

“Marriage and Divorce”

Mark 10:1-16

Introduction

- So last week I talked about hell – where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched and this week my assignment is divorce
 - So - Thank you Pastor Rob for these amazing teaching assignments!!!
 - Hell then divorce – some people say the order is very appropriate

But these subjects, like they are today, were controversial subjects of that day

- and that is why the Pharisees who are no doubt jealous at the crowds coming to hear Jesus speak, this is why they are bringing them up – they are trying to trap him
 - understand the area Jesus was in was the area ruled by Herod Antipas, remember him – he was the same guy who had John the Baptist put to death for questioning his marriage to Herodias
 - so maybe they thought they would provoke Jesus to do the same, get Himself in trouble

At the very least, this subject was controversial in this day, and they knew Jesus was going to offend someone

- And unfortunately we live in the similar time period – this is a subject that effects us all – for some of you this is your grandparents, your parents, this is your story or if something doesn't change this is what you are facing now in your marriage right now - And there are always strong emotions on all sides

So thank you Pastor Rob for the assignment– but someone may be offended today – but I am asking you to hear me out, keep your big boy pants on and let's simply hear what the Word of God says and believe it, not what Jason Duff, no one has come to hear that, but what the word of God has to say

Which by the way, is exactly what Jesus does – They are trying to trap Him, but He points them back to the Word in verse 3

- what does the Word say???
- You see in Jesus' day there was really two sides to the debate that came from two very popular Rabbis of the time that differed from each other on the interpretation of Deut 24:1 –

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, then he shall write her a certificate of divorce, put *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.” – Deuteronomy 24:1

- God had made a provision in His law for Divorce
 - But the argument was over the definition of “some uncleanness”

On one side there was Rabbi Hillel

- And Rabbi Hillel was very liberal and he taught uncleanness was any fault in your spouse
 - If she did something that made you angry, then she caused you to sin and that made her unclean - You can put her away
- And Rabbi Hillel included burning of bread or over salting your food, making a bad dinner
 - Rabbi Hillel even taught if you found someone who was more clean than your wife, that made your wife unclean and you could get rid of her

○ Well Rabbi Hillel had many followers and divorce was becoming rampant
On the other side of the debate was Rabbi Shammi who taught that uncleanness meant if you discovered you wife was not a virgin when you got married

- then she and her family were not forthcoming with you and you could divorce your new bride

It is interesting to me that neither Rabbi Hillel nor Rabbi Shammi, interpreted uncleanness to mean adultery as we so often interpret it today

- Adultery could not have been an acceptable reason for divorce in biblical times because the punishment for adultery was not divorce, it was death
 - And so then I guess for the non-involved party it would mean remarriage, for your husband or your wife was dead, not divorced

But that said, do we see as a church family that there is ever any reason for divorce???

- churches today really come down on one of two extremes
 - you have the churches that will okay divorce for any reason
 - and it is either they don't want to stand for anything, they are cowardly – sure just come in and I will bless your divorce, just don't get mad at me
 - or in some churches, you come in, write a check and they will bless your divorce, because they are not cowardly, they are just greedy

On the other side of the coin there are those churches who believe there is never a justifiable reason for divorce

- those churches love to quote Malachi chapter 2

“For the Lord God of Israel says, that He hates divorce” – Malachi 2:16

They will say there is never a justifiable, biblical reason to divorce, because God hates divorce

- and it is true He does
 - but do you know who also hates divorce, the people going through a divorce
- God says He hates divorce because of what He sees it does to people He loves
 - What it does to the couple, the hurt it brings, the sadness when the other falls in love again and you have to watch that
 - The hurt the kids go through. I can speak from personal experience that it is a living hell for the kids – it was for me when my parents divorced
- That is why God says, I hate divorce
 - He hates what it does to people
 - Because divorce is always the result of someone's sin – and sin always brings pain

So yes, God hates divorce and sometimes churches will then say, there is never a reason to end a marriage

