**Kingdom Alimony**

Matthew 5:31 It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **32**But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Tonight we touch on a very tricky, touchy subject. It is a subject that permeates the lives of a large number of those listening and a large number of this generation. In America, anywhere from about 40-50% of first marriages end in divorce. Around 60-67% of second marriages end in divorce. Over 70% of third marriages end in divorce. A lifetime marriage is no longer the norm. Marriage is no longer held in as high regard as it used to be. There are people that intentionally don’t get married because they know it demands a commitment to their word.

Jesus just used the phrase “You have heard it said” about adultery and anger, and now uses it here of divorce. It seems anger and adultery are not the only things that had been twisted in the theology of the Pharisees. Here, Jesus is bringing clarity to the Old Testament teachings on divorce.

In the Old Testament law divorce due to adultery is not mentioned, and it is obvious why it is not: the punishment for adultery was death, so that took care of the marriage problem. Nothing needed to be said about it. The marriage was over because the adulterer was dead. The issue we find in the Old Testament is that men were divorcing their wives not just for adultery, but for any and every reason. If they were simply sick and tired of their wife they would get rid of her. If they got sick of her cooking they would get rid of her. If they discovered secrets of her checkered past, they would get rid of her. If she started displaying signs of barrenness, he might rid himself of her and find himself someone who will give him kids.

God commanded Moses to command the men to produce a certificate of divorce if they chose to divorce their wife (Deuteronomy 24) This action was actually taken to protect the wife. The automatic assumption of society was that if a man divorced his wife she had done something horrible such as adultery or something else indecent. But now this certificate protected the woman by declaring the reason for the divorce no matter how silly it sounded. If a man divorced his wife because he didn’t like her cooking that was placed on the certificate. So now there was no shame on her.

On top of this, the Mosaic Law declared that a man that divorced his wife could not take her again as his wife later on, establishing this truth: Marriage is not a fluid thing—you can’t just walk in and out of it when you want. Marriage is a commitment; it always has been. It is not like a dating relationship where you are testing the waters to see if this person is a reasonable choice. No, a marriage is meant to be final. You are to stand on your word with marriage. The vows you make at the beginning of marriage are for life. There’s no wedding that has ever suggested any differently. It is far easier to run from problems than to face them, and it is far easier to run from a chaotic marriage than towards it.

See this constant, chaotic departure from marital commitments had become so commonplace because marriage was not held in high regard. Moses sought to fix that problem and bring marriage back into its rightful place—a place of honor. How simpleminded and undisciplined people we are when we waver in and out of commitment! The Pharisees took this command to write a woman a certificate of divorce as license to divorce a woman for any reason as long as the man gave her a certificate. They taught and believed that men could treat women this way if they felt like it. Jesus was confronted with this question later on in His ministry:

Matthew 19:3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?” **4**He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5**and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? **6**So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” **7**They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” **8**He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. **9**And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Jesus makes it very clear that Moses was not giving everyone license to divorce their wife for any reason, rather He was bringing order to this chaotic situation and protecting the women at the mercy of these men. Jesus establishes that from the beginning Jesus established marriage as

**Between a Man and a Woman, A Holy Union, Lifetime Commitment**

**Between a Man and A Woman**

Some people say Jesus never addressed homosexuality. Right here are His own words on the matter. From the beginning it was established that marriage was between two genders, not two of the same.

**A Holy Union**

Both the Mosaic Law and the Words of Jesus really affirm this truth: Marriage is a sacred thing! And because God created it He considers it sacred. God established marriage as the first institution. It was founded into being through Adam and Eve and for ages since marriage has been a part of the world. Marriage is holy and sacred because it represents an even holier union: Christ and His Church.

**Lifetime Commitment**

Jesus said: “What God has brought together let no man separate” (Matthew 19:6) It is not something we just go in and out of like dating relationships. It is not God’s will that anything He has brought together be torn apart.

Jesus establishes only one legitimate cause of divorce: fornication, sexual immorality—as some put it “marital unfaithfulness”. Most scholars and pastors agree that linguistically speaking we can also place physical abuse under that banner of unfaithfulness to one’s spouse. Physical abuse that puts you in danger is a valid reason to leave a marriage relationship.

Jesus’ message about divorce is about so much more than divorce. Jesus’ words on divorce restore dignity to women. A lot of people in the world today claim the Bible is misogynistic and sexist against women. But the words of Jesus demonstrate the exact opposite. How undignified and shameful it would be as a woman to be tossed around from man to man because they could dispose of you like expired food.

Women are not toys, to be played with until you are too old for them. They are not tools that get old and worn down to be replaced. They are people, they are made in man’s image who is made in God’s image. They have worth and value as human beings. Why is it wrong to sleep around then? Because women are not objects—they are not toys, they are not made for our pleasure, but for our help. Women were not made for man’s pleasure but for our help.

Really, all these truths about marriage—Between Man and Woman, A Holy Union, and Lifetime Commitment, even the dignity and worth of women—these were not things Jesus introduced in the world when He came. They were already established by God in the Law and Prophets, but Jesus came to fulfill the Law and Prophets. He is bringing people back to God’s first design. This is not a new teaching—it’s a return to the old teaching that had been forgotten, trampled on and abused.

As teenagers, you may consider tonight’s message irrelevant to you. It is easy to look at it and scoff, knowing it may be ten years before marriage is even a question for you. You may even scoff, thinking marriage will never be an option for you—to each their own. But in reality, it is relevant for two reasons. One—because if marriage is something you strive for in the future, doing it right and understanding God’s will for it is important. Second—if anything it helps us stand on the principle of keeping our vows, sticking to our words, and being honorable, honest people.

Furthermore, for those who have been victim to the struggles of divorce: Where things do not turn out the way God originally intended, however, there is still hope. There is healing for those who have felt the pain of divorce. There is healing for those who have felt the pain of broken covenants. We established a few weeks ago that Jesus is the Master of restoring broken things. Even if that broken relationship or marriage is not restored, God can and does restore broken hearts.