marriage surpasses his allegiance to his father and mother, making marriage second only to obedience in God.

What this does is create a stark difference between the Jewish understanding of a man controlled marriage and instead says that it is neither man, nor woman who controls the marriage but rather God, For what God has joined together, let no man separate. In these last few verses here arises even more controversy. Verse 10 says that In the house his disciples asked him this question again. As we have seen time and time again in Mark it is in this private settings that Jesus explains his parables, and his teaching so that his disciples can understand.

Jesus teaching to his disciples here is where we get conservative fundamentalist idea we see in some churches that there is no grounds for divorce. Some taking this to the point of even believing that if a spouse is abusive, or unfaithful that you still have no grounds to seek a divorce, for that would be to separate what God has joined. Then there are others take these verses, instructing that divorce is permissible under the right circumstance but remarriage is not, and doing so would be equal to adultery, understanding that while you maybe divorced legally, in the eyes of the state, in the eyes of God you are still married for marriage is eternal in the eyes of God. At first reading, that is exactly what it seems that Jesus is saying, verse 11 and 12. So he said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

But I think to understand this we need to see the bigger picture here, Jesus is teaching what marriage should be, what it was intended to be, and not what it can become due to man's sinful nature. This is not a marriage guide, but rather it is instruction as to what marriage should be especially in the lives of his followers. We need to look at marriage in light of what scripture teaches not only about marriage but equally important is how Christians are to interact with each other. We already know that we are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ as our selves, so what does that do to the marriage relationship rightly viewed under God's command to not only love our brothers and sisters in Christ, but our neighbors as well. If we are to love our neighbors and our friends, and others who are in Christ more than ourselves should we not also do so with our spouses?

This really is a basic Christian principle, which is why when Jesus instructs his disciples here about marriage he does not take into account the issues that arise from corrupt sinful humanity, but rather sets for what the standard should be which falls perfectly in line with all of his previous teachings about being a humble, loving servant, preferring one another over ourselves. This is a

difficult thing to do, and in fact one could say it is impossible but it is something that is an attribute, or should be an inherit trait in God's children.

Many issues in marriage's come down to issues of pride, control, and selfishness, which Paul lists in his list of those who are slaves to sin. Adultery, lust, lying, lack of trust, unfaithfulness, abusive relationships can all be summed up under Paul's list. And just as Paul said that these things ought not to be in those who have the spirit, so to ought these things not be in a christian marriage. But as we know even after the new birth, as long as we live in this body we will struggle against sin. But as Paul says, those who walk in the spirit we will bear the fruit of the spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. All of those things that are to define God's children are all things that are needed for a healthy and God lead marriage. To live up to this standard in marriage is just as impossible as it is to live up to this standard in our own christian walk, it is not something that we can be accomplished by ourselves but it is only through the grace of God.

And that ties this all in to the lesson he taught his disciples who were unable to cast out the demon, it is a reliance on God to grant us these things through the holy spirit so that we are not hard hearted, angry, and selfish, but rather out of love for each other give preference to the other. While I know that divorce can be an area of contention in the christian ranks I really do not see this as being very difficult to understand. We have God's standard, he created man and woman to be united together in such a way that each compliment each other. One not being greater then the other, both being equal for God's intended purpose. And as Jesus says that marriage is something that is designed and put together by God, it is holy, it is just, it is right. And he sets forth the standard, what marriage should be, especially for a Christian. But as we know not everyone is a child of God, sin has a corrupting effect on every aspect of life. That which God created for glory, has been corrupted in sin by the fall of Adam.

So we have marriages that run the gambit, from christian couples, to marriages with an unbelieving spouse, to marriages in the world between unbelievers. But all of those things do not change or effect God's standard, his purpose and his intent. And we as Christians through faith must love our spouses as Christ loves the church, but that does not mean that we are to be shackled into an abusive relationship. Jesus teaching here in Mark seems to not leave any room for divorce, but we see in Matthew who gives a more detailed account of this discourse says that divorce is permissible for sexual immorality, and I agree with many who argue that abuse is included for at the heart of unfaithfulness and sexual immorality is the same as abuse. It is an abandonment of that marriage, that marriage contract has been broken. But I believe that forgiveness and reconciliation should be the standard, and divorce is the exception. In a marriage between 2 Christians as I stated before this should not be for they should both have the spirit of God ministering to them giving them each the grace and mercy and love toward each other. An abusive, or sexually immoral relationship is not something that should exist in a christian marriage, and it calls into question the salvation of the offender.

But that is why God has aloud for divorce, because of sin, and the hardness of mans heart. But it is not something that take lightly as it seems that the world does today. But rather should be the last ditch effort if resolution, repentance, and reconciliation can not be achieved. I will close today by quoting James Edwards. "Whether or not Jesus allowed for divorce on the basis of adultery is therefor not certain, and even in the case of adultery there is no indication that he demanded divorce as did the Rabbis. If the guilty parter repented and ceased from sin and the other partner forgave him or her, the marriage could be redeamed. The adultery clause at any rate, is not the key to Marks narrative. The essential thrust of these verse's here is the inviolability of the marriage bond as intended and instituted by God. Human failure does not alter that purpose. The intent of Jesus' teaching is not to shackle those

who fail in marriage with debilitating guilt. The question is not whether God forgives those whose who fail in marriage. The answer to that question has already been dealt with in chapter 3 when he says, All the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven. There is, after all, no instance in scripture of an individual seeking forgiveness and being denied by God.

So the question in our day of impermanent commitments and casual divorce is whether we as Christians will hear the unique call of Christ to discipleship in marriage. In marriage, as in all other areas to which the call of Christ applies, will we seek relief in what is permitted, such as divorce, or will we commit ourselves to what is intended by God and commanded by Christ? Will we fall away in trouble and difficulty, or will we follow Jesus in the costly journey of discipleship, even in our marriage? Will we sunder the divine union of 2 becoming one flesh or will we honor and nurture marriage as a gift and creation of God?

Marriage, just like everything else in our life must be seen through the gospel, through the lens of faith in God. Our conduct in marriage must be upheld to God's standard and we should not be found to be the so called guilty party in the relationship, but rather, as much as we are able, we must uphold it through love, and through the grace of God in Christ.