- but what do we believe in this church family? – or I guess I should say what does the leadership of this church believe as you may have a different view
 - but we believe though you never have to get a divorce. I believe God would always rather there be repentance, change, forgiveness and restoration – I think that is always the ideal
 - but I do believe we see justifiable reasons for divorce in the scripture

Biblical reasons for the ending of a marriage

#1 – Death – Romans 7:2

“For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband.” – Romans 7:2

Though not technically divorce at all, death certainly ends the marriage covenant

- when we stand before the Lord and take our vows, we say, “Until death do you part”
 - Marriage is a covenant for life and when one of the people in a marriage pass away, then the other is free to remarry as he or she so feels led by the Lord
 - So death ends a marriage

Biblical reasons for the ending of a marriage

#1 – Death – Romans 7:2

#2 – Adultery – Matthew 19:9

“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” - Matthew 19:9

- In Matthew’s account of the story we are looking at today in Mark’s gospel, Jesus adds the famous “adultery clause”
 - He is saying, there is not reason to end a marriage, except Jesus says, for sexual immorality

Now some see this and say, well okay, I know it says that in Matthew’s gospel, but it is not in Mark’s account, which is most likely the oldest gospel or in Luke’s gospel

- so those that like to hold that there is never a reason for divorce, ever, they will say, this so called exception clause was added later by liberal scribes
 - but I don’t see it that way

Remember in Old Testament times, adultery wasn’t punished by divorce it was punished by death

- so to a Jewish mind, adultery definitely ends a marriage, because you were dead if you did that in Old Testament times, so the marriage as well as your life would be over

So most Bible scholars infer that the reason the adultery exception doesn’t occur in any gospel but Matthew’s is because it was understood, it was obvious to the original audience that adultery could end a marriage because adultery normally ended the death of the offending spouse

- I believe Jesus added this clause of adultery as a justification for divorce really for two reasons

Number one because in the first century the Roman empire had made it next to impossible for a Jewish court to hand out the sentence of death

- especially for something so trivial in a Roman’s mind as adultery
 - but secondly Jesus allows divorce to end a marriage because He is God realizes that there is a sin that can kill the heart, the trust and foundation of marriage – that sin is adultery
 - Jesus understood that the hurt can be so deep after that particular sin that apart from a miracle of resurrection, (which Jesus can do by the way,) but apart from that miracle, the marriage is dead
- They couldn’t get a death sentence from the Roman empire, so Jesus adds the exception clause of adultery as another biblical reason for divorce

Now please hear me on this precious church

- Jesus is not saying, you have to divorce if your husband or your wife cheats on you
 - I again believe God would rather there be real serious genuine repentance from the offending party
 - And slow, rebuilding of trust and forgiveness from the offended party
- I believe Jesus can and would love to restore, to do a miracle of resurrection in your marriage

I am not saying Jesus is saying you have to divorce if there has been infidelity

- All I'm saying, is God understands that sometimes the hurt is too deep
 - And so He allows in the case of adultery, the marriage to end
- Now I believe there is one more reason for divorce in the scripture and that is the issue of abandonment from I Corinthians chapter 7

Biblical reasons for the ending of a marriage

#1 – Death – Romans 7:2

#2 – Adultery – Matthew 19:9

#3 – Abandonment – I Corinthians 7:12-15

“But to the rest I, If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband... But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.” – I Corinthians 7:12-15

- God says, my ideal is if you are married to an unbeliever, and they are willing to stay married to you, then stay
 - Oh but I want a Christian man, I want a Christian women
 - Paul goes on to say, you have no idea the influence you can have over them, if you embrace where you are, and really be an example of Christ to them
- But then, verse 15, Paul says, but if the unbeliever departs, let them depart, you are not under bondage

Sometimes the unbelieving spouse can not handle your walk with God and they leave, they abandon you

