



Mark - Lesson 10A

Chapter 10:1-12

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- As we transition into Chapter 10 of Mark, we arrive to a very touchy and difficult topic to discuss – Jesus’ teaching on divorce.
 - As we approach this teaching, as a minister of the Gospel, I will not and cannot sugar coat the realities of this matter.
 - And in the same breath, I recognize that this discussion can be very traumatic for some, so I want to approach this as best I can – **in grace and truth**.
 - I acknowledge that some of you may have gone through a divorce or may be going through a divorce.
 - And with that know that the body of Christ, whether locally in your context or globally through VBVM, we are here for you and are praying with you.
 - As we work through the scriptures, we will encounter God’s truth on a matter and it will have the ability to offend and at times cause frustration.
 - **But if you hold to a high view of scripture as being God’s very spoken word, then it behooves us to submit to it in all its authority.**
 - And where there is confusion and need for clarity, we submit to the Lord and seek the Spirit’s counsel for understanding – not the way we want to hear it, but by the way in which God has revealed this source of truth – through the scriptures.
 - I also know that there are many interpretations on this matter and I want to give room for the Holy Spirit to teach us and correct us where needed.
 - So with this introduction in mind, as we make our way through tonight’s teaching, I would like to offer a flow of thought through the text:
 - We are going to see the following things:
 - **1. A Raised Inquiry (v.1-3)**
 - **2. A Rebut (v.4-5)**
 - **3. A Reasoned and Original Response (v.6-9)**
 - **4. A Necessary Restatement (v.10-12)**
 - If I were to put a tag on tonight’s text it would be: **“Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: What does God have to say on the Matter?”**
 - With that being said, I invite you to open up your copy of the scriptures and pick me up in Mark 10:1-12.

Mark 10:1 Setting out from there, Jesus *went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds *gathered to Him again, and, as He was accustomed, He once more began to teach them.

Mark 10:2 And some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began questioning Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife.

Mark 10:3 And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?”

Mark 10:4 They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send his wife away.”

Mark 10:5 But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote

you this commandment.

Mark 10:6 But from the beginning of creation, God created them male and female.

Mark 10:7 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother,

Mark 10:8 and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Mark 10:9 Therefore, what God has joined together, no person is to separate.”

Mark 10:10 And in the house the disciples again began questioning Him about this.

Mark 10:11 And He *said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;

Mark 10:12 and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.”

- Let’s Pray.
- “Do you take this person to be your lawfully wedded husband/wife”
 - “To have and to hold, for rich or for poor, in sickness and in health, till death do you part.”
 - It’s at this next line where it becomes both sentimental and terrifyingly sobering – “I Do.”
 - Marriage is this unwavering commitment to forever in divine partnership with one another under God.
 - It requires that each individual yields themselves to God’s authority and submits themselves to His will and each other to accomplish God’s purposes.
 - However, in a society and culture that now defines for themselves what marriage means to them, it completely undermines the Divine institution in which God created and set for His good purposes and pleasure.
 - Tonight, we will see Jesus teach on matters of marriage and in doing so we will find, that as Jesus did in the wilderness in being tempted, He will defer back to the only thing that matters – “It is written” (What does God say?)
 - Pick me up at the first three verses of Mark Chapter 10.

Mark 10:1 Setting out from there, Jesus *went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds *gathered to Him again, and, as He was accustomed, He once more began to teach them.

Mark 10:2 And some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began questioning Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife.

Mark 10:3 And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?”

- Mark writes that Jesus and the disciples left their previous setting, which we know from previous context is Capernaum, and they head to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan.

