

The Gospel According to Mark - Marriage A Sacred Institution

Marriage: A Sacred Institution

Mark 10:1-12

“If You're not in it, then I don't want it, let all else fade away! Take the whole world, give me Jesus, let all else fade away”

There's no Mother's Day gift or Mother's Day card you could give to your Mom or your wife that would be more powerful than an attitude that says “God if You're not in it, then I don't want it, let all else fade away! Take the whole world, give me Jesus, let all else fade away!” Our families today desperately need to be led by parent's who are sold out to Jesus. We need young people who will allow this to be the creed of their lives. Talk about something that would make Mom happy! In our text today Jesus talks about the sacred institution of marriage and there's some underlying principles that if followed will be a powerful way for us to celebrate our Moms. Let's pray and ask God to open our hearts to His truth!

If you will open your Bibles to the Gospel According to Mark and we'll begin with chapter 10 verse 1.

Mark 10:1 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

Mark 10:2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

Mark 10:3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

Mark 10:4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

Mark 10:5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.

Mark 10:6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'

Mark 10:7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,

Mark 10:8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one.

Mark 10:9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Mark 10:10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.

Mark 10:11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.

Mark 10:12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

If you have experienced the pain of divorce, you will be quick to confirm what I will teach today! Dr. Nave had a friend who had been divorced and he said, “Divorced people know why God hates divorce!” And pay close attention to God's word in Malachi ...

Mal 2:15 Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

Mal 2:16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel,

In other words, God hates divorce, not divorcees! God hates divorce because divorce hurts and if you've been through a divorce you would probably say “amen to that!!!” Gary Collins put it this way when talking about God hating divorce...

“He's not alone. Hundreds of thousands of former husbands and wives hate divorce, and so do scared kids whose parents have separated, grown-up children who still bear the scars of family breakups, grandparents who smiled proudly at the wedding of their offspring then watched with agony as those once-happy marriages disintegrated in anger, distrust, and sometimes hatred.”

I've never had anyone who has experienced divorce tell me divorce was fun, painless, and without consequence. Jesus acknowledged there are times when divorce is the only option and we'll see the reason

in just a minute, but He wanted everyone to know it was not God's will for people to take marriage flippantly or nonchalantly! Marriage was considered by God a sacred institution and we'll see why in just a minute. What we're going to learn today will help all of us here. When I realized it was going to be Mother's Day and we would be on this subject I thought about doing something different just for today, but then I realized, what would be better for moms and what would honor them more than if we discuss the importance of marriage as a sacred institution!

If you've suffered a failed marriage, today's message will help you avoid a repeat. If you're struggling in your marriage, today's message may help you find hope and healing, and if you're not married, the three things we're going to discover will help you plan for a future marriage and if you just don't think marriage is for you, the principles we'll learn can be applied to your life as a single person and your relationship with the Lord! And I think if we do this well, we will make Moms happy!!

Here's what was going on during Jesus' day. There were two well known and very popular rabbis, Shammai and Hillel who had different views on the subject. Shammai taught a very strict interpretation of the law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and that divorce was only for marital unfaithfulness. Hillel, on the other hand, according to Biblical commentator Henry Turlington, was "much more lenient, giving as examples such things as careless preparation of meals or some other unsatisfactory quality in a wife." Here's the way the question was asked in Matthew's Gospel...

Mat 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

In both Mark's Gospel and Matthew's Gospel, Jesus answered the question with a very convicting observation...

Mark 10:5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.

Mat 19:8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.

The underlying issue causing marriage not to be considered Sacred: Hardness of Heart

The Truth Is...

When divorce happens, one or both have allowed their hearts to become hardened.

Somewhere along the line, one or both decided (consciously or not) to neglect the marriage relationship. Divorce should be the exception to the rule, not the rule. In many cases today divorce is the road more easily taken...

I just don't love him like I used to/We're just not compatible /We don't even like the same things/She's a great lady, mother, and all that, in fact we're great friends, just not great lovers/Our careers are going in different directions and we've decided it's best we go our separate ways/I even heard this once...God called me into the ministry and she didn't agree. Besides the girl I'm seeing now really supports me in my ministry.

My response! What kind of kool-aid are you drinking? You've sacrificed your family on the alter of ministry! Not of God! Check your heart! In fact God's word has something to say about this.

1 Tim 5:8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

So what would cause a person to decide they no longer wanted to keep the sacred vows they made and care for their family? The word Jesus used that is translated hardness is the greek word for "Stubborn!" I do a lot of marriage counseling and I'm just gonna say this: yep, stubborn!

