

Sermon on the Mount: Jesus Speaks About Divorce

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus teaches that marriage is a divine institution and should not be broken, except in the case of marital unfaithfulness.

Duration: 53:27

Scripture: Matthew 5:31-32

Topics: "Sermon on the Mount"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the painful subject of divorce and the dissolution of marriage. He emphasizes the importance of honoring marriage as a divine institution and following God's instructions. The preacher acknowledges the prevalence of divorce in society and expresses sympathy for those who are suffering. He urges listeners to face the reality of life and to seek peace and harmony with God by adhering to His teachings on marriage. The sermon references Matthew chapters 5 and 19, where Jesus addresses the subject of divorce.

Transcript

The Christmas season requires that we should be deviating from our Sunday morning diet in the Sermon on the Mount, and that we should concentrate a little while on the wondrous gift of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Well now we are back to, shall I say, normal again, and we return to our studies in the Sermon on the Mount, and the subject before us today is a very heart-rending subject. I doubt whether we shall ever have to discuss a more painful subject than that of the dissolution of marriage.

Will you turn with me in the first place to Matthew chapter 5, verses 31 and 32. It has been said, anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery.

And anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery. I previously read from Matthew chapter 19 because, as you will realize, our Lord addressed himself to this subject on at least these two occasions, and perhaps it is necessary for us to consider the subject in its reasonable wholeness and not simply the more cryptic, confined statement that we have there in Matthew chapter 5. Now it is incumbent upon us to face life wholly, in its totality, and unfortunately we are living in a day when the prevalence of the dissolution of marriage is something that we meet on all hands. I tell you I'm exceedingly nervous in taking

this subject today.

I don't know that I've ever felt more nervous in the pulpit. I'll tell you why. On the one hand I have become so acutely aware of the pain and of the anguish that is involved in this area.

Never before in my life have I had any idea, such as I have today, of the measure of suffering and pain that is abroad due to things that go wrong within marriage. But on the other hand, you see, there is the will of God for marriage, and there is the revelation of God concerning marriage, what it was meant to be, and the manner in which we are to enter marriage if that is the Lord's will for us. And so the preacher who is going to try to expound the Scriptures must be sympathetic with those who are suffering, and yet loyal to God in what he declares.

And I find this is today somewhat difficult. I covet your prayers, therefore, that I shall be loyal as a pastor, and yet supremely loyal as one who attempts to expound not my own ideas, nor perhaps what some of us would like to hear, but what the Scriptures say. And I trust that there will be no hardness in my voice, for there is certainly no hardness in my heart toward those who are facing these very, very harrowing issues in their marriage.

We come then to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you will notice that he addressed this subject at least on two occasions. One, in the course of the Sermon on the Mount he made this rather concise statement. No one asked him to, it just apparently came out in the course of his address.

In Matthew chapter 19, however, our Lord is answering a question. As a matter of fact, it was a trick question. People were there to cause him to trip, or to try to cause him to trip.

But perhaps we should in some measure thank them that they did try to trip our Lord, because in the attempt they brought out this larger exposition of this subject. And so our Lord Jesus spoke of divorce in a way that he had not done in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Now taking these two passages together then, what have we from the lips of the Son of God? I think we have three main statements with many subsidiary statements alongside of them.

Now first of all, our Lord reminded the people that he was addressing in Matthew 19 of the divine plan and purpose for marriage. And it is absolutely basic that we should be mindful of this when we come to consider divorce. Divorce must not be looked at simply as an exigency in life, something that we are faced with now and we don't know any other path to take than this.

Rather we must consider possible divorce, and insofar as we are thinking about it and theoretically considering it, we must see it against the backdrop of the divine intention for marriage. That's the context in which it is to be considered. And so this is what our Lord did when the Pharisees asked him the question, is it right, is it right to divorce one's wife? Notice what they said, for any and every reason our Lord outlined the divine plan for them and that is the answer to their question.

Haven't you read, he replied, 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, therefore what God has joined together let man not separate. What God has joined let man not separate.

Now let's examine that statement just a little. There you will see in the first place that marriage is a divine institution. Our Lord stresses that.