- If we were to look up a potential path of travel, here is a map that speaks to their walking distance from Capernaum to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.
 - And as we can see from this map, the exact region in which they traveled to was known as Perea.
 - Perea is near the region of Judea and not too far a distance from Jerusalem where Jesus is headed to prepare to die.
 - And what is so interesting to note is that as Jesus is incrementally headed towards His death, He continues to teach the people.
- It is while Jesus is teaching the people in Perea that the Pharisees came up to Jesus in an effort to test and question Him on a particular matter.
 - Now, before we move to what they came to question Him about, let's note **where** the Pharisees are traveling from in effort to confront Jesus with their **“raised inquiry”**.
 - The religious leaders who came to see about Jesus had traveled down from Jerusalem to Perea to interrogate Jesus on matters of divorce.
- Verse 2 tells us that this line of questioning was in effort to “test” Him.
 - The Greek word here for “testing” is *peirazo* (pe-razo).
- This sort of testing was to **discredit Jesus within the public eye** knowing that His ministry was still gathering more influence and a larger following.
 - We should also note that Jesus had previously addressed this matter of divorce on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:31-32.
- So, in the eyes of the religious leaders, what better way to know Jesus’ stance on this issue in a public forum than this moment here in Perea.
 - Now, one may ask the question: **Why would the Pharisees bring up this question to Jesus?**
 - Weren’t there other matters that could be discussed?
- 1. On one hand, keep in mind that the Pharisees are looking for any and every opportunity to discredit Jesus to terminate His ministry and lead to quicker death.
 - But on the other side of this questioning, one should consider the particular region in which Jesus was in.
- 2. Not only was Perea on the other side of the Jordan, but the Tetrarch in charge of that area was none other than Herod Antipas.
 - This is key because if you remember, Herod Antipas had a run-in with the John the Baptist.
 - And it was with John the Baptist confronting Herod on his affairs with his brother’s wife, Herodias, that cost John his life.
 - Truth came with a price, and it was a price in which John the Baptist was willing to die for.
- **So, what we see in this moment is there was a power move at play here: How can we trip Him up? If not theologically then most certainly, politically.**
 - In other words, we can get Rome involved if need be.
 - The way in which they attempted to trip Jesus up was with the highly debated

rabbinical school of thought regarding the issue of divorce.

- There were two interpretative stances on divorce throughout rabbinic discussion and debate.
 - One was a conservative view, and one was a liberal view.
 - The conservative view followed the thought that “the only grounds for divorce” was adultery (sexual immorality).
 - Whereas the liberal view emphasized the phrase “any indecency” from Deuteronomy 24:1 regarding laws concerning divorce.
- What should cause much alarm here is how humanity attempts to take the very words of scripture and completely distort its meaning in an effort to defend one’s own selfish ambition. (Satan tempting Jesus in wilderness)
 - I say this because from the liberal view “any indecency” was any and every reason that a man could think of that he didn’t like about his wife that day.
 - For example, if the wife burned the soup that day, that was his out.
 - This view could be seen as giving man permission to sin for the sake of **“being right in his own eyes”**.
 - And that was exactly how the liberal view of divorce was seen.
- **And what we see from Jesus in verse 3 is a beautiful picture of combating eisegesis verses exegesis.**
 - Jesus is going to answer their question, on whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, with a question.
 - And as we have learned, this method of teaching becomes introspective for the hearer.
 - Check out Jesus’ response to their misguided yet raised inquiry regarding the scriptures.
- He answered them by saying, “What did Moses command you?”
 - If I were to put this another way, Jesus was moving to counteract their own interpretive suggestions on the matter and to seek what the Mosaic Law said.
 - Again, Rabbinical thought was not the epistemic authority in the Lord’s eyes, **it is God’s word alone that holds up**.
 - And a proper understanding of the Mosaic Law leads one to recognize that God spoke verbally to Moses to establish God’s law for His people – therefore, what does God say on this matter.
 - Check out how they respond to Jesus’ question. Look at verses 4-5.

Mark 10:4 They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send his wife away.”

Mark 10:5 But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

- Notice what the Pharisees say in response to Jesus’ questioning regarding the Mosaic Law: They said that Moses **“permitted”** a man to write a certificate of divorce.

- However, in order for us to know what Moses wrote according to scripture and not hearsay, let us go to where the law concerning divorce is mentioned.
 - Turn with me to Deuteronomy 24:1-4. We want to pay close attention to verse 1 for context.