Hardness or stubbornness of the heart is the reason divorce is sometimes the only option. I've known situations where because of hardness of heart, there was marital unfaithfulness, abuse, abandonment, or other very serious issues and even though one might want to make things work, if the other person remains hard of heart, there may be no recourse other than divorce. God does not expect someone to live in a truly abusive relationship. While divorce is sometimes unavoidable, and it was never God's perfect will or intention for your marriage, if you tried your best, put it in God's hands, and never stop praying for the other person. And let me say this as well: If you were the offender and were not living for God at the time and divorce happened and you have since turned your life over to the Lord, just remember that God's forgiveness covers all sin. You've no doubt had to deal with some of the consequences, but never forget that the penalty of sin was borne by Jesus on the Cross and your forgiveness is complete if you have sincerely repented. Don't let Satan make you think you're a second class citizen in the kingdom of God! The

fact is we are all sinners saved by God's grace! The ground at the foot of the cross is level and we all stand in need of a Savior! All of us! Let God take you where you are and begin anew!

In fact, I've seen situations where someone has been truly egregious and broke the marriage covenant but was heart broken, and truly repentant of the wrongs done and then committed, with God's help, to change! I've seen times where forgiveness was granted and a beautiful outcome was had! It can happen but only when people are willing to deal with the issue of hardness of heart. Remember I told you the principles of today's message apply to all of us here. Hardness of heart not only destroys marriages, it destroys single people as well. It can destroy a person's walk with God, their witness to others, their relationship with their parents, their friends, and the list could go on. We touched on this last week in our message on the importance of the inner life.

One of the best ways to honor your wife or your mom is to pay attention to your heart! And that applies to everyone in this room even if your Mom is no longer with you, you can honor her memory! And it certainly honors God when you make sure that your heart is not hardened to the principles and ways of God! Let me give you some Scriptural advice on the heart. The Psalmist said...

Psa 51:16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

Psa 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The Prophet Joel put it this way...

Joel 2:12 'Even now,' declares the LORD, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'

Joel 2:13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

But this is talking about a broken and contrite heart, and rending your heart! What's that all about? When your heart is not hardened before God, but softened, tilled, open, broken over sin and selfishness and unfaithfulness and wrong priorities, God can bless that kind of spirit! God can take a heart like that and fill it up with good things, right things, Godly things, things that would make your marriage strong and your Momma proud! Maybe a prayer like the Psalmist prayed would be a good start for all of us here today...

Psa 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Psa 51:11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Psa 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

The underlying reason marriage is a sacred institution: It was God's idea in the first place!

Mark 10:6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'

Mark 10:7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,

Mark 10:8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one.

Mark 10:9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

The people wanted things their way! But God had made it plain from the very beginning the right way to do marriage! Marriage is God's idea! Jesus was quoting concepts found in the creation narrative found in Genesis chapter's one and two. Commentator Henry Turlington once again nails it with the following comment:

"Jesus drew the conclusion that the institution of marriage was in the purpose of God; That in the marital relationship a new home was established with a new unity; and that it was not according to God's purpose for so sacred a relationship to be severed by God's creatures.

Let me share with you our denomination's statement on Marriage and Family. I believe it to be very well stated and very much in line with God's precious Word...

"God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship,

the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle, example, and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents."

Talk about a setup to honor Moms, and it was God's idea! In fact let's just see what God's Word says about the way a man should honor his wife.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Eph 5:26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

Eph 5:27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Eph 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Eph 5:29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--

Eph 5:30 for we are members of his body.

Eph 5:31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

If a man loves his wife as Christ loved the church, and is willing to give his life for her, then treating her with love and respect should come naturally and what wife would not be excited to follow that kind of loving leader in the home? And by the way, children, since marriage and family were God's idea, He also gave some good instruction for you when it comes to honoring your parent's and especially your Mom on this Mother's Day.

Prov 23:22 Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Prov 23:23 Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding.

Prov 23:24 The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him.

Prov 23:25 May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!

Prov 23:26 My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways...

Children, I don't think there's a mom here today who wouldn't want you to follow God's advice. Give God your heart and follow His ways!

Okay, so we know that marriage and the resulting family is a sacred institution. How can we be sure to keep it that way?

The underlying way to keep marriage and family a sacred institution: Faithful Commitment!

Mark 10:10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this.

Mark 10:11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.

