

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for July 9, 2017

Destructive Divorce
Mark 10:1-12

I. The test concerning divorce (10:1-2)

And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.

² And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

A. The transition (10:1)

"And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan,"

-Mark documents this major shift in ministry from Galilee to Judea

-Jesus was now on His way to Jerusalem for the last time in His earthly life

-He is specifically in the region of Perea (beyond the Jordan River) while journeying to Judea

"And crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them."

-Jesus had spent considerable time trying to withdraw and be alone with His disciples previously in the gospel of Mark

-Now He has stepped back into the public square and He is swarmed with people "again"

-Jesus' response was not to avoid the people but to teach these crowds "again"

B. The topic (10:2)

"And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?'"

-The very second Jesus began teaching in public again, the Pharisees drew near to test Jesus again

-Since Mark 3, the Pharisees have been plotting to destroy Jesus

-They approach Jesus with a question regarding divorce

-The Pharisees probably chose this topic for at least two reasons:

1) Divorce was widely accepted and practiced at this time in Israel

-Two schools of thought, Shammai and Hillel

- Shammai was more strict and said that divorce was only acceptable for the cause of unchastity or immorality
- Hillel was more loose (and popular) and said that divorce was acceptable for pretty much any reason

- If a wife burned a meal

- If a husband found someone more pleasing

(Josephus)

2) John the Baptist was arrested for preaching about this very topic

- John the Baptist preached against the unlawful marriage of Herod Antipas to Herodias

- She was married to his brother Herod Philip

- If Jesus had a similar view as John the Baptist, Jesus might be destined for the same fate as John the Baptist

- Also, Perea was under the control of Herod Antipas as was Galilee

- Thus, Jesus' response on such a topic would be telling and potentially life-threatening

II. The teaching about divorce (10:3-9)

³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." ⁵ And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

A. The incomplete view of divorce (10:3-5)

"He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?'"

- Jesus is not interested in the debates among the Rabbis

- Jesus is not interested in the opinions of these men or experts in the Law

- Instead, Jesus asks what Moses, the author of Genesis-Deuteronomy, has said

- Jesus asks what Scripture says

"They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.'"

- First, notice how they answer according to what Moses "allowed," not what Moses actually "commanded" concerning divorce

- They are referencing Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as their basis for this claim

-Upon examining Deuteronomy 24:1-4, one finds that this is not an explicit permission and allowance of divorce by Moses

-Instead, one finds that this is a very specific law intended to protect women from being passed around from husband to husband

-Some form of legalized prostitution

-In reality, the Pharisees are referring to an Old Testament law that merely gave regulations for the practice of divorce, which was already in existence among the Israelites

-Moses was not giving God's hearty approval to the practice of divorce

-So, why would Moses write such a law?

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.’”

-Jesus explains that this law was not giving any approval to the practice of divorce, instead it merely acknowledged that divorce existed

-The practice of divorce was like a Pandora's box of some sort

-It had already been opened and thus was rampant in Israel

-They were hardened in their heart due to an extended practice of divorce probably developed from their time in Egypt before the Exodus

-Thus, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was a command from Moses to try and keep a lid or a ceiling on the practice of divorce

-Deuteronomy 24:1-4 did not command or even allow divorce

-It commanded the limitation of divorce in Israel

-It provided guidelines for keeping the practice of divorce in check

B. The instructions for marriage (10:6-9)

“‘But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’”

-The Pharisees referred to what they thought was a loophole that allowed divorce in their thinking

-Jesus, on the other hand, goes back to the beginning of creation to give what Moses really commanded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit

-First, He quotes from Genesis 1:27 that God made mankind male and female

-God gave mankind his and her distinct features and anatomy

“⁷ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh.”

-Because of how God designed and created man and woman, it is God's intention that they join together in the unifying act of marriage (Gen 2:24)

-This union of man and woman involves leaving father and mother

- This union also involves holding fast, cleaving or becoming glued to one another
- This is more than just sexual union and intimacy (1 Cor 6:16) but a comingling of man and woman such that, “they are no longer two but one flesh”
- “⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”
 - Jesus has transported His audience back to the first marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden
 - He has reminded them of what Scripture has clearly stated regarding marriage
 - In marriage, the two become one
 - In light of these truths from Scripture, Jesus gives His answer to the initial question
 - What God has joined together in the common grace of marriage must not be separated by mankind
- Is there ever a time where divorce is ok?
 - There are two instances where divorce is permissible in God’s eyes (not commanded but allowed)
 - 1) When sexual immorality or marital unfaithfulness has occurred
 - a) Matthew 5:32; 19:9
 - 2) When an unbelieving spouse desires to abandon the marriage
 - a) 1 Corinthians 7:15
- How do you think His disciples felt about this teaching?
 - Matthew 19:10 *The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."*
 - Jesus, like in the Sermon on the Mount, was opening their eyes to sinfulness of mankind
 - He did this simply by revealing the holy and righteous standard of God from Scripture
 - The disciples and the majority of Israel at that time had given into the common practice of divorce
 - They had failed to examine Scripture as the means for informing their living
- After this public discussion concerning divorce, the passage moves to a private discussion

III. The truth about divorce (10:10-12)

¹⁰ *And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.* ¹¹ *And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery*

against her, ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

“And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter”

- After this public exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees in front of the crowds, the disciples privately asked Him again about divorce
- This continues the private instruction that Jesus constantly gave His disciples as His earthly ministry slowly moved toward the end
- Perhaps the disciples still did not understand the gravity of the destructive nature of divorce

“And he said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her,’”

- Jesus has already shown that divorce undermines and attacks the plan of God for marriage as laid out in Genesis 1-2
- Now Jesus reveals the devastating effects and impact of divorce
- Divorce in and of itself is sin in the eyes of God
- Divorce is so destructive that it actually creates more sin into the future
- Jesus gives the scenario of a husband divorcing his wife and then marrying another woman in the future
- Jesus calls this man’s relationship with his second wife an act of adultery against his first wife!
- How can this be?
- We need to understand the background of divorce
 - When divorce occurred in their time, there was a certificate that was given to the woman that stated they were free to remarry
 - While the husband might feel justified that he has legally and properly dealt with his ex-wife by giving her a certificate that legally allows her to remarry, he has actually done a horrible thing
 - Because of this divorce, the husband will now remarry thinking all is well when the reality is that God still sees him as married to his first wife
- Since his divorce was not done for “biblical” reasons, God does not see the first union as separated, though man or the government might see it that way
- Thus, Jesus is saying that divorce for any reason other than that which is laid out in Scripture is a gateway to more adultery and sin in the remarriages that occur for both the husband and the wife
- Jesus does not elaborate on the solution of what must be done now for those in their second and third marriages
- His main goal was to reveal the horror of divorce and the sin it creates

-However, we know from Paul's writings in the New Testament that any activity (unbiblical divorces and/or remarriages) before one's conversion to Christ are not to be undone

-Instead, Paul commands the church to remain in whatever condition one was in when they were called by God (1 Cor 7:24)

-Any activity (unbiblical divorces and/or remarriages) taking place after one's conversion are more than likely not to be undone as well

-However, it is vital to search the Scriptures, present one's situation to God in prayer, and ask the elders of the church how one ought to proceed if they find themselves in the above situation