

THE SCROLLS

Meeting The Messiah | Mark 10:1-12

Life Lesson

God calls us to pursue not just what is allowed, but what is holy. Whether married or single, this passage calls us to examine our hearts: Do we seek the easy way out, or do we strive for God's best? True discipleship means seeking not what is permissible, but what is holy and pleasing to the Lord.

Mt. Zion's Mission

*Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to **MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY** disciples of Jesus Christ.*

Let No One Separate

There is probably no more difficult subject needing attention in the Church, yet it is so greatly avoided as the subject of divorce. It is a confusing, sensitive subject that causes pastors, teachers, and Christians to either tiptoe around or avoid it altogether. Yet, this is the beauty of expositional study of God's Word. We do not get to pick and choose what texts we want to hear and which ones we do not.

Before we even approach the text, we must establish a biblical view of divorce. First of all, divorce was never God's divine plan for marriage. In Malachi 2:16, we read, "If he hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord God of Israel, 'he covers his garment with injustice,' says the Lord of Armies. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously." While many translations render this verse similarly (CSB, ESV, and NIV), some translate it as "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'and him who covers his garment with violence,' says the Lord of armies. So be careful about your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously" (NASB, KJV, and NKJV). It is a matter of hermeneutical preference whether it is translated as a direct quote from God or an indirect quote about man. I believe the better translation is an indirect quote about a man hating and divorcing his wife, but either way, it is clear that divorce is a painful act that causes brokenness and suffering. As John Piper says, "Death is usually clean pain; divorce is usually dirty pain."

So, why is divorce not part of God's divine plan for marriage? First, marriage is a divine and holy institution; God is the designer and creator of marriage. Marriage, in its fullness and beauty, comes from God; divorce, with its pain and ugliness, stems from man. Second, marriage is defined by the creation of Adam and Eve and serves as a model to follow. There was no provision for polygamy or divorce, because there was no one else. It was only Adam and Eve; the two were made for each other and never meant to be apart. Third, marriage is a union. "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24). Jesus will highlight this in our text. Lastly, marriage is a covenant, not a contract (Malachi

Mt. Zion's Motives

1. Gospel Transformation

We believe real change begins with Jesus Christ.
(2 Corinthians 5:17, CSB)

2. Spiritual Development

We believe that spiritual growth is essential to our journey with Jesus Christ.
(1 Timothy 4:15, CSB)

3. Authentic Relationships

We believe we are stronger together and called to walk in love and accountability.
(Galatians 6:2, CSB)

4. Community Involvement

We believe our faith should be visible through love and service.
(Matthew 5:16, CSB)

5. Kingdom Partnership

We believe in advancing the Gospel together—locally and globally.
(Acts 1:8, CSB)

Mt. Zion's Map

UP - IN - OUT



2:14). An agreement can be nullified if one party fails to fulfill the expectations of the contract. As a covenant, marriage is not easily broken. It's more than just a contractual agreement between a man and a woman. It's a covenant entered into with God, with families as witnesses, pledging lifelong commitment. The biblical concept of "cutting a covenant" is reflected in today's weddings. In a biblical covenant, the two parties would sacrifice an animal, split it into two parts, and walk between the pieces (as families and friends sit on either side at today's ceremonies). The idea was "if I break this covenant, let it be done to me as was this animal." Vows are exchanged, rings are given, witnesses testify, and God blesses. It is a sacred moment when a man and woman enter the marriage covenant. It is not easily broken.

As you read this text, you will notice it emphasizes the sanctity of marriage more than the details of divorce. With that in mind, let's move on to our passage.

V. 1

Again, we see one of the main themes in the Gospel of Mark: Jesus' magnetic personality and ability to attract large crowds. Much of Chapter 9 focused on Jesus instructing His Disciples. Now, He returns to teaching and ministering to the crowds. As Mark has shown, Jesus is not just for the "inner circles," but for everyone. Jesus can be worshiped and followed by all who have faith in Him and His Gospel.

Verse 1 serves as a somber reminder that Jesus is turning His face toward Jerusalem. With intention and divine purpose, He is moving toward His death. Although He is currently teaching, healing, and performing wondrous works, His eyes remain focused on His ultimate goal: redemption for mankind.

Vs. 2-4

Breaking through the crowds of people who genuinely wanted to hear from Jesus and experience His power, the Pharisees returned to question Him. In a sense, you have to admire their tenacity and perseverance; they refuse to give up trying to "catch" Jesus with the aim of either discrediting His ministry or completely eliminating Him. This is perhaps one of their boldest traps. They are attempting to use Scripture to lure Jesus into a comment that would either portray Him as rebellious to the laws of Moses or make a statement about Herod's marriage, similar to John the Baptist, hoping He would end up with His head on a platter.

There were essentially two groups of Pharisees during this period. On the conservative side, you had those who followed Rabbi Shammai. Shammai taught that divorce was only lawful in cases of infidelity. On the more liberal side, likely those questioning Jesus, followed Rabbi Hillel, who taught that divorce was allowed for any

Mt. Zion's Marks

1. MAKING Disciples

- Am I interceding for those in my circle of influence?
- Am I intentionally investing in them?
- Am I inviting them to know Jesus Christ?

2. MATURING in Faith

- Am I discovering the fruit of the Spirit through prayer and the Word?
- Am I seeing the fruit of the Spirit developed in my life?
- Am I displaying the fruit of the Spirit in my daily walk?

