

Matthew 19:1-11
Christian Marriage
Sunday September 25th, 2022

This week I watched a video of an old couple who had been married 70 years and were being interviewed. The first question they were asked was, “Do you every argue?”. The man answered, “Yes, why just this morning.”

“How was it settled,” asked the interviewer. The old man bent over and kissed his bride in response.

The next question to me I thought rather odd after that first one, but the interviewer asked if they ever thought of divorce. The old man said, “No, never.” The old women said, “Divorce no. Murder yes.”

Today I am teaching about Christian marriage from the words of Jesus as found in Matthew, which seems like he’s talking more about divorce than marriage, but deep truth from God in the words of Christ are found there.

You might remember during the pandemic I wrote a blog to bring hope and light to others. I kept it up until I and my creativity was exhausted. I want to share a relevant one here today, which was blog 43.

On Aug. 13th, 2020, around 1:30pm my mom passed peacefully in her sleep into the arms of Jesus. As I wrote earlier, it was her 3rd birthday, her birthday into heaven. I stayed with her body about 2 hours until the Adair’s mortuary got there to take care of her body. In the meantime, the hospice nurse came by to pronounce her dead.

I had prayed with her, some of the Forum staff prayed with her and spoke to me and then I did one of the most touching things of the whole experience. With the help of the hospice nurse, I took off her wedding ring that had hardly left her finger for 65 years. She celebrated 63 years

of marriage with my dad and then lived 2 years beyond his death. He died at 98.

As I reflected on this experience the scripture from Genesis came to mind that Jesus also quoted, **“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”** Gen. 2:24

They were a living witness to the truth of this verse. Their “one flesh” was incarnated in my brothers and me and my sister. It was with great tenderness I took off that ring. It was indeed **“an outward and visible symbol of an inward and spiritual grace signifying to all the uniting of my mom and dad in holy matrimony”** as their wedding vows said. This ring will one day be given to my sister representing 2 lifetimes of commitment and faith.” I gave the ring to my sister this last summer when my family gathered to bury my mom’s ashes.

The truth of the matter is that my mom was married 68 years. 63 years to my dad and 5 years to another man who had an adulterous relationship with alcohol. My mom divorced him because God calls us to peace as she found in counseling.

What we see in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, which Jesus quoted, **“that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’** and said, **‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’!**

So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

What we see here is how God the Creator intended marriage to be. Marriage for Adam and Eve was an exclusive relationship. There was no one to commit adultery with, but sin still managed to divide and bring on the first marital argument.

Adam blames Eve. Eve blames the snake and they both run and hide and try to cover up with the most miserable itchy thing I could think of touching that part of any human body-fig leaves.

Shame, regret, and broken relationship come into Creation, and part of this sermon will be on how to have an argument without having to resort to divorce or murder.

God intended marriage to be an exclusive relationship between a man and a woman. That was God's intention from the beginning and then sin, separation, and lust came in. Jewish traditions and ancient cultures added to God's original plan for marriage, extramarital relationships such as "concubines" and "polygamy".

Here Jesus rules those out for Christians by calling his current audience and all who read his words back to God's original intention. One man, one woman exclusively in one relationship with each other.

This sets aside for Christians other types of "marriage" such as 'polyamorous', polygamous "spiritual" marriages, marriages to "Mother Earth". I have read of men consummating such "marriages" and can only imagine how painful that would be. And here is where I get into trouble today, Jesus rules out "same sex" marriages. God the Creator's intention from the beginning from the words of Christ here today are that a Christian marriage is between a man and a woman.

Now "one flesh", "the two shall become one flesh". What does that mean. It actually refers to more than just sexual relations. Even though God is the Creator and through our sexuality has made us "procreators". To be "one flesh" is more than having sex and producing children.

It refers to a unity of what I call the four "Ps": **Physical, personalities, purpose, and parenting**. A married Christian couple completes each other in their mission together in this world for Christ. It's not just that the man or the woman is completed in the relationship, both are. When a Christian man and woman marry, they create the world's smallest church, which is the building block for the Church Universal.

The bride and groom become part of the Bride of Christ—The Church whose consummation is in the New Heaven and Earth after the Resurrection of the Dead.

In my series on the DNA of the Bible I spoke of the DNA of the Bible being Covenant and Kingdom. When we enter into a Covenant with God we then enter into the Kingdom of God. We have invitation and challenge. We also have relationship and responsibility.

DNA of the Bible	
Covenant	Kingdom
Invitation	Challenge
Relationship	Responsibility

In this story we see the **first covenant** that God instituted with humankind. God invited the two of them into “relationship” by creating them and their “responsibility” was to be fruitful and multiply and take care of the Garden.

“The Jewish term for marriage was *Kiddushin*. *Kiddushin* meant “*sanctification or consecration*.” It was used to describe something which was dedicated to God as his exclusive and peculiar possession.

Anything totally surrendered to God was *kiddushin*. That meant that in marriage the husband was consecrated to the wife, and the wife to the husband. The one became the exclusive possession of the other, as much as an offering became the exclusive possession of God.

That is what Jesus meant when he said that for the sake of marriage a man would leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife; and that is what he meant when he said that husband and wife became so totally one that they could be called one flesh. That was God’s ideal of marriage as the old Genesis story saw it and that is the ideal that Jesus restated.” Barclay Matthew Vol. 2, p. 236

Marriage is under attack, especially the Christian concept of marriage-one man, one woman. Sex is being divorced from marriage. Couples are moving in with each other without any marriage commitment, which leave both at the whims of the other sticking around. Those that move in together before marriage are actually at a higher risk of divorce than those that don’t.

The busyness of the world pulls couples, parents and families apart. I will speak more to that next week.

This exchange of Jesus with the Pharisees was not just a theological exercise. They were trying to trap Jesus with a charge they could bring to King Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded for opposing his adulterous marriage to his brother's wife. Just as they tried to get Jesus into trouble with their question about taxes, Jesus referred them back to the creation story and reminded them human beings were made in the image of God. And God had an original intention for men and women.

So, Jesus in this exchange with the Pharisees who were trying to trap him in his words and get him killed, Jesus was redefining marriage in that day and age and for the ages to come. He did this by referring back to God's first intention for marriage, which has been lost again today.

Divorce for Jewish men in Jesus' day was too easy. Verse 3 in the NRSV version reads, **"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for ANY CAUSE?"** In the Jewish tradition men could divorce women, but women could not divorce men. Women were in an utterly inferior position at that time and Jesus was correcting that. Women were treated so badly that one school of Jewish thought led by one rabbi in Jesus' day said a man could divorce his wife simply if he found someone prettier that he liked better. That's all nothing more and she was out the door.

What Jesus the Christ was saying to them was if you love following the law so well and doing what the law says then here it is, 'if you treat marriage and your wife so casually and divorce and remarry you are an adulterer in the eyes of the law.' You don't get off that easy. Adultery breaks one of the 10 commandments.

Divorce was so common in Jesus' day that his disciples were concerned that they might soon sin if they married which is why they make the statement, **"If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."** They caught Jesus' message very clearly.

Take your marital relationship seriously! As God says in Malachi 2:16, “I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel,”

But still our hearts are hard. We live in a fallen world, and many have divorced. As I said, my own mom was divorced. And many marriages are very troubled. The answer to that is to seek wisdom. Seek counseling when times are hard. There are other choices besides divorce and murder.

On Page 5 in our bulletin, you will find what I call “Rules for Fair Fighting”. If you are human and live in this world you will get into arguments. The question is how do you argue without damaging the relationship? I learned these by going to counseling myself.

If you follow these, you will save yourself lots of time and money that I have already spent. Number 3 took me a lot of time to learn not to do. Let’s go over them. These work in the marriages as well as in the Church and the world. I wish politicians would learn and use them especially number one.

Rules for Fair Fighting

- 1. Attack the problem—not the person.** Do not personally attack the other person. Don’t question the other person’s intelligence, character, understanding, family background, upbringing etc. Avoid personal attacks which include mocking.
- 2. No name calling.** Treat one another with the utmost respect.
- 3. No “sandbagging”.** Address the current problem. “Sandbagging” is storing up a whole series of past grievances in a “bag” and hitting someone over the head with them when “finally provoked”. Do not bring up past incidents. Do not use statements like “you always”, “you never”. As issues come up, deal with them one at a time as they come up. If you don’t deal with them at the time, or in a reasonable “cooling off time”, forget them!

4. **Forgive one another's trespasses and forget them.** (If you do remember them, don't bring them up! This helps with rule 3!)

5. **Speak in terms of "I", "I feel", "I think", "I feel when..."**. Statements like "you make me so mad, sad etc..." are not true and not helpful. I am going to tell you something that will astonish some. No one can make you mad or angry. Anger is a choice. So, statements like "I feel like _____ when you _____" are truthful and helpful. No one can make us mad, sad, angry, helpless, etc. We choose to have and express these feelings. Any questions give me a call.

Marriage is good for us. It is a gift. It is what God intended for most human beings from the beginning. Vs 12 about "eunuchs" is meant for some, but for most of us God intends for us to be married. Men live longer. Married couples are usually more financially successful than others. Families in mission is how God wants us to approach the world.



I want to close with this photo of Howard and Mary Lou Young from last Sunday's worship and celebration of our 90+ year olds. To me this is a very touching photo. For 70 years they have lived out their wedding vows: "to have and to hold, for better for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health."

They have been and are a family in mission as the sign above their head says, and it says it for all of us as we leave this sanctuary today, "You are now entering your mission field."

What is God saying to you and what are you going to do?

In Jesus' name, Amen!