Marriage was ordained by God the Creator at the creation. Indeed it was in his mind, as I'm going to say in a moment's time, before the creation. But from the creation it was an institution of God the Creator.

Marriage did not originate with man, not with the sociologists or the psychologists or the theologians or the philosophers or anybody else. Marriage originated in the mind and in the heart of God Almighty, holy, just and merciful and altogether good. It is not a mere matter of culture.

It is not a mere matter of convenience. It is not a concession for human passion. God ordained the institution.

Secondly, marriage was envisaged by God before the creation of man. Marriage was no afterthought when man had been created and woman had been created. No, no, no.

God made us male and female with a view to marriage. This is exceedingly wonderful. It means that before anything was brought into existence by the fiat of an omnipotent God, God in communing with himself had purposed that men should be made male and female with a view to marriage.

Marriage was considered in eternity and God determined there before anything was made that was made that he would make his creatures male and female and endow them therefore with capacities to become one flesh, male and female. And there without my dwelling upon it is the divine condemnation of so-called homosexual marriages. It is not and was not in the purpose of God.

Thirdly, marriage involves, if I may quote the language of the King James Version, which is very graphic here I think, marriage involves a leaving and a cleaving. It's easy to remember, isn't it? Leaving and a cleaving. And I think we can add a third, a becoming.

A leaving and a cleaving and a becoming. And you need the three ingredients in a marriage properly constituted. Adam and Eve were husband and wife and you have the first family unit.

Now as I understand it, our Lord Jesus is saying here that whom God has joined together as man and wife let no man put asunder. But notice, the child of a marriage is permitted to break the family tie. The child of a marriage is permitted to break the family unit and break out of it and join himself to a member of the opposite sex from another family and form another family unit.

The father and mother should not do that. But the children of the marriage, the offspring of the marriage may choose a member of the opposite sex belonging to another family and the two may come together and be joined by God in marriage and they become an altogether different unit. A leaving, a cleaving, a becoming.

In order thus to become the husband or the wife in a new unit, social unit, it is necessary that we should leave the nest where we were born. And this does not mean to say that we turn our backs on mum and dad completely, of course not. You have only to read the Ten Commandments for that.

There is a respect and there is an honor that is due to our parents. But nevertheless, in order to become a married man or a married woman, it is necessary for us to get away from the influence of mum and dad on both sides so that we ourselves under God determine what is right in His sight. And if we are not mature enough to leave mum and dad, we are not mature enough to marry.

There must be a leaving. But then the leaving is with a view to the cleaving to the one for whose sake you leave your home. And in the process of this cleaving to her or to him rather than to anybody else, and no third party is allowed to come in here, there is no room for three in marriage, only for two.

The only third that is welcomed is the fruit of the marriage as a child or children. There is no room for a third person. If you find a third person coming into your marriage for God's sake, for your soul's sake, for your home's sake, for your children's sake, brother, sister, stop, nip it in the bud.

You cleave, cleave, cleave in the storm and in the sunshine, cleave, cleave, cleave. And this is the way of discovery. And what happens is this.

Having left and now cleaving, there is something coming into existence and they shall become one flesh. Now this term one flesh has been unfortunately misconstrued, I think. Of course there is basically to it a physical, a sexual element.

Nothing that I'm going to say now is meant to cover that or to hide away from that. That is basic. Nevertheless, men and women have construed their term becoming one flesh as if marriage was altogether physical and sexual.

It is not. When you speak of everybody, you don't simply mean everybody. You mean every person.

If there's a bus that collides with another bus and we say everybody was hurt, we do not simply mean that their bodies may have been hurt. They may have been emotionally hurt. They may have been psychologically hurt.

We mean that the persons, the beings, the individuals were involved in the accident. So is flesh. When we read in the book of Genesis that God destroyed all flesh in the days of Noah, we do not mean that God destroyed the flesh and left the bones intact.

Now pardon me putting it as crudely as that. But I'm doing that in order to be quite clear. People were destroyed.

Our community was destroyed. The race was wiped out with a few exceptions. Not just the flesh, but the whole beings.

