

Announcements:

1. AWANA Grand Prix was great
2. Next Saturday: Church clean up day
3. Wood, bring a note
4. Easter service: April 4
 1. Breakfast at 9am
 2. Service
 3. Egg hunt after service

Jesus's Response

Mark 10:1-12

This morning we are going to talk about something that is almost never thought of when someone feels those warm fuzzies, but is considered the out. Our passage this morning talks about divorce.

This has again been another passage that I have struggled with. Not because I question whether divorce is good or bad, right or wrong, but because of wanting to know what is the deeper truth that Jesus is giving us. In our culture today, if marriage isn't working, divorce is our out.

Maybe you have heard these phrases from a friend, or maybe you have thought them.

"Now that I am out of this relationship, I am growing".

"I am not growing in this marriage. I am being held down."

"This marriage is a dead-end relationship."

"The both of us have just grown apart. We are no longer in love, we have just fallen out of love."

"Don't I deserve to be happy in a relationship?"

What is wrong with these statements? They are very self centered. They are about self-fulfillment. They don't reflect love of another, just love of self. They reflect the mentality of, "What's in it for me?"

God says in Malachi 2:16, in unequivocal terms that He 'hates divorce.' There is no other way around what God says. That is the premise we have to come from, what God says.

In the creation account, in Genesis 2, it does not say, "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one...until there is a problem". Divorce was not a thing until after the fall of man. It was not part of God's plan. There was no prenuptial agreement. There was no 'we will see if this works'. Jesus, in our passage that we are going to look at this morning responds to the

Pharisees question about divorce by plainly saying divorce is due to the 'hardness of man's heart.'

Being someone whose ministry was working with youth for over 25 years, I can speak to you of all the hardships that are placed upon youth due to divorce, all the confusion that they are now feel. As someone who has done marriage counseling with couples before and after marriage, I can tell you of the strain and stress and destruction and feelings of failure and hurt that can be founded in divorce, but also the feelings of failure and hurt from before the divorce that are exasperated and made bigger and dig in deeper after divorce. Divorce is ugly. Almost all, if not all people who have been divorced will agree that divorce is ugly and painful. Is it the end all, no. Does it solve all problems, no. Does it add new problems, it definitely can. Can it complicate life, most certainly...especially if kids are involved.

One thing I would like to make clear and say right now is this...if you are divorced, I am not wanting to stir up feelings of guilt or shame. I am not wanting to bring back any anger that leads to bitterness. I am not wanting to place judgment. But this I will say, if you are in a marriage now pour all you have, and more, into it now. God's grace has already gone before you and His forgiveness has made you a new creation. Make it the best you can. Put it ahead of everything except your relationship with Jesus as your relationship with Jesus will give you the ability to make the marriage you are in now great.

If you are not in a marriage right now, take this time to continue in understanding God's grace for you in this time of life. If you need to forgive, choose to forgive, but remember, it is a process and most likely will take time and definitely be hard. Own what you need to own and learn from it. Scars can be great teachers. But, most of all, remember the Lord is with you and will do a good work in you as you bow at His feet.

Or maybe you're a child of divorce, I do not want to breed anger within you. Maybe you are a kid of parents that are taking about divorce, or seem like they are going to get a divorce, God is with you. The pain you feel, the hurt, that sense of "I just want my parents to stop fighting, but I also want my parents to stay together", that confusion you feel, but maybe can't express, it's normal...and it's actually the right feelings. Those feelings are red flags that something isn't as it should be. And when

something doesn't feel as it should be, go to God and look at what He says about it and how to deal with it. And, talk to someone who is a God-fearing, God-honoring person about how you are feeling. You don't have to be able to explain your feelings, many times it just takes saying "I am confused and scared and angry." There is nothing to be ashamed of. It can only help you to move towards understanding, strength, and healing.

I can boldly say divorce is not God's plan. Forgiveness is God's plan. Commitment is God's plan. Humility and servanthood is God's plan. Husbands loving your wives as Christ loves the church is God's plan. Be a spiritual leader. What that means is first get your junk together. Here is what I mean. Cast down your pride and look at what it means to be a man of God...a Kingdom man. I encourage you to step into our next Kingdom man study that starts up on June. I know it is a ways off, but put this on your calendar. I am going to give you a minute to put this on your calendar. June 12th at 8am. In May at our men's retreat, May 14-16th, we are going to give a little teaser of what Kingdom men are.

To often, us men, we are afraid to be the spiritual leader. "What if I am wrong?" "I don't want to look stupid." "I don't know much about the Bible." "My wife does a better job at that than I do." NO! She doesn't. This isn't a woman-hating, woman are less than comment. When a man steps into his role as he was meant to have, it actually will lift up the woman and make her great and it gives room for her to become great. Husbands, you can make your wife great. Putting your job or your hobbies first is not going to do that. Putting the kids first is not going to do that either.

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as you do to the Lord, this is God's plan. I know that those are not popular words in our culture. These words seem to go against everything a young lady is taught today. And, I would agree when you take the idea of submission out of context of what God is saying. It does not mean become a door mat, a tool, or a thing to be owned. Submission is an act of surrender. It is not an act of making less of yourself in the sense of lowering your value as something to be used, but it does mean to lift the other person up. It is very much the idea of what Paul says in Philippians 2 when he says, "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too." These verses are for both men and women.

