

**Title:** Kingdom Marriages

**Scripture:** Matt 5:31-32

### **Introduction:**

- Expository preaching and forcing us to deal with texts that we would just as soon ignore
- When we started this series, I warned us that it was going to be challenging. Well, here we are... what becomes obvious in working through this passage is that even the most learned/studied struggle with the radical nature and implications of Jesus' statement on marriage and divorce
- The temptation even for me to postpone this – knew we would come to this passage when began to think about preaching this series over a year ago now – if I just study it a little bit more... I have studied, and read, and reread and on and on. I can't recall having spent so much time studying so few Greek words
- So we will look at this passage this morning and I will do my level best to communicate what the text clearly says, to emphasize what Jesus was emphasizing, and not to add to nor take away from it
- I will not apologize for what God's word says – We are going to consider the truth here no matter how it might hit us
- Factors that influence our interpretation of this passage:
  - Culture
    - Divorce is rampant; but the bright spot is that the rate has declined
    - Part of this is that couples are just not getting married
    - The sexual revolution permits sex without marriage and commitment
    - Birth control has permitted sex without procreation
    - The government defining marriage
    - Laws are permissive – no fault divorce has been a disaster; prime example of a toxic empathy “well since fighting in marriage is already so horrible, we should not make it worse by making the divorce process difficult and assigning blame and all that”
    - The result of all of this is that marriage has been moved from a sacred promise to a legal contract

- Dispel the myth that divorce rates are the same in the church as out
- Experience
  - Some scholars in writing on this passage rightly acknowledge that it is tough to do so because writing “this is what the Bible says” about this and thus “this is what God says about this” has significant implications for so many who have been affected by divorce
  - We cannot remove ourselves completely
  - Personally, I hate divorce
    - As a child of divorced parents
    - Married to a child of divorced parents
    - Seeing how divorce has devastated other family members
    - Seeing how it has devastated church members and disrupted whole churches
  - I recognize that similarly many if not most of you have been affected by divorce – I am not trying to re-open wounds. I am not trying to heap on guilt for past sin. But the truth is, and those who have been through it know this the most, that we must never fall for the lie that divorce is an easy out solution to a hard problem. No, it is a hard, hurtful, and permanent solution to hard problem.
  - Furthermore, we must never allow our personal experiences to prevent us from proclaiming truth to the next generation – so we must talk about this. We must continue to hold high God’s standard for marriage and hatred for divorce
- Assumptions
  - Our culture and experience lead us to make and then bring assumptions to the text effectively limiting what God can tell us

Read the text – Matt 5:31-32 and Matt 19:1-11

Righteousness that exceeds – upholds God’s intent for marriage.

What is God's intent for Marriage? Is two fold:

- Exclusive – one man and one woman
- Permanent – in Jesus' own words, "What God has joined together, let no one separate" IOW 'til death do us part

Challenging texts – we look to contexts:

Historical

- Divorce in Roman culture
- Divorce in Jewish culture

Literary

- Grammar requires help for us to understand
- Between lust and oaths – fitting
- Rest of SM to this point – humble, merciful, peacemakers, pure in heart – how can be this in other relationships when cannot be this in the most intimate of relationships
- Matt 19
- Mark and Luke

Theological

- Creation and Gen 1-3 – Marriage is God's good gift
- Lev ?
- Deut 24
- Theological summary
  - Marriage is God's good gift

Gen 2:18-24

<sup>15</sup> Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

<sup>16</sup> The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup> but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

<sup>18</sup> Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." <sup>19</sup> Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup> The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones,  
And flesh of my flesh;  
She shall be called Woman,  
Because she was taken out of Man."

<sup>24</sup> For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Prov 18:22

<sup>22</sup> He who finds a wife finds a good thing  
And obtains favor from the Lord.

Prov 19:14

<sup>14</sup> House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers,  
But a prudent wife is from the Lord.

The entire book of Song of Songs

- Marriage did not escape the consequences of sin and the fall
- Adultery was considered a crime so heinous as to be punishable by death
- Divorce is never God's will
- But because of the hardness of hearts, God in his grace allowed for a certificate of divorce to be issued

Thus having established all of this, x3 truths from this passage

### **1) Divorce must never be seen as the easy out from working through the inevitable conflict in marriage**

- Vs 31 – it was said and a paraphrase of Deut 24:1
- Deut 24:1 - “If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he may write her a divorce certificate, hand it to her, and send her away from his house.”
- “something indecent/improper” (lit. a matter of indecency) often but not exclusively means nakedness. Ambiguity led to debate over the meaning.
- Many scholars writing on this text note there were basically two interpretations -Some interpreted loosely/permissively while others very strictly as sexual sin.
- Thus the Mishnah in line with the Hillel permissive interpretation specified numerous and ridiculous grounds for divorce: ... if she were barren (m. Yebam. 6:6; m. Git. 4:8), if she became a deaf mute (m. Yebam. 14:1), or if she had epilepsy, tetanus, warts, or leprosy. Mishnah

Ketubbot 5:5 insisted that a man could divorce his wife if she failed to perform certain services in the home. Each day she was required to grind flour, bake bread, wash clothes, cook food, nurse the children, make the beds, and weave with wool. If she brought servants into the home she could be relieved of some of the duties for each one but if her husband considered her lazy then he could still divorce her. Also physical defects, if did something against wishes of husband, basically for any reason. Thus the ? in Matt 19 and Josephus's statement confirming this view. Quarles SM 125-7

- Then in Matt 19 – the ?
- The summary of what has occurred: pattern if you will God in his grace makes an intended redemptive exception for hard-hearted spouses that his people had turned into a license to act ungodly and undermine the entire institution of marriage, the original institution going all the way back to creation itself.

### APPLICATION:

- If we are going to submit to the authority of God's Word, we must come to it in humility being willing to accept even the hard truths

### ILLUSTRATION:

- “sir, you can always eject” – det to Barksdale

### APPLICATION:

- Is we come to the text seeking when divorce is acceptable and/or to justify divorce, we are guilty of the very same thing the pharisees were doing -

### **2) the only reason Jesus gave for divorce was sexual infidelity**

- Vs 32a
- Matthew's exception clause
- The word pornia – was more than just the physical act of adultery – was any sexual infidelity. The problem was that the Jews had defined adultery too narrowly – see 5:27-30 above
- aim not to accept and accommodate human “hardness of heart” but rather to uphold the standard of unbroken, life-long marriage which God

designed and to oppose the human tendency to make it easier to “separate what God has joined together.”

### **3) having a divorce certificate/divorce papers is not necessarily a license to remarry**

- vs 32B
- This is where we get into some really tough terrain
  - What were the assumptions of the day re remarriage
  - When if ever and to what extent was remarriage even permitted?
  - We know it was a historical reality, but that does not make it morally acceptable in God’s eyes.
- The challenge is that with any position, there are problems in application
- So we stick to what the text clearly says – remarriage can be, and often is, adultery

### **Conclusion:**

- Application:
  - Young people – who you marry is the second most important decision that you will make
    - Do not compromise
    - Seek advice upon advice
    - Don’t allow emotions to run amuck and fog your judgment
    - Remember that you yourself are not perfect and your marriage relationship will highlight every one of your sinful tendencies
    - If there are signs of unfaithfulness before marriage, unless an angel appears to you and tells you to go ahead, you better make sure that is finally dealt with
  - Work at marriage
    - Require intentionality
    - Requires effort
    - Requires sacrifice
  - Don’t even joke about divorce
  - Never give up fighting for marriage
  - Men – lead – every problem is a leadership problem
  - Take advantage of opportunities to strengthen marriage