- many Bible scholars believe Paul the apostle was in that boat

We know at one time Paul was a member of the group known as the Pharisees

- and we know from Jewish history, in order to be a Pharisee you had to be married
 - So there is every indication that Paul at one time was married
- But by the time he writes I Corinthians it is clear, he is not married
 - So what happen?
- Well it could be that his wife died, that is possible
 - But it far more likely that when Paul gave his life to the Lord, his good Jewish wife left him
 - When people would covert to Christianity the Jews would have a funeral for their family member, because to them, they were as good as dead
- Most likely this happened to Paul, so he understands what it is like to be abandoned

Biblical reasons for the ending of a marriage

#1 – Death – Romans 7:2

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#3 – Abandonment – I Corinthians 7:12-15

What about abuse???? – it's not on the list Pastor Jason, I'm about to get offended

- Please - Hear me on this – if you are being abused, for the safety of you and your kids, you need to get out, you need to protect them, you need to involve the police
 - Abuse is a serious crime, but I think separation is the way to deal with it, not divorce

By separating, getting you and your kids to safety, one of two things will happen in the heart of the abuser

- He or she will either respond to the separation by giving you every biblical ground you need for divorce
 - Or they will realize the seriousness of sin and work on becoming the right person
 - And if they are willing to do that, you must give them time and space for your safety to become the man or women after God's own heart
- Either way – you and your kids will be safe if you take time to separate
 - Paul says this...again we want the Word, not opinions

“Now to the married I command, A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart (separate), let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband.” – I Corinthians 7:10-11

- Again precious church please do not misunderstand me
 - This list I put up on the screen is not a list where God is saying you have to end your marriage
 - He would rather there be healing

In fact what Jesus says, is Moses made a provision in the law for divorce

- not to encourage to do it, but because you are so hard hearted some times there is no other way – verse 5 of Mark 10
 - but then Jesus was clear to say, this, meaning divorce, was never God's intent
 - and the evidence is the first marriage

God created the first marriage as an example to you and me

- He made marriage to be between a man and a woman

Notice that – a man and a woman

- And before you clap - He also created it for life
 - We can cheer on God's forbidding of Homosexual marriages because we agree with it, but let's not forget that God equally despises marriages that don't last because we are so hard hearted to do the right thing

I think one of the great mistakes in the church today is our tendency to camp out on one sin

- Look – I believe homosexuality is a sin that needs to be repented of, and I have no problem saying that in public until they decide to take me away in chains
 - But – I also believe sleeping with your boyfriend or girlfriend before you are married is also a sin that needs to be repented of
- I believe stealing from your work, from the government, from the Lord are also sins that need to be repented of

I believe my sin of pride is just as ugly before the Lord as someone else's struggle with same sex attraction

- and we can protest and camp out on one issue church, but if we are not willing to look in the mirror and confront our own sin, then we have no right to speak out on any other subject.
 - We as a church need to take a hard look about how we treat divorce in the church

Some churches hand it out like candy, some say, God never sees a reason

- but I believe biblically we can say there are some provisions in the scriptures, where God does allow divorce

But just because you are unhappy, or you think someone else will fulfill you – I love you church and that is why I am willing to tell you the truth – that thinking is wrong!

I don't mean to hurt anyone this morning – as I have said I don't believe divorce is the unforgivable sin, I don't believe divorce is more heinous than any other sin

- And of course I believe God loves to rebuild and restore the years that the locusts have eaten

But I do believe God would have His church take this subject way more seriously than we do

- couples, divorce the idea of divorce from your marriage – don't utter it, don't consider it, don't do it
 - but for some of you, you already have
 - and therefore verses like 11-12 are pretty scary, what is Jesus saying?

Now with verses 11 -12 much debate over how to interpret them

- Again I do not personally believe Jesus is teaching divorce is an unforgivable sin
 - Nor do I believe Jesus is teaching that those who remarry live in continual adultery, that is not what Jesus is saying
- But I do think it teaches that those who are entering into marriage need to be careful and do so with much prayer and consideration
 - Especially if it is a remarriage with a marriage that did not end the first time for a biblical reasons
- You need to go into that prayerfully
 - Realizing all the effects of the sin of ending a marriage – an ex-spouse, children who are not yours (not that the children are a result of sin, but the effects of them not being yours in your new marriage)
- You must go into it realizing all these things

However if you are in a re-marriage – I have heard pastors advise that you need to divorce your current spouse and go back to the person you divorced and get remarried – I'm sorry, that to me is foolishness – how does more divorce please the Lord?