Mark 10:12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

In other words, marriage is sacred and is based on a commitment! We are to place the same importance on marriage as God does! What Jesus is saying here, is that when we don't, other's get hurt! One of the problems with commitment in our post modern world, is we have lessened the value of commitment and

elevated other things to take its place. Some are no longer saying "So long as we both shall live," but "so long as we both shall love!"

What? So long as we both shall love?

You mean, when the bubbly, butterfly, feelings in the tummy start to wain, you'll start to look elsewhere? You mean when you don't "feel" like you love them anymore, you'll go searching for a feeling? That's nonsense and Satan's distortion of what true marriage is all about!! Many lies have been perpetrated on couples today. Here are a few:

Lie: If it's true love, everything should be spontaneously great. True love doesn't take work, it just happens.

Lie: Just live together, if it doesn't work out that's okay, keep looking, the perfect mate is out there somewhere.

Lie: Regardless of how good a person your spouse is, if your not happy it would be better for you to leave anyway.

The truth is God's plan for your marriage is more wonderful than anything you could ever dream up on your own. But it takes commitment on both sides! In fact marriage is more a commitment than it is a feeling! People who want to base marriage on feelings will inevitably face this fact: feelings come and go. God knew that about us so he designed marriage to be a commitment, a covenant, a promise based on vows rather than feelings. Nothing wrong with feeling good about your marriage and your vows, but only faithful commitment to a promise made can take you through the ups and downs of marital life! Here's an amazing concept: If both husband and wife are committed to work on the marriage the feelings will follow, if not, the feelings will die! If you're not willing to work on the marriage, I don't care how great it was at the beginning, the feelings will begin to fade, apathy and atrophy will set in, and the feelings will be lost.

Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about because you've been there done that! Once again, if divorce is in your past, don't feel condemned because in Jesus your past is covered! Just learn from your past and don't make the same mistakes twice! If you are remarried, work on your marriage now and hold it as a sacred trust! If you are not remarried and find yourself single again, maybe a single mom or dad, then ask God to help you practice commitment in your relationship with Him and to be the best man of God or woman of God you can be! Do this and if marriage is to be a part of your future you will be able to apply godly principles of commitment to that marriage.

You might ask what godly principles of commitment look like.

Your first priority after your relationship with God should be to your family! Not career, hobby, or anything else! Did I hear some moms say amen? Too many husbands are married to their jobs. Maybe even some wives! I know work takes time. I've had many 60 plus hour weeks. But when you're home are you really home? Sometimes marriages and children are sacrificed on the alter of career and busyness. Here's a question to consider: What are you working for anyway? You may think your kid's most important needs are financial, making sure they live in great house and are transported in a nice SUV, and have really nice things to enjoy at birthdays and Christmas. But I'm here to tell you kids spell love, T-I-M-E!! If you spend all of your time to give them the things you think they want and need you may realize when it's too late what they really wanted and desperately needed was your time, your example, your friendship and your mentorship! Again, I know you have to provide for your family...food, shelter, clothing and all of that stuff, but again, your spouse and your kids need you too! What place does your family really hold in your life?

Proper Priorities

Your Relationship with God

Your Relationship with your Spouse

Your Relationship with your Children

Your God-given Job which provides for your family

Your Service to God in ministry to others

Your Hobbies

I tell folks all the time that the secret to my marriage is that I'm not the most important person in my wife's life! Jesus is! And I like it that way, because as long as Jesus is number one to her, I'll always be second, not third or fourth or fifth, but second. And the same is true for me with her. Jesus is number one and she is

second. And by the way, the proper order is not God, then children then spouse! It's God, spouse and then children. Like I've said before, the greatest sense of security and foundation you can give your children is a stable home life based on your commitment to God and your spouse! God's design for marriage is that it last a lifetime and grow in depth each and every day! And when it comes to decisions about anything, think about its impact on your priorities of God first and then your marriage commitment! God will honor that!

And I think every mom in this room today would want me to give this advice to our young people. If you are dating keep your relationship within the boundaries of God's principles because your actions today will deeply effect your marriage tomorrow in a good way or a bad way. Your mom wanted me to be sure to tell you that!

Again, as I thought about today, Mother's Day, and the text for today, I thought: what would honor Mom's more than for their husbands, their children, and our church to recognize and emphasize the sacred institution of marriage and renew our commitment to that institution! In fact I'll end with this passage from Nehemiah 4:14. Nehemiah and the people of God were facing some serious attacks from their enemies. Nehemiah's words of encouragement should encourage us as we fight for the sacred institution of marriage!

Nehemiah 4:14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

Let's pray!