Now when the Bible speaks and says they shall become one flesh, it does not simply mean they will have physical intercourse. That is involved in marriage. A man's body doesn't belong to him alone after marriage, nor a woman, 1 Corinthians 7. Nevertheless, even for physical intercourse to be what it is meant to be, it has to be more than physical.

It has an emotional content. It has a psychological content. It has a spiritual content.

And our generation has had such a glut of physical experience without anything else that we are degenerating to the level of the beast. No, no, no. In order even for the physical to be what God meant it to be, it must be more than physical.

Oh let me change the language. Let me take the Pauline word which speaks of man as body, soul, and spirit. In order for you to know the oneness that marriage was meant to give, there must be a harmony and a union on these three levels.

Physical, soul, mind, intellect. You must be able to think together. If you and your wife can't think together and reason together and talk together, and look at the whole of life together and assess the situations of life together, you cannot be one.

And not only that, that is not adequate. Important as that means, if we are looking at marriage from the Christian point of view, and as God meant it to be, we must be one on the level of the spiritual. We must be both capable of hearing the voice of God through His Word, of discerning the mind of the Spirit.

We must be on the same wavelength, you see. No two people who are not on the same spiritual wavelength can know the union and the unity and the communion that lies embedded in this Word. They too shall become one flesh.

Two persons fused into one, so that when you meet the one you get the mind of the two. It doesn't matter which you meet. The two of them are one and the life of the two of them is represented by the words and the actions and the attitudes of both separately.

That's the kind of union that is envisaged here. Marriage is not to be broken. Therefore what God has joined together and made thus capable of such a deep unity and union, what God has joined together, let man not separate.

Jesus forbade the separating of two people that God had joined together as one unit. He concedes an exception. We shall come to that in a moment.

But it has to be seen as an exception. The rule is marriage should never be broken. There is an exception, Jesus said, but marriage should never be broken.

Because originally in the purpose of God it was never meant to be broken. And because it was never meant to be broken, it should not be broken. The exception, however, the exception does not abrogate the basic principle.

As a matter of fact, death alone liberates the remaining partner to envisage another such relationship. Paul is quite clear about that. Our Lord does not address himself specifically to this, but the apostle Paul does when he says, A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives.

But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes. But he must belong to the Lord. At 1 Corinthians 7.39, and he says exactly the same thing really in Romans 7.2. Marriage is thus a divine institution, not a human invention.

It is the outworking of a divine plan and not simply a recourse to human passion. It is an exclusive relationship where no one else has the right to intrude. And it brings into existence a new unit which has depth to it, a profundity to it that is beyond all telling.

And it is something that God has ordained and God has purposed. Well now, when the Pharisees heard this they had a question. Jesus said, it is not to be broken.

Well they said, why then, why then did Moses command a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away? Oh, they were ready and they thought they had a way to divide and separate our Lord Jesus from Moses and pit Moses against Jesus and Jesus against Moses and so they would have a case against Messiah. Jesus replied, Moses permitted you to divorce your wife because your hearts were hard.

But it was not this way from the beginning.

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness and marries another commits adultery. Now the immediate context here is such that there was a great division in the ancient society where Jesus was at the time, a great division between two schools of thought on divorce. I'm only going to refer to them, I'm not going to deal with them at any length, but it's important to remember this.

The Pharisees came, you see, and they came in a context where there was a raging controversy. There were two main schools of thought. Rabbi Shammai insisted that there was only one basis for divorce and that is the one given by Moses in Deuteronomy 24 verses 1 to 4. And that's what the Pharisees refer to here actually in their question.

Moses gave a bill of divorcement or a certificate of divorcement. So there was one reason and they said you must not divorce your partner, say for that one reason mentioned by Moses. But then you had the other famous school of Rabbi Hillel and he said no, no, Moses went much further than that.

And if we rightly interpret Moses, he meant that you could divorce your partner, especially a husband, his wife, for much, much lesser reasons than that. For example, he would insist that a man could divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner, if she spoke to men on the streets, if she spoke disrespectfully of her husband's parents in his presence, or if her voice was so loud that the people next door could hear her. I'm literally quoting to you.