At this point, maybe it would be good to look at why God said He ‘hates divorce.’ Let’s look at Malachi 2. Malachi 2 is a warning to Israel, especially to the priests. The priests were not holding up the truths of scripture, but were compromising. One of the ways they were compromising was teaching it was ok to divorce. They were also teaching it was ok for a child of God to marry a person who served a different god. Malachi 2:11, says “Judah has been unfaithful, and a detestable thing has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. The men of Judah have defiled the Lord’s beloved sanctuary by marrying women who worship idols.”

Now listen to the response in verse 12, “May the Lord cut off from the nation of Israel every last man who has done this and yet brings an offering to the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”

There was an expectation. The expectation was that even in their disobedience to what God had commanded, that God would receive their worship and because of that manipulation God would still make their marriages and their nation great, powerful, and strong.

Here is the problem. Listen to verse 14, “You cry out, “Why doesn’t the Lord accept my worship?” I’ll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows.” In other words, these people who were already married were divorcing their wives for ‘something better’ in their minds. They had broken what God had set forth.

Let’s go back to Genesis 2. God said, “This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” Other translations use a word that is a little stronger. “This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves [some say ‘holds fast’] to His wife.”

In the original language the idea of ‘cleaving’ or ‘holding fast’ meant to turn inwards toward, forsaking all other things, grabbing hold of and pulling inward towards oneself tightly as to not let go. So the problem in Malachi is just the opposite. The men were not cleaving to their wife, but were open to what seemed to be better options, more satisfying, more fulfilling options.

Listen to verse 15 of Malachi 2, “Didn’t the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are His. [God’s...marriage is a physical union, but it is a spiritual union before God too...in holy matrimony] And what does He [God] want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth.”

Godly children from your union. When I look at America, when I think about the youth I have dealt with that have come from single parent homes...either divorce or never married...they have a harder time understanding what it means to trust God, there is security in God, that God is a good, good father, that God cares about us. So we shouldn’t be surprised that when the government comes in to save the day, they place their hope in the lofty things they promise.

Again, I don’t aim to place guilt, but to have understanding and compassion for those who are the fruit of divorce or unmarried households. To have understanding as to why our nation has gone the way it has gone. When the household is upside down, you have a nation that will struggle. Malachi chapter 2 is giving understanding as to why the nation of Israel is not seeing God’s blessing upon their nation, why He is not receiving their worship. They were adulterating themselves. They were not being faithful to God. They were doing what pleased themselves. Proverbs 14:12 says pretty straightforward this concept, “There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” That isn’t talking about just physical death.

God holds the marriage up. It is one of the greatest pictures of who God is, His forgiveness, His love for us, the sacrifice He makes for us. Talk to anyone in a marriage and they will tell you that the need of forgiveness is an everyday thing...anywhere from easy to hard. Marriage shows us the depth of God’s love and that true love has tied to it feelings, but what makes it is commitment, and that commitment leads to sacrifice. Doesn’t this sound a lot like humility and servanthood. I wonder if Mark placed this passage here in the context of what radical discipleship looks like based on humility and servanthood for a reason??

When a child of a marriage, or even children not of that specific marriage see a marriage that is based upon the principles of God it speaks to them,

it can open the door for healing, safety, security, and hope. It reveals the power of God. It begins to make the mystery of God understandable.

Paul, in Ephesians 5 gives us understanding of not just tools for a healthy marriage, but what a healthy marriage looks like, but even more so tells us it is the picture of Jesus's relationship to the bride of Christ, which are the believers in Christ. Ephesians 5:32, speaking of the marriage relationship, says, " This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one."

Ephesians 1 talks about us being sealed in Christ, nothing can break that bond, it is eternal. Ephesians 2 speaks of the grace that God pours out upon us. He says it's a gift, something we don't earn, He freely gives. It isn't based upon the receiver, but based upon the giver. Ephesians 3 is the revealing of God's plan that the church, the bride of Christ would reveal God's wisdom and would experience His goodness and His blessing and inheritance to the world around them. Ephesians 4 and the beginning of 5 is urging us to be unified, to "make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace." It then goes on and gives practical teaching as to how to do this. The end of Ephesians 5, Paul relates the relationship between Jesus and the body of Christ to a marriage relationship. The marriage relationship is a gift to us as individuals, but it is also can be one of the greatest testimonies of who God is. Let's lift high the union of marriage.

I don't have to say the big 'duh' of the year, but I will. Our culture is has taken an all out assault upon marriages and degraded them to an economical resource for the wedding industry and something that can be thrown away if it doesn't 'fulfill one's needs.'. Really it's the enemy of God who has taken the all out assault. He knows that the traditional, God ordained and God defined family unit is the fabric of society and if that can be destroyed, or even tainted, than wickedness and lawlessness and doing-right-in-one's-own-eyes will begin to rule the day and then man will begin to define what a relationship looks like. Kind of sounds like America today.

Hebrews 13:4 puts it this way, "Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery."

May we be people who repent. May we be people who seek God's face. May we be people that walk in humility. May we be people that serve the family because we serve God.

It wasn't much different in Jesus's day. Marriage was throw away. It was a tool of making oneself happy, but when that happiness wasn't as much as the happiness that could be had '*over there*', then go over there to that happiness.

Woman were a tool. They were important, but mainly for the furthering of the family, for someone to come home to, and for meeting the man's need. This is not how God created it to be. The man and the woman were to be one. It wasn't man domination, it was union. It wasn't meant to be a man's world, but a world where there was equality, but different roles. It wasn't meant to be what a man says goes, but he needed a help-mate to come to the best conclusion. God said it was "not good for the man to be alone." He needed companionship. And then God said, "I will make a helper who is just right for him." That word for helper is also used of God helping the nation of Israel. So, it isn't about one being better than the other. The picture is this...someone to help the other become great, to lift the other up and give strength, caring for, and providing assistance. I actually think God gave great honor and value to the woman because man was incomplete or no other gender, animal, or thing could fulfill the role needed to complete the man.

Here is what is going on in our passage. Divorce is a thing of the day and there were different teachings about what gave right for divorce. Some of the mindset was anything gave right to divorce...unhappiness, found someone better, didn't make enough money...whatever. Some taught that there was no reason for divorce.

So, the pharisees come to Jesus to test Him, to trap Him. They asked, "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?" Matthew's account adds, "for any reason." If He would acknowledge divorce as okay, then He would be acknowledging that what the Pharisees say is correct and worth listening too. If He says divorce is wrong then maybe this would incur the wrath of Herod who killed John the Baptist for speaking out against divorce and adultery. Maybe this would also create frustration with Jesus for those in the crowd that divorced for whatever reason. But, Jesus is wiser than this.

How does He answer their question? “What did Moses say in the law about divorce?” They answered, “He permitted it. He said a man can give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away.” Catch that word, permitted it. That is key to understanding.

The question the Pharisees were asking is based upon Deuteronomy 24:1-2 which says, “Suppose a man marries a woman but she does not please him. Having discovered something wrong with her, he writes a document of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house. When she leaves his house, she is free to marry another man.”

Some then, and some today think this is supporting divorce, when in reality that is not the case. Moses was responding to a practice already going on. Men were discarding their wives for another wife. So, in order to protect the woman from being taken advantage of or thinking of her as a prostitute, they would give her a written document of divorce. This gave her the ability to remarry, because her next husband would understand her predicament.

Jesus’s response to their question, “Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife,” is what gives us understanding to this test, this challenge that the pharisees put before Jesus. His response in verse 5 is simple, “He wrote this commandment only as a concession to your hard hearts.”

Hard hearts. Behind every divorce is at least one hard heart. What is a hard heart? It is a heart that has turned away from a softening to the things of God. It’s a heart that is unrepentant. It is a heart that is filled with pride, and lacks humility. It is a heart that says “I deserve to be served” instead of taking the position of being a servant.

The willingness to forgive and the action of trying to forgive is the sign of a heart that is not hardened. The repentant heart, one that says, “I am sorry” and works to change its actions is a heart that is not hardened. That is the power of Romans 12:1-2. A heart that is put on the altar on the altar of God, willing to live according to God’s commands, choosing not to copy the behaviors and customs of this world is a heart that is transformed by God’s working in their life.

Jesus takes their question and turns it to show that God intended marriage to be held in high esteem. He responds in a way to show that their idea of marriage being a contract was the wrong thinking. He reveals that it is a covenant between a man and a woman. Listen to what Jesus says next, “But ‘God made them male and female’ from the beginning of creation. ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”

There are two important truths here. 1) God created the family. God designed the family unit. God defined what a marriage looks like and the only way for it to stay a family unity, between a man and woman. Isn't it interesting that physiologically also that there is only one way for this to work. I love Pastor Rick Warren responded to Larry King's question about whether or not homosexuality was a viable thing. Pastor Rick responded with something like this, “When you look at the human body, and when the two bodies come together, male and female, it just works.” As creator, God has defined what a marriage is. Our government we have in place today is trying to play God, they are trying to define gender and marriage. 2) Our second truth is this: the union between a man and woman is joined by who? God...in holy matrimony. It is unlike any other union in the human race. It is not like animal-human, father-child, mother-child, friend-friend.

Jesus is lifting high the institution of marriage. He is saying to the Pharisees, you are looking at this all wrong. It isn't about the ways to get out of marriage. It's about who designed the marriage, what marriage is, and what strengthens the marriage.

Scripture seems to point towards only 2 viable options for divorce. It doesn't command divorce, but gives room to it, are these: sexual immorality and an unbelieving spouse leaving.

1 Corinthians 7:12-15

Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a fellow believer[a] has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. And if a believing woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him. For the

believing wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the believing husband[b] brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not be holy, but now they are holy. (But if the husband or wife who isn't a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the believing husband or wife[c] is no longer bound to the other, for God has called you[d] to live in peace.)