3. MULTIPLYING Disciples

- Am I growing as a learner of Jesus Christ?
- Am I encouraging others in their walk?
- Am I helping teach and disciple others?

Personal Reflection

1. When it comes to difficult topics (like divorce), do I tend to avoid them, or do I allow God's Word to challenge and shape my understanding?

reason the husband considered indecent, from infidelity to the wife's subpar cooking. These are the men questioning Jesus. They come from the lineage of religious leaders that Malachi prophesied about in Malachi 2. They believed divorce was a legal right allowing the man to "trade in" his wife for a newer one if he grew tired of her. Dealing with such men must have been exhausting for Jesus!

Jesus turns the question back to them: "What does Moses say?" This is a good example of how to respond to people who question you: turn it back to Scripture. The Pharisees answered, "Moses permits it." Jesus knew, in the end, the Pharisees would appeal to Moses. After all, Moses was their authority, so Jesus cuts through and brings it up first. Thinking they were trapping Jesus, He trapped them!

Notice how the Pharisees immediately respond with "Moses permitted us to write divorce papers and send her away" (v. 4). In their answer, the Pharisees reveal the intent of their sinful hearts. They immediately quoted what Moses and the Law permitted, not what God has commanded! They did not look to the will of God, but rather to the intentions of man. How often do we do the same? How frequently do we look for what is permissible instead of what is the perfect, holy will of God?

Vs. 5-9

Interestingly, Jesus responds with such a direct and personal retort. The Pharisees said, "Moses permitted us." So, Jesus answered, "He wrote this command for you because of the hardness of your hearts" (v. 5). Therefore, the basis of their allowance of divorce for any reason was man's sinfulness, not God's will. In other words, the Law was not providing an imperative or a command, but rather a concession due to the sinfulness of man. This allowance of divorce under certain conditions was intended to establish regulations governing divorce. God knows man's sinful hearts and intentions; He knows that man will seek after selfish, ungodly means, so provisions are made in the Law to regulate and reduce the number of divorces. The same is true for other issues, such as slavery; it was never God's will, but because of man's sinfulness, laws are given to regulate and reduce it.

So, how does Jesus respond? He looks beyond what the Law allowed and shifts the focus to God's will. In (vs. 6-9), Jesus reminds the Pharisees of the same marriage principles we previously highlighted in the introduction. From the beginning, God had a perfect design for marriage; it was a divine creation (v. 6). Marriage is a lifelong union of a man and woman, now one flesh (v. 7). This is why divorce is so painful. It literally tears two people apart, leaving children affected by the fallout. The marriage covenant is ordained, blessed, and sealed by God; it is not

2. Do I look more often for what is “permissible” in my life, or do I genuinely seek after God’s perfect will, even when it is harder?

3. How do I view marriage: as a contract that can be broken, or as a sacred covenant created by God?

4. In what ways might I allow my own “hardness of heart” to shape my relationships, instead of letting Christ soften and transform me?

5. How does Jesus’ teaching on accountability (for both men and women) challenge me to take personal responsibility for my actions and my faithfulness?

Further Study

Biblical Allowance for Divorce:

1. Sexual Immorality (Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:10-11)
2. Abandonment (1 Cor. 7:12-16)
3. Abuse (Ex. 21:10-11)

Commentaries

Exalting Jesus in Mark by Daniel Akin

MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16 by John MacArthur

BECNT: Mark by Robert Stein

up to humans to decide when the “contract” is void (v. 9).

Jesus concisely shows the will of God concerning marriage. The Pharisees sought an answer regarding divorce, and Jesus delivered a powerful yet concise sermon on marriage. Therefore, we can see that this text focuses more on marriage than on divorce.

Vs. 10-12

After His interaction with the Pharisees, the Disciples followed the traditions of rabbis and their followers: they did not question Jesus in front of others. So, they waited until they returned to the house to ask for clarification and a deeper explanation.

Jesus highlights the futility and sinfulness of the Pharisees’ views on divorce. The Pharisees believed that any cause for divorce was acceptable, permitted, and protected by the Law. Jesus points out that if a man divorces for these ungodly and unallowed reasons, as the Pharisees were known for, then the divorce is not only invalid under the Law but also leads to another sin: adultery if either person remarries.

Interestingly, Jesus is reshaping the religious thought of His time (not completely reforming, but restoring it to God’s original intention). In Jewish culture, men had more rights than women. The husband could divorce his wife, and in cases of adultery, typically only the woman was held responsible (for example, the woman caught in adultery in John 8). Here, Jesus shifts the responsibility for adultery and sin to both the man and the woman. By challenging Jewish customs and the teachings of the Pharisees, Jesus shows that there is no difference between male and female, Jew or Greek, when it comes to God (Gal. 3:28). We are all accountable for our actions and sins; however, we all have equal access to grace, mercy, and forgiveness through Christ.

So, what can we conclude from this? Marriage is not only important to Christ; it is considered holy by Him. Although divorce is the result of human sin, not everyone who divorces is guilty of sin. Divorce is permitted in certain circumstances, but it remains painful and has serious consequences. Additionally, as shown in Chapter 9, Jesus calls His followers to live in a radically different way. We do not simply seek what is allowed; we aim for what is best, what is holy, and what brings glory to Christ!