

“God’s Union” – Pastor Jim Sprengle – Pentecost 20 October 6, 2024

- I. **Mark 10:9** - ⁹What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.
- II. **What’s going on in our world today?**
 - a. You don’t have to be a researcher or psychologist to realize that marriage and families are not doing well.
 - i. Overall, society no longer defines marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman.
 - ii. Many couples choose to live together rather than make a commitment and seek God’s blessing in marriage.
 - iii. Pornography is a multibillion-dollar industry, impacting the lives of young people earlier and earlier as they get mobile devices.
 - iv. Children in the womb are considered either “a person” or “not a person” depending on whether or not the mom wants to bring the child to term.
 - v. Casual sexual relations are so normal for many people that it’s just a normal part of going out with friends to bars and clubs.
 1. This casual approach to sex has even gone all the way down to our elementary schools.
 2. Not only that, but many schools teach a very confusing message about gender identity to kids as young as 5-years-old.
 - vi. Divorce is still a big issue in our country, and it’s no longer young couples... I read somewhere that 35-40% of divorces are with people who are older than 50.
 1. In fact, there’s a name for it... “gray divorce”.
 2. Some might tell you that divorces are down overall, but that’s because fewer people are getting married... they are either living together, or just staying single.
 - vii. Many people in our nation have decided that bringing children into the world is a bad idea – whether because of expense, climate change and overpopulation, or the personal sacrifice of a career or lifestyle.
 1. We are dealing with a decline in births to the point that we are below the threshold of replacing the people who die... which may have an impact on our future here in America.
 - viii. Now, everyone has opinions about this long list of social issues – but what does God say?
 1. God’s design for marriage and family is the building blocks of His creative power and love.
 2. From the beginning of creation in Genesis, God gave marriage to Adam and Eve (Gen 2:24) and told them to multiply (Gen 1:28) and manage the earth – but more than that, God uses the

imagery of marriage for Jesus and the Church – meaning marriage is a visible example of how God loves us.

3. Yet, the opinions of so many different people begin to crowd out the design and purpose God gives us in Scripture, and we start to wonder if there isn't more to the story.

b. Did God *really* say? (Genesis 3:1)

- i. Remember what satan asked Eve before she sinned in the garden?
- ii. People have not honored God's desire for marriage since sin and evil entered the world through Adam and Eve.
- iii. I suppose that Adam and Eve had the perfect relationship and connection before they sinned against God, but the institution of marriage, and families, have suffered from sin and selfishness and pride since the first two people decided they knew better than God.

c. Now, when I'm talking about marriage