No, you in my opinion if you divorced for non-biblical reasons, you need to repent, you need to realize ending your past marriage was a sin

- maybe you have never acknowledged that – you have been living in your justifications of feelings for years
 - you need to repent and then you need to move on in God's grace and forgiveness as you do with every other sin, realizing your sin is covered by the blood of Jesus

I believe there are times when remarriage even in non-adultery situations can be redeeming

- What??? – There was a young woman in the church in Texas who married young, and the couple had two kids, and in few years they divorced for non biblical reasons – and this woman was putting her kids in daycare, not being able to raise them, and then along comes a man who loves this young woman with all of his heart, and he can provide for this family, so she can stay at home and raise those kids in the Lord and He can lead them all closer to Jesus
 - And that young man through prayer and humility decided to absorb the sin, to absorb the effects of the sin that will, not may, come his way
 - I found that to be not offensive, but a lot like Jesus, who took me, a rebellious and adulterous bride, and absorbed my sin, taking its effects so that I might be with Him

Divorce for non-biblical reasons is a sin

- but like everything else in this life, God can take what the enemy meant for evil and He can turn it for good
 - He loves to redeem and save
 - And speaking of that I want to close with one last thing this morning

Many of us in this room are married, or will be married in the future – we don't want to end up having this chapter be about us, we don't want to end up divorced, what do we do?

- You have heard it said that “50 percent of Christian marriages end in divorce” and the effects of hearing that study is well then why try?
 - well first of all that study by George Barna who does a lot of great research, has a great flaw in the study, he simply asked are you a Christian
 - and the problem with that is 75% of our country claims to know Jesus
 - but do you believe that is true? – that means almost 8 out of 10 people are born again believers – no way
- but listen if you go to Alabama and ask – are you a Christian, you are going to get yes 95 percent of the time, - but I have lived in the south for 8 years and let me tell you – wonderful people – but they are not all really Christians even though they will all tell you they are.
 - So it is not true that 50 percent of Christian marriages will end in divorce

Other studies have found your likelihood of divorce drops by more than half if you do a few things as a married couple – write these down and we will be done today...

How can I improve my chances of success?

#1 – Repent

- You have heard it said, “Love means never having to say you are sorry” – that is stupidest thing I have ever heard in my life
 - You need to repent – but she is crazy – he is out of control – and you most likely contributed to that in many ways
 - If you are the husband – God says in I Corinthians 11:7, the wife is the glory of the man, literally the reflection – you don't like what she is reflecting, then guess what - you need to repent
 - We get on the crazy cycle – and it will get worse until there is repentance – I am sorry!

#2 – Attend church together

- same church, same teaching, accountability to the same leadership
 - we live in a day where you can be discipled by anyone via the internet, and I love that for growth, but that is not church
 - Christy and I are different – I like sports, she like vegetables, I like crispy fries, she likes thick undercooked ones – we have nothing in common, except our convictions
 - And that is what you want holding you together

#3 – Bring church home

- Do it yourself
 - read together, pray together, talk about what God is doing in your lives
 - a couple that prays together, reads together, learns together, stays together
 - bring it home precious church – and you will never have to deal with the effects of Mark chapter 10

Heavy subject but if we will receive it, we will be blessed

- this is why I believe Jesus says next in verses 13-16
 - if we will receive God's word like a little child
 - Little kids believe their parents
- When my son started sitting in the front seat he had to touch all the buttons so I told him to be careful because this one button would eject you out of the car
 - He didn't believe me so I googled a video of them testing ejector seats on a fighter plane – and it was on a track, it looked like a car, so he was sure Dad was telling the truth
 - So much so as I went to touch the hazard as we were pulling over, he yelled, no Dad don't eject me
 - Parents can be liars – God never is
 - we will be blessed as we listen and obey