Deuteronomy 24:1 “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens, if she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, that he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her away from his house,

Deuteronomy 24:2 and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife,

Deuteronomy 24:3 and the latter husband turns against her, writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand, and sends her away from his house, or if the latter husband who took her to be his wife dies,

Deuteronomy 24:4 then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

- It seems like we have an issue of terms to address here. Jesus is asking for the “command” that Moses gave (*entello*).
 - However, the Pharisees are expressing the fact that Moses “permitted” divorce (*epitrepo*)
 - However, what we just read in verses 1-4 are not matters of “Thus saith the Lord”, but rather Moses outlines particular regulations and conditions “if indecency transpired”.
 - We must pay attention to the language here, because where the Pharisees are seeking an interpretation that favors their civil and legal relevance, it falls short of God’s say on the matter.
 - In other words, there is this understanding from Jesus that the means of divorce was never a matter to be resolved legally because it is a divine institution by God.
 - To put it plainly, man has no say or rights to dictate or change God’s standards and purpose of marriage.
 - In effect, this condition that Moses places is solely “allowed” because of the fallen condition of humanity.
 - So in order to restrict the further damaging effects of separation and its impact on the family and most certainly the woman, conditions were established to aid these issues.
 - **Friends, it becomes clear that divorce was an accommodation because of sin and not a license to sin.**
 - And Jesus confronts their manipulation and misguided interpretations of divorce in verse 5.
 - Jesus tells them Moses “allowed” this because of your “hardened hearts”.
 - **In other words, Moses permitted divorce, he did not command it.**

- And being that Moses was the representative mediator between God and man, we must not garble the language.
- Again, the permission of this act was simply because of man's "hardened hearts"
- The Greek word for "Hardness of Heart" is *sklerokardia*. (Sklero-kardia)
 - It is a combination of two Greek words "*skleros*" which means hard and "*kardia*" which means heart.
 - **It's a stubborn attitude toward one's behavior or an unyielding frame of mind.**
 - This word is used in the Septuagint twice. Once in Deuteronomy and once in Jeremiah.
- In both instances of the word, it refers to the need of the heart to be circumcised.
 - So, within this context, the issue is not the certificate of divorce, but rather the condition of the hearts of men and women, respectively regarding its use "for any reason they found".
- The conditions and institution of marriage is not something to be taken lightly and must be entered into not through the lens of personal enjoyment and satisfaction, but rather through the lens of the scriptures.
 - When we enter a marriage with our own view of what it is or false expectations, we miss God's plan and design for it.
 - And Jesus points the Pharisees to this very point. To understand proper terms and conditions of marriage, **one must look to the originator and Creator of it.**
 - Check out what Jesus says in verses 6-9.

Mark 10:6 But from the beginning of creation, God created them male and female.

Mark 10:7 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother,

Mark 10:8 and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Mark 10:9 Therefore, what God has joined together, no person is to separate."

- Jesus doesn't quote the top commentator of the day or even pull sources of the most influential rabbis of that day, He goes to the only source that matters – God's word!
 - Jesus provides **a reasoned and original response** to the Pharisees' misguidance and rulings, and He goes to the Creation account to speak to this divine institution.
 - Notice, Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24.
 - In other words, Jesus **contrasts** the varying views of marriage and divorce of that day with God's view of marriage from the beginning of time.
 - And we see several significant points which Jesus shows us through the use of the creation narrative.
 - However, before we expound any further, we must begin by recognizing that **God sets the terms, definitions, and pronouns in every case.**

- The first point that we must recognize, beyond the fact that God created marriage and established marriage, **is the confines of the marriage. (Exclusivity)**
 - God’s establishment of marriage exclusively belongs to one man and one woman. (Monogamy)
 - **Meaning that God’s definition of marriage is between one biological male and one biological female.**
 - And anything outside of this definition does not meet a biblical standard of marriage.
 - God designed man and woman’s body to be joined together physically in a very clear and obvious way.
- Secondly, we see in Genesis 1:28 that God commands man and woman to “procreate and fill the earth”. **(Consummation)**
 - Each individual leaves the confines of their individual families to come together and establish a family unit of their own for the flourishing and multiplication of image bearers.
- It’s in verse 8, that Jesus mentions that God’s intent for marriage between a man and a woman was meant to be inseparable. **(Inseparability)**
 - The Creation account states that the two shall become one flesh.
 - Or to put it another way, with woman being taken from the side of man, there was a reuniting of man’s very flesh.
 - If you were to picture the image here, it is as if there is no pulling apart what was and is **“one flesh”**.
- Lastly, we see in verse 9, Jesus mentions that what God has joined together, “let no man separate”
 - In other words, marriage is for life and the one-flesh relationship is not a man-made connection but rather a God-established connection.
 - Paul himself makes this emphatic point, not of himself, but rather from the Lord, in 1 Corinthians 7:10:

1 Corinthians 7:10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife is not to leave her husband.

- The New Testament canon speaks to this expectation of unyielding commitment and inseparability between a husband and a wife.
 - So what does this understanding of marriage from the parameters of scripture show us?
 - Well, it gives us two distinct components of biblical marriage that we must recognize regarding His teaching on marriage and divorce.
 - We must first recognize that marriage is a covenant relationship (exchange of vows) established between one man and one woman.
 - After that covenant relationship (vow exchange) is done, the one-flesh relationship can be established.
 - However, it is important that we make clear that these 2 aspects of biblical

marriage are distinct and one is not dependent upon the other.

- In other words, it is possible to have a marriage covenant yet not consummate the marriage.
- And it is possible to establish a one-flesh relationship without a marriage covenant.
- Therefore, marriage is not established because someone engaged in pre-marital sex. This is deemed as fornication in scripture and is such because no covenant is formed.
 - However, sex outside of the context of marriage is deemed a one-flesh relationship.
 - Paul makes this statement in 1 Corinthians 6:15-16:

1 Corinthians 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are parts of Christ? Shall I then take away the parts of Christ and make them parts of a prostitute? Far from it!

1 Corinthians 6:16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “The two shall become one flesh.”

- Paul makes clear here that any joining of the flesh with one, whether it be a one-night stand or a constant fling, it constitutes as a one-flesh relationship.
 - And because the two engaged in this activity are not married, by God, it is deemed a sin.
 - The flip-side of this coin also holds true: One can be married yet for whatever reason, whether death or “fill in the blank”, are not able to establish a one-flesh relationship.
 - The marriage covenant is intact however the one-flesh relationship was not.
 - During the 1st century, the betrothal period could take up to a year.
 - **So what we see is two things; a marriage covenant is formed by an exchange of vows and a one-flesh relationship is formed through a physical union.**
 - **I pray we recognize the weightiness of marriage and its implications when not done God’s way.**
 - Marriage is something beyond seeking to be happy. The purpose of marriage points to the exaltation of God!
 - This inseparable union speaks to God’s commitment to the believer. That despite the trials of life, God is faithfully committed to Himself and His work in you and me.
 - I want to make mention here that there may be some who have experienced divorce or may be going through a divorce.
 - I want to pause here for a moment and say that when we have a true picture of Christ, we can rest in His grace knowing that there is forgiveness in Him and restoration through Him.
 - If there are some considering marriage, seek wise counsel and discipleship as you

choose to enter courtship.

- Because the ramification of a lack of understanding the purpose of marriage and the meaning of marriage can cause harm to the family, community, and societal dynamic.
- Within our culture today, we see the rise of divorce rates and the devastation in which sin has wreaked havoc within families and communities.
 - My prayer through this teaching is that we recognize the seriousness of marriage and the casualties of divorce.
- So Mark's Gospel is making the point here that the certificate of divorce is not to be used as a means of excuse to get out of marriage because of a liberal view of marriage, but rather it was allowed for the sake of prevention and protection because of our sin.
 - **Friends, God allowing the certificate of divorce was an extension of God's grace despite us.**
- It is after Jesus completes this conversation with the Pharisees that we see a switch in setting and audience.
 - Mark doesn't provide us the details here as he is providing big picture action points for the reader.
 - And it is in verse 10-12 that Jesus **restates** His teaching with the disciples in private.

Mark 10:10 And in the house the disciples again began questioning Him about this.

Mark 10:11 And He *said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;

Mark 10:12 and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

- Mark states in verse 10 that Jesus and the disciples were in "the house" when the disciples began questioning Jesus on divorce and marriage, based upon Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees.
 - The text does not give any suggestion as to whose house it is and whose house is not of importance here.
 - **What is of importance is that the setting changes from a public forum to a private dialogue.**
 - It seems as if the disciples were inquiring more about this profound statement regarding marriage and divorce based upon God's authority.
 - What we must keep in mind here is that up to this point the disciples were inundated with the teachings of the religious leaders of that day.
 - And with that it was safe to assume that they were accustomed to the discussions of divorce, remarriage, and the various views depending upon the rabbinical school of thought.
 - However, as we peek behind the curtains, if you will, through the pages of Matthew's gospel, we see that this is a moment in which the disciples

understood the weightiness of this matter.

- So, to better understand Mark's brevity here, I would like to turn our attention to Matthew 19:10-11.

Matthew 19:10 The disciples ***said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”**

Matthew 19:11 But He said to them, **“Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.**

- It's clear that the disciples' eyes were open, and their minds understood what Jesus was saying.
 - **Divorce violates God's divine institution of marriage.**
 - And the disciples' response to the severity of the matter was, it would be better for one not to marry.
 - In other words, because of the one-flesh relationship the implication of becoming “one” with another, unless by the death of one's spouse, one is not to be remarried. (It constitutes as adultery)
 - Jesus makes it clear in verses 11-12 that divorce and remarriage are deemed adultery before the Lord's eyes.
 - And although Matthew's gospel provides an exception clause, the **goal** would be to do everything you possibly can, **within means**, to avoid divorce.
 - As I think through God's commitment to His own people, Hosea the prophet comes to mind.
 - God makes Hosea marry a prostitute to demonstrate His faithfulness to sinful Israel.
 - **If that is not a picture of *He'sed* (covenant faithfulness), I don't know what is?**
 - Lastly, you may notice that Mark's ending here is unique from Matthew's, in that Mark's gospel speaks to the wielding of divorce from either the husband or the wife.
 - And this is found in Mark's gospel due to the audience he is writing to.
 - For within Roman society, the women had a right to divorce their husbands as well.
 - So, Mark is making it clear, through Jesus' words, that for one to divorce their spouse and remarry, with the exception of indecency, it is deemed as adultery.
 - So, what do we see from Jesus' teaching on divorce:
 - 1. If divorce occurs before a one-flesh relationship has been established, then marriage is permissible.
 - 2. If divorce happens after a one-flesh relationship has been established, remarriage is not possible.
 - 3. And should we choose to remarry after a one-flesh relationship has been established, we commit adultery.

- As we close tonight, I want to again recognize the weightiness of this teaching on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage.
 - I pray that on one hand we recognize the holiness of God's divine institution.
 - As well as being able to witness God's grace for us all.
- As our founding Pastor Stephen Armstrong mentioned through his teaching on this matter in Matthew 19A, I too tread lightly and desire to provide grace in this space.
 - The reality is we have all fallen short of the glory of God and are in need of His grace and provision.
 - Yet we must remain uncompromised in the truth of His word.
- We all are in need of God's grace and as long as we are in this world we will need to seek constant forgiveness.
 - We must keep in the forefront of our minds and hearts the reality that God must hold the reigns of our marriages.
 - If you are considering marriage, this may be an opportunity to pray and seek counsel to walk you through the process of what marriage is, practically.
 - For those who are engaged, this is an opportunity for you to walk through your pre-marital counseling, seriously.
 - For those on the brink of divorce, I encourage you to remember God's commitment to you even in your shortcomings, failures, and faults.
- And for those who are hearing this, and like the disciples said in Matthew's gospel, "It would be better that those who are not married to stay single", I would encourage you to pray.
 - Has the Lord indeed called you to singleness permanently or not?
 - Singleness for a season is different than singleness for a lifetime.
 - For singleness is a gift of the Spirit as we see in context in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7.
- I pray that we all recognize the weightiness of marriage and as we pursue it that we pursue it as Christ pursued us.
 - Let's Pray.