

Grace to you and peace from Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and has made us kings and priests to God. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. It is certain.

(Introduction, then text)

See Marriage from a Child's Perspective

Prayer: TLH 230.

In Jesus name, fellow redeemed,

Ask a child what marriage is. Ask him or her what a family is made up of. Ask how long a mommy and daddy are supposed to stay together.

Marriage as a God-given principle is simple. A child can understand it. One man, “daddy,” one woman, “a mommy,” making one family – a family that is to remain a family until death. What makes the subject so complicated for us? Politicians debate it. Churches teach differently about it. Why do 2 out of every 5 marriages in America end in divorce?

(v.2) Before considering the rest of our text, let us consider the original context in which this confrontation from the Pharisees comes. Debates over marriage and divorce have been echoing throughout history ever since the garden of Eden. You’ll see here that Moses, 35 centuries ago had to deal with this subject. Jesus’ day was no different.

Placing yourself in Jesus’ day, consider the situation where you are having marital problems. In Jesus’ day, to seek counsel – whether marital, spiritual, or legal – you would go to one person – a Rabbi, a Teacher. Among these theologians, you basically had your choice between either the ultra conservative Pharisees or the more liberal Sadducees. Both agreed there were valid reasons for a husband to divorce his wife. They both point to **Deuteronomy 24:1** **“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,**

The liberal view of the Sadducees interprets “some uncleanness” as basically any reason – if your spouse “burns the toast” for example. That is why, in Matthew, we find the Pharisees saying: “is it lawful to divorce your wife FOR ANY REASON.” The conservative view, on the other hand, takes “uncleanness” in a ceremonially strict sense. If your wife leaves the house without a veil covering her face, then the husband has a reason to divorce. Take your pick. Whatever the reasons, each group is looking to the law of Moses for legal justification to advocate divorce. What will Jesus say?

The question that the Pharisees pose is said to “test” Him. That is, they are seeking to set a trap by which they believe He will contradict the Law of Moses. We read...

Mark 10:2–16 (NKJV) — 2 The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him. **3** And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” **4** They said, “Moses permitted a man to write

a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.” **5** And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. **6** But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ **7** ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, **8** and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. **9** Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” **10** In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. **11** So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. **12** And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” **13** Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. **14** But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. **15** Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” **16** And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

This is the Word of God.

Having rebuked Pharisaic rationalizing, Jesus welcomes the humble approach of children. Only God can close our Pharisaic loopholes. Only God can work in us a child’s-perspective that receives the truths of God’s Word in humble faith. It is our prayer today that – along with every word of Scripture – we SEE MARRIAGE FROM A CHILD’S PERSPECTIVE.

1. Pharisaic Loopholes Closed

With election season upon us, we see many thorny questions being posed. Politicians debate. Each side tries to pose thorny questions that will cause the opponent to trip up. These ask questions are meant to lead the opponent to offend the audience – to lose votes. The Pharisees come to Jesus with such a thorny question. They test him. How will Jesus respond? With whom will He side? Jesus responds as only the Word made flesh would – with the clear testimony of Scripture. Through the Word, Jesus CLOSES OUR LOOPHOLES.

The question reveals much. “Is it lawful...” “Is it permissible...” They come from a legal mindset. The Pharisees were lawyers. They were supposed to be experts in the Law of Moses. They quote Deuteronomy 24, which comes from the Law. So they deal with the matter as a mere legal one, ignoring the spiritual principle at stake.

This same Pharisee lives in every one of us. Everyone of us has something inside that prefers this legal approach. After all, the law tells us what we can and can’t do and what the price to pay is if we break it. It tells us how I can take care of myself and what I need to do to get what I want. Legal loopholes leave no need for love.

The pharisee within just wants to look at the law from the outside, for a way to know I’m o.k. in God’s eyes. Well, can I or can’t I? Is it o.k. to get a divorce or not?

After all, my husband never puts his shoes in the closet. Or, my wife always nags me about putting my shoe in the closet. If you look hard enough, you can find a counselor that will approve a divorce for just about any reason. If you look hard enough, you can find a church that will approve of all sorts of sin for just about any reason. The religious leaders in Jesus day had done much the same by basing their counsel on one passage from Deuteronomy out of context and ignoring the rest of Scripture.

The quotation from Deuteronomy 24 refers to a civil matter. In such civil laws, God had to deal with a nation full of believers and unbelievers. He had to deal with stubborn hearts while still maintaining order in society. (**v.5**) Because the people were not going to bow to the Word in love, God imposed these civil regulations to maintain order through the State.

What is marriage anyway? Is it merely a civil matter? Ask a child. I asked one child who it was that put his mommy and daddy together. He responded: “Jesus.” (**v.6,9**) Jesus takes us back to the beginning. This is more than a civil matter. Nor is this a mere legal issue. This is a spiritual and moral issue. From the beginning, God has given the gift – that a man should not be alone, but be joined, literally, “bonded together” to his wife. Let man not separate what God has united.

(**v.11,12**) There are parallel references in Matthew and Luke. In every instance Jesus links together the divorce to another marriage. In each reference the divorce and marrying again are looked at as one act. If your own lawn isn’t looking so good, the grass is always greener elsewhere. Jesus addresses the popular teaching of His day that it was acceptable for a husband to divorce his wife in order to marry a more suitable mate.

Notice how Jesus leaves no loopholes. Any divorce for the purpose of marrying again is adultery for all involved. The spouse that initiates the divorce and marries again not only commits adultery, but also causes adultery to come upon the other party.

The accusations of the law have brought us all low. The rebuke of the law leaves us all guilty. Letting Scripture speak clearly, there are no loopholes left. Not just for the divorced or the adulterer, but EVERYONE OF US. You could be married 70 years, and yet still face the same accusations of the law, as Jesus said – **Matthew 5:28 — 28 whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

Sin is made clear. All this Jesus does for the sake of our salvation. Sin is not revealed for the sake of us now trying to make things right. Sin is made clear as the kingdom comes to us with ruling comfort of the gospel. The loopholes by which we escape the judgment of sin are closed so that we would be humbled ... so that we may SEE MARRIAGE FROM A CHILD’S PERSPECTIVE.

2. Childlike Acceptance Opened

Become a child. See the Bible as a child sees it. Why do we have the Bible? Is it just a list of rules: do’s and don’t’s – a list of morals to teach us how to live. Not so – we have the Bible because the Bible brings us Jesus. It is that simple. A child can

understand this. Likewise, we are brought low, loopholes closed, so that we receive the truths of God's word with CHILDLIKE ACCEPTANCE.

(v.14-15). These children had not come to teach Jesus what is right and wrong. They did not come to find out how they could become righteous on their own. They came for what they had not earned. Children are as sinful as parents. Parents are no greater than children. These children came because they were brought. They were brought to something they needed so desperately – the blessing of their Savior.

There are times when we, as pastors, get caught up in theological debates thinking it is all about our persuasive personalities. Or we get so focused on the outward results that it becomes a mere legal argument – who's right and who's wrong? We, in a sense, rebuke the children by relying on a more scholarly approach to interpreting Scripture. "Is it lawful..." So easily we lose the receiving principle of the gospel. The kingdom is not that we create by sound logic or reasoning, it is something received. Only the grace of God, something undeserved, grants this childlike faith to receive the truth.

And the gifts that He has prepared for you who have been brought low are the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Jesus has come for the divorced, the adulterer, the sinner. He has come to close the loopholes that approve of sin so that we see these things as humbled children. **Matthew 5:17 – "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.**

We are brought to our Savior as a small child. We run to the open arms of a Savior who blesses us with His perfect fulfillment of all the law has demanded.

Romans 8:2–4 – For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Now we receive the ruling influence of the Spirit within us. We look at marriage as a child – a precious gift in which intends many blessings for us and the whole world.

However things don't always work out that way God intends them. Marriage doesn't always end up as the blessing God desires it to be. Sin gets in the way. Sin is contagious. But you know what – so is salvation. The gospel is contagious. Those differences which seem so irreconcilable, are perhaps only reconciled by means of the gospel. What God has joined, He preserves through His Word of forgiveness and reconciliation.

When a child falls down and scrapes his knee, where does he turn for a bandaid. When your daughter bonks her head on a shelf, where does she look for comfort? Who can they trust to respond with love and answers? They turn to their parents.

v.14 – Your heavenly Father is here. He has given up His only Son to redeem you from all those sins which lie in your past. Jesus has humbled Himself to the point of slavery on the cross, to the death which you and I deserve, so that He could lift you up with His

resurrection and exalt you in His heavenly kingdom. The childlike faith that openly accepts the counsel and gifts God gives through His word will overcome the challenges you face. Whatever your struggle, whatever the sin, divorce, adultery, or the discontent in your heart – Jesus opens His arms freeing you from all these things. Such faith will show others in your life what great hope and joy you have been given through Christ. Such faith will find in the Word restoration and a will to endure and overcome.

The Spirit leads us to see marriage for the blessings God intends. God's word is not merely legal matters but spiritual. It is not always a matter of "is it lawful..." but rather "is it gospel-ful?" May God always lead us to close our Pharisaic loopholes and receive as a child, the truths of Marriage as well as all truths of God's Word. To His glory, INI. Amen.