

Luke 16:18; Mt. 19:1-9; Marriage and the Law I. Marriage in the Beginning II. Marriage after Sin III. Marriage and its End

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, last week we saw that Jesus did not come to destroy or abolish the Law- but rather He came to fulfill and properly apply the Law. We noted that there are two errors to be avoided- either the denial and rejection of the law or the embrace and trust in the Law's ability to save. Both legalism and antinomianism try to remove the Law from the character and grace of God. Jesus continues this focus on the proper application of the Law by applying the 7th commandment today. When the OT Law says- you shall not commit adultery- what does that mean for us and our marriages today? In considering marriage, we are going to take a step back to consider the topic of marriage in the context of the New Covenant as a whole.

Although v. 18 seems to be out of context since it has nothing to do with money as the previous and following parable do. We will see that Jesus is applying the Law of the Kingdom to His people- the same law that will not pass away spoken of in the previous verse. So today we see that Jesus applies the Law to our marriages. With this theme: Jesus Christ defends marriage from the destructive teaching of man.

I. Marriage in the Beginning

We start in our first point by highlighting the contrast between the teaching of man and the teaching of Christ concerning marriage. Jesus is going to elevate marriage to its proper position of respect as He takes the Law and shows us how it still applies to those who are in His kingdom. In our first reading from Mt. 19 we found these same Pharisees coming to Jesus with a question- can a man divorce his wife for any cause? It is helpful to remember that during this time, there were various school of thought concerning the OT Law. In Dt. 24, a man may send his wife away with a certificate of divorce if he finds "some indecency" in her. Now the religious schools of that day expanded upon this OT law- and gave Dt. 24 a very broad application. For example, if your wife loses her beauty in your eyes, she has become indecent and you can divorce her. Or if your wife spoils a dish- messing up a meal- she has become indecent in your eyes- and you can divorce her. So in Jesus day, divorce was an option for almost any slight or imagined offense. The destructive teaching of man had turned this institution into a hallow shell- forsaking the spirit of the Law. Don't we find the same thing today? You can divorce for any reason- with a no-fault divorce. We are simply incompatible it is said. I do not love him

anymore. But Jesus reigns in this errant view of marriage by highlighting the glory and foundation of this establishment- He is going to re-apply the Law properly. What God has joined together, let no man separate! From the beginning, divorce was not a part of marriage. In Mt. 19, Jesus brings his hearers back to the Garden. When God made man from the dust of the ground, he saw man's need. Marriage was meant to be for our good- to be a blessing to those who enter into it. During the creation week in the opening chapters of Genesis, you will find 6 times that God says- it was good. And when you read of man's creation, you expect to read- it was good- but instead you find that something is not good! It was not good for man to be alone, so God created a helper suitable. Marriage is a good, blessing from God. The marital union is designed to bring joy, blessing, encouragement and fulfillment. When God brings two together, this new state is one to be received from God's hand. The first marriage takes place before the fall- Eve was made for Adam- a perfect fit that speaks to their compatibility. Not only does God made the man and his wife one, He also shares a portion of His Spirit with them- making their union a spiritual covenant. And as such, it needs to be defended and protected from attack. In fact- as Mt. 19:5 puts it, the two become one and these cleave or cling to each other. It is a union where the former no longer remains the same- no longer separate and individuals- but a family and a united pair. Thus, to break this pair- to divide this unit- to separate this union is to attack and undo what God has done. Malachi 2 states it this way- I, the LORD, hate divorce. So Jesus is taking the Law- protecting it from man's false application- applying it to the church by stating- God makes them one in marriage- and they should not be separated. As the 7th commandment states- you shall not commit adultery. So Jesus says in Luke 16- whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. Jesus is making it clear; marriage was designed by God to be a life- long, monogamous union. One man and one woman becoming one flesh. The application is clear- anything that attacks or undermines our marriage is to be guarded against! Put a priority on your marriage because it is from God- and it is for your good! There is such peace and stability in knowing that your spouse will remain one with you – that they are seeking your good! God has chosen to bless you with a spouse, so be faithful to the wife of your youth. Do not break the covenant that you have made before God and His people. So Jesus is defending the high view of marriage as it was meant to be.

II. Marriage after Sin

But that is not all we read about marriage. As it was first revealed in Dt. 24, the Law comes to us in the context of our sin. Although God hates divorce, the fact is we live in a sinful society and we struggle against sin within. It is because of hard hearts that divorce is a reality, even within the church as Mt. 19:8 states. Although it is a sad testament to state of our world- and the sin that so easily entangles, Jesus does give us an exception clause in Mt. 19:9. To divorce your spouse and marry another is to commit adultery- except on the grounds of sexual immorality. In other words, Jesus acknowledges the fact that if one of the members of the marriage commits a sexual transgression- sleeping with someone who is not their spouse- that marital union has been disrupted. Sexual intercourse- or the marital bed- is a sign of the unity that God brings to those who are married. However, if one the partners introduces a 3rd member into this union- the bond may have been broken beyond repair. In such a case, divorce is allowed. If you spouse commits this sexually immoral act, you are free to sue for divorce. To commit adultery is to leave one partner and to choose to live and sleep with another. Divorce simply acknowledges what has already been done- making legal and visible the shattered union that has already been broken. So if one of the partners is sexually unfaithful- as Jesus states in Mt. 19:9- divorce is allowed. In I Cor. 7 we read of a second situation where divorce may occur. If one spouse becomes a Christian while the other does not- and the unbeliever refuses to live peaceably with the believing spouse- than the believer is free to divorce. As I Cor. 7:15 puts it, if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so, you are not enslaved, God has called you to peace. So in this instance, one member of the marriage is a Christian and the other is not. This spiritual inequality causes a division and the unbeliever refuses to live at peace. So the unbeliever is destroying the life- refusing to live peaceably- and in a situation like this the believer may separate. These are the two, biblical grounds for divorce within the church- and both situations are found in the context of great, hard- hearted sin. But to be clear- Jesus in our text of Luke 16 wants us to remember that divorce is the exception and should not be common. The rule and law remains- marriage was designed to be life long- until death parts.

III. Marriage and its End

But this phrase- until death do us part- is itself a limit, isn't it? Because not only does divorce break this union- death breaks this union! Here again, we see that marriage changed after the fall. Before the fall, death would

not have been an issue. As Rom. 7:2 puts it, a married person is bound to their spouse as long as they live. This bonding union is broken when one of these married ones die. This truth helps us to put our marriage in the proper perspective. The fact remains, every earthly marriage is a temporary one. Death breaks this union- so there must be something more foundational than this marital union. As wonderful, joyful and encouraging our earthly marriages may be, they are not able to bear the weight of eternity. As Jesus taught the Pharisees in Mt. 22, when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. Rather they will be like the angels. So we will not be married to each other when Christ returns on that last day. However, there is a marriage that will last. Rev. 19 speaks of the marriage between the church and Christ, our head. This marriage supper of the Lamb will take place on that last day, and will last for eternity. You see, Jesus is the centre of this world. By Him, through Him and for Him all things were made. The Law and the prophets spoke about Him. But even the 7th commandment and our earthly marriages speak about Him as well! This is the marvelous mystery that Paul speaks of. The reason that divorce is so tragic is because it speaks a lie about Christ. Christ will never divorce nor forsake His bride! It is impossible for those joined to Christ by this holy marriage to be separated! Not even death can separate Christ from His bride! In fact, death hastens their union! The ultimate joy and expectation of God`s people is not limited to an earthly, joyful but passing union. Rather our firm comfort and lasting joy are found in our eternal and lasting union that we already have with Christ! That fact that our earthly marriages are a picture of Christ and His church- as Eph. 5 puts it- reveals the important of how we live in this momentary marital union. We are committed to this earthly union- because it is both a picture and a foretaste of the union that is to come!

To conclude, the institution of marriage is under attack today. Not only with the rights of marriage being extended to non-biblical unions- but also by the breaking of marriage with non-biblical divorce. Jesus Christ defends marriage from the destructive teaching of man by rightly apply the Law. Let our church and our homes be places of peace as we live in the union God has given us- for what God has joined together, let no man separate!