Now, this controversy was raging and here they bring the issue to our Lord. What does he say? The Pharisees were siding, it would seem, with the more liberal side in this. And they said, tell us, they said, is it right? Is it proper? Can we really divorce our partners, our wives, for any and every reason? Now mark that, for any and every.

And what happened? Jesus replied. In reply, he first said that their question had to be corrected. They said, Moses commanded to give a certificate of divorce and to send our wives away.

No, no, says our Lord Jesus, Moses didn't do anything of the kind. He didn't command anything, he permitted. Now there's a world of difference between permission and command.

If Moses had instituted a new rule, then Moses would have been taking away from the original intention of God. No, no, says our Lord, Moses gave you permission. And let me remind you, he said, why he did so.

He did so because you were in rebellion. Because mankind is in rebellion against God. And the rebellion arising out of the hard-heartedness of human hearts, the hardness of human hearts, was so terrible, as far as the women was concerned, something had to be done to try and keep it within limits.

And so Moses said, if you divorce your wife, you must give her a bill of divorcement. If you don't do that, anything can happen to her. When she goes away from you, somebody may think that she's an adulteress and she will be stoned.

I have no time at this moment to go into all the possibilities facing a woman who was just sent out of the home without a bill of divorcement. And what Moses did was to make provision in order to make it easier for the wife if the marriage had been broken. Jesus affirms, and this is the third main point that I want to underscore.

Jesus affirmed one and only basis for divorce. Except for marital unfaithfulness. It should never take place, he says.

Now these words are in substance identical with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, verses 31 and 32. Whether you take them from Matthew 19 or Matthew 5, it really doesn't matter. They come to the same thing.

Now the question arises, what is meant by marital unfaithfulness? Now, I covet your listening here, because it's very important. Jesus used a word here, a Greek word, *pornaia*. It is translated in the NIV as marital unfaithfulness.

And in this context you will notice that it is distinguished from adultery, which is *moichai*. Now I'm just using the Greek word for you to see that there is a chasm between them. They're quite separate, quite distinct.

Jesus says there is only one basis for the dissolving of marriage, and that is *pornaia*. And if you dissolve your marriage for any other reason, you cause the partner that is sent away to commit *moichai*, which is adultery. That is, if he or she marries somebody else.

Now what does this word *pornaia* mean? Well now, what makes it a little bit difficult is this, that sometimes it includes adultery. Sometimes the New Testament plays with us, and it's not easy to distinguish with any certainty what a particular word, and sometimes a key word, really means. This is one of them.

I have been looking up all the authorities that I could lay my hands on over the last number of weeks, knowing I was coming to this text. And I am back where I was before. The word really means, it has reference to any kind of marital unfaithfulness involving something sexually wrong, inappropriate, unacceptable to God.

But sometimes, as with an unfaithful wife or an unfaithful husband, it could mean adultery. It could mean sexual relationships along with another person. But it doesn't specifically mean that.

It's wider than that. How much wider? Now that is the question. Whatever it is, it seems to be sexual in nature, and yet not necessarily as loathsome as adultery itself.

Adultery would be its extreme form. But because the church has not been able to discern exactly, precisely what it connotes, generally in the history of the church, where divorce has been conceded as right in certain cases, the church has said that it is right on the basis of adultery. But they say that in the knowledge that this word *pornaia* may mean something less than adultery, not much less, something serious, necessarily serious, because of the meaning of the word, but something slightly less than adultery.

Now then, let me come to apply all this. What is the message here? I've tried thus far simply to expound what Jesus said in these two occasions. Now, here are you and I in Knox Presbyterian Church in 1985.

What is the message of all this? What's the thrust of it for you and for me? And whether you're married or single, really it makes no difference. If you're a single person, and you're a Christian, you have a ministry to the whole world. And even if you're single today, you may not be single a year hence.

And you need to know what marriage means, and you need to know what limitations are set by our Lord. But more than that, every Christian person today, I believe, is called upon to show sympathy with those

who are in trial and in turmoil and in awful struggles on this level. And I think the church has to be mobilized as never before to meet people whose marriages are broken.

And we need to show the grace of God and the mercy of God and the kindness of God to people who have not found kindness and love anywhere else. And if they don't find it in you and in me, single or married, where in God's name are they going to find it? Now, what's the message? The basic message is this. Marriage is a divine institution that must be honored.

You see, we do not make the rules for marriage. Now, our generation doesn't like that. We like to make the rules for everything.

Oh, why can't I make the rules? After all, I'm very important, aren't you? Can't I drive on the other side of the road if I feel like it? Why should anybody tell me how to drive my car, which side of the road? Why should anyone dare tell me how to run my home? Why should anyone? Well, you see, marriage is a divine ordinance. And God has given the instructions. And it's not for me, not for you, it's for Him.

And if you want peace with God, harmony, fellowship with God, you and I have got to face what God has said about it. Now, if we've wandered from that, well, God still has grace for us. I shall come back to that before I'm through.

But ideally, we do not make the rules. Society doesn't make the rules. And you know, my friends, I hope you won't misunderstand me, but I would want to say that psychiatrists who are not Christian and basing their whole attitude on the Word of God, do not make the rules.

I find some psychiatrists to whom some of our Christians go for counseling, telling them to do things which are completely contrary to the Word of God. God makes the rules for marriage, not man. Now, why is marriage in the sight of God? This is the second thing.

I ask the question, as I'm sure you will ask it. Why does God take this high view of marriage? Why can't I change the order of it? Why can't I get rid of my wife if she doesn't please me? Well, you see, marriage is meant to serve such a high significance, such a high service, such a valued service, such a precious service for God, that He can't afford to lower the standard. Marriage is meant to be something that is so exceedingly high, it has to be as God says.

You say, what is marriage meant to perform for God? I can only mention two things. One is this. God ordained that Adam and Eve should be man and wife, in order that they should subdue the whole of nature and organize the whole of life and bring everything under the will of God together.

He found a helper suitable for Adam to subdue everything in creation and cause everything within the orbit of creation to serve the purpose of the Creator. And together they were meant to do that. Now, since that day we have had a fall, a catastrophic fall.

Man fell. God sent His Son to redeem men from sin and from the effects of the fall. Far as the curse is found, God sent His Son to deliver men back from the effects of the fall.

And the purpose of marriage is this. That you and I should still live in the society where we are and use everything that God has given us, the time God has given us, the possessions God has given us, the children God has given us, whatever God has given us, to use everything and subdue the whole of life to the kingship of Jehovah. Use everything for His glory.

And the purpose of marriage is this, that we should do it together. And a wife is meant to be the help meet of her husband in this holy high calling of subduing time and everything else within the orbit of time that it should serve the purposes of God. Second thing is this.

Oh, I'm sorry, I must add a P.S. there. You see, when God made man and wife, He made them male and female and He says that He made them thus after His image. After the image of God created He them.

And the implication is this, you see, that in order fully to represent the image of God to the world, you need man and his wife together in harmony. Now to the second point. Marriage is also meant to be a symbolic representation, an enacted parable of the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the church, the earthly bride.

I don't know whether you've ever pondered this. We say it, we use these words in the marriage ceremony. What does it mean? What does it mean? My friends, what it means is this, that here am I and my dear wife.

We are meant, we are meant to portray to the world the relationship between Jesus Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the church, the bride. We are to show such affection for one another, concern for one another. We are to be responsive to one another and the head is to be responsible for his bride.

Read Ephesians 5. Now, if you allow for divorce, the breaking up of the husband and the wife, then the parable is declaring a lie. A husband and wife is to be a parable of the relationship between the heavenly bridegroom and the bride. But the heavenly bridegroom has said that he will never leave his bride, that he will bring her home to him, that he's not going to leave her in the lurch, he's not even going to leave her in the grave at last.

He's going to gather his people home. And so there is no divorce there, you see. There is no breakup there.

And if I allow anything to separate me from my partner, I'm telling a lie to the world. See, it's important. What then, and I must hurry, what then of those who have been divorced on unscriptural grounds? Now, I want to speak here very, very clearly, but I trust helpfully.

And the first thing I want to say is this. However serious a transgression, divorce, on unscriptural grounds may be, and it cannot be less than serious in the light of what we've said, it is forgivable. It is forgivable.

It is forgivable. Now, is there anybody who hasn't heard that? The reason I ask it is that I have met some Christian people who treat divorce as if it were something that cannot be forgiven. Now, I want to thunder aloud this morning.

There is absolutely nothing in Scripture which says that. Not a thing. As a matter of fact, you will be shocked, and you check it up when you go home.

There are places in the New Testament where the Apostle Paul gives us catalogues of the worst sins in the society to whom he is writing. Romans, the end of chapter 1. Galatians, chapter 5, the works of the flesh. 1 Corinthians, chapter 6. And he's giving a catalogue of the worst sins of his day.

Shall I tell you that divorce is not found in one of them? Did you know that? Now, don't you misunderstand me when I'm saying that. I'm certain that Paul did not minimize the tragedy of divorce. But nevertheless, it

is not the sin against the Holy Spirit.

It is not the unforgivable sin. God, in his mercy, forgives. And I want to get that across this morning.

And when you come to the book of Revelation, and it comes to describe those who are finally outside the eternal city, it does not actually mention those who are guilty of unauthorized divorce. What it says is this. Outside are dogs.

Those who practice magic arts. And I know many people who practice magic arts. Who would frown down their noses at a divorced couple.

The book of Revelation says that practicing magic arts puts you outside the city. The sexually immoral. The murderers.

The idolaters. And everyone who loves and practices falsehood. The sexually immoral, of course, may be among the divorced.

But if so, the reason why they are condemned and left outside the city is because of their immorality. And you notice in the context in Matthew 5 and 19, what our Lord is concerned about is adultery and immorality. And that's what he condemns.

No, serious though divorce is in the sight of God, it is not the unforgivable sin. Brothers and sisters, do you remember the first man who sent away his wife in the Bible? Do you? Will you be surprised when I tell you it was none other than the great and saintly Abraham, who sent Hagar and her little one out of his house, believing he had the blessing of God in so doing. Was not Abraham forgiven? I tell you, Abraham became known as the friend of God, despite whatever wrong may have been in that.

And I say that in order to encourage some people here this morning, who think that the world has come to an end, because they've walked this way and they've been involved in divorce, which may not have been on the basis allowed by Jesus. But of course, in order to be forgiven, there must be repentance, and an acknowledgement of the wrong of it. And they're coming to the word of promise, which says that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all, now mark that little word, all, all unrighteousness.

And that means this too. Now those of us who have not been involved in divorce should therefore not look smugly proud, and look down upon others who may have walked this way. You know, I really have been shaken to the ground in reading the context again in the Sermon on the Mount.

Do you remember what precedes this? Jesus tells us that if we have hatred in our hearts, we have murder in the bud, in our hearts. Jesus then has said, if we look after a woman to lust after her, we have adultery in the bud, in our hearts. Now I ask you, who has not had hatred in the heart? I ask you, who here this morning has never looked at a man or a woman to lust after him or her? Therefore, you see, you and I cannot frown at somebody who not only looks, but does the corresponding deed.

We cannot do that. It is wrong in the sight of God, you say. Yes, yes, but so is what you do in the heart wrong in the sight of God.

They have broken the ideal. Yes, yes, but so have you and I broken the ideal. When you have anger, when you lose your temper, when you're uncontrollable, so too are you and I. We have all fallen short of

the glory of God and we are all sinners before God and we have no right to be proud of our sins over against somebody else's sins.

Of course, now I'm drawing to a close, but of course I must say this. It is my conviction that when once somebody in the ministry of the Word of God has found his marriage failing, especially when there has been a divorce, it is most inappropriate for that person to be conducting gospel services and particularly married services. Let me read to you from Helmut Thielicke, the German, who says, he, that is the minister, is subject to a special demand in this particular area on the ground that his message and especially his performance of marriage services threaten to become unworthy of belief coming from his mouth if his own marriage is broken.

To hear the words, till death us do part, spoken as a vow by one who himself could not or did not satisfy the obligations, can provoke offense and seriously increase the already threatening danger that the church's blessing will be misunderstood as a mere conventional ceremony. And for that reason, I think that people in public office in the Christian church, such as in the ministry, if marriage goes wrong and we cannot, by the grace of God, keep it on the right lines, we should quit. For the sake of the testimony and the purity of the church, and we should not bring dishonor upon the institution of marriage and upon our Lord by maintaining the position we have.

And lastly, since divorce other than for the one conceded cause mentioned is a serious violation of God's plan, what preparation should be given to those who are contemplating marriage? Now I can only throw out two things, but I want you to think, and I would like you to consider this matter. This is really where we should begin. You see, there must be preparation for marriage.

Two things. I have only time to refer to them. One, we must make sure that every Christian man and woman knows that it is wrong to be maritally yoked to an unbeliever.

I have no time to really discuss that, but 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 14 is absolutely conclusive there. Do not be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. It can't be.

You can't walk the same steps. You can't go in the same direction with both of your hearts in it. There's a pull apart.

The unbeliever must go one way according to his nature, and if you're a believer, you want to go another way according to your new nature. You cannot really be one, says the New Testament. And it is true to history.

It is true to experience. That's the first thing. And that's the first thing I would say.

If you are contemplating marriage, make sure that you are not tempted to be yoked together to anybody less than a Christian. But even the fact that a person is a Christian does not necessarily mean that that person was meant for you. My second point is this, and last.

The prospective partners in marriage covenant need to be spiritually mature. I hope I don't speak insultingly when I say there are many people who are not sufficiently mature for marriage. They think they are, because their concept of marriage is lower than the New Testament.

But you read the New Testament and you have to come to the conclusion they haven't grown up enough, spiritually. They're not sufficiently mature for marriage. You say, what do you mean? I mean this.

One, unless you can curb your passions outside of marriage and are a disciplined person, you're not mature enough for marriage. I won't add to that now. I will if you want to speak about it.

Not only that, you must be mature enough to forgive other people as often as forgiveness is sought. Not only that, but you must be sufficiently mature not only to think, as Paul says, of your own things, but also of the things of others. There are two of you, and there may be three or four of you within the little family group.

You must learn to think about the things of others, and if you can't do that, you're not mature enough for marriage. It may sound as a harsh indictment to say that, but I believe it is true. And the reason why there are a number of marriage breakdowns is that spiritual maturity has not been evident.

May the Lord help us to influence our hopelessly befogged society back to the paths of purity and marital fidelity again. Nothing less can save our society and civilization, so-called, from ultimate and total moral chaos. We must be prepared to pay the price.

And that's the context you see in the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord is addressing the subjects of His Kingdom. Are you in the Kingdom of our Lord? Are you under the Lordship of King Jesus? Do you belong to His rule and to His reign? If you are under His reign, He says, only one reason.

I want men and women to see in the subjects of my Kingdom what marriage was meant to be. And I'm asking you to pay the price in fellowship with me. God grant us the grace for the glory of His name.

Amen. Our Lord, our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the measure of help you have given us, whether to speak or to listen to such a sad subject as this. And you know our hidden emotions or evident emotions as we now come to you at the end of our morning service.

Father, we first commit to you any in this service this morning who are conscious that perhaps they have sought divorce on a basis that you did not allow. Please help them to be penitent and to turn to you for the forgiveness and the cleansing and the fresh start that only you can give and help us, your forgiven ones, to receive them as you're forgiven and to help them along to rebuild life again with you. And our Lord, we pray for those who find temptations in this area, for those who are perplexed by difficulties that arise and know not what to do and have never said anything to anyone perhaps, but you know.

Oh Lord, heal the wounds in our hearts and enable us to seek your glory above even our own comfort and lead us all that as a congregation and your church at large we may have the vision clear of what you meant marriage to be and that we will be pledged to serve you in the light of your word as long as life is given us. These things we ask in the blessed name of your blessed Son. Amen.

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