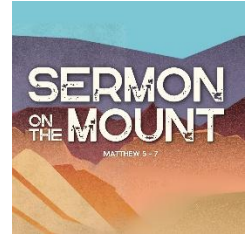


The Sermon on the Mount: Divorce & Remarriage

Lesson 7: October 27 & 28

Read Matthew 5:31-32



Sermon Reflection Question: What captured your attention from Sunday's sermon?

Jesus has launched his Kingdom and with it has brought the law and the prophets to fulfillment. He now calls his disciples to have a heart-rooted and whole-life righteousness, a greater righteousness, which is entirely different than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus contrasts what people have heard about divorce with the new standards of his Kingdom.

1. Jesus refers to Moses' instructions about divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.
 - a. Summarize Moses' instructions on divorce, including who initiated divorce and its permissibility.
 - b. What are the effects on women from this law?
 - c. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is not a command to divorce but a concession to Israel's sinful disobedience. What is the root of this concession? See Matthew 19:8.
2. Jesus reveals a new standard of the Kingdom in Matthew 5:31-32.
 - a. From v. 32, when is divorce permissible?
 - b. What does it mean for a man to "make her the victim of adultery"?
 - c. In his cultural context, how does Jesus' statement protect and elevate the dignity of women as images of God?

Jesus expanded his teaching on divorce in Matthew 19:1-12. There, Jesus ignores the Pharisees' question on divorce and moves right to the heart of the issue from his perspective. Instead of debates about legitimate grounds for (men) initiating divorce, he responds by pondering the symbolic meaning of marriage within the Scriptures, and what it tells us about God's will.

3. Read Matthew 19:1-12.
 - a. Notice that Jesus appeals to God's original intention for marriage from Genesis 1-2 before explaining his view of divorce. How does Jesus summarize God's original design for marriage? How does marriage display the image of God?
 - b. Why is it important to understand God's design for marriage before we consider any potential allowances for divorce?

Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce provides wisdom for all but is limited in scope by the context of the debate he's addressing. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul gives us some examples of how this wisdom can be applied in circumstances that don't fit the specifics of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5.

4. Why does Jesus single out "sexual immorality" as potentially covenant-breaking? In what ways does this point to the covenant nature of marriage as more than merely a legal agreement?
5. In 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, how does Paul, the author of this passage apply Jesus' wisdom to marriage and divorce?
6. How would you summarize the secular view of marriage, divorce, and remarriage?
7. If you feel comfortable to share, what are experiences (both positive and negative) that have influenced your view of marriage?

So far in the Sermon, Jesus is showing how God's wisdom in these commands is aimed at our core desires and motivations that affect how we treat people. Someone could strictly follow these rules about murder, adultery, and divorce but still dishonor and objectify people in other ways.

8. For those who are married (or hope to be), what are practical ways to cultivate faithfulness, trust, and love in a relationship? *(For those not married, consider close relationships and commitments.)*
9. Moses pointed out that the allowance for divorce was due to a hardness of heart. How can you discern if you have a hard heart toward a spouse? What do you think are the signs of hard heartedness?
10. What might repentance to God and a spouse look like if you have failed to uphold Jesus' standard at this point? Take time this week to ask the Lord.
11. What would it look like for you to support healthy, faithful marriages and care for those affected by broken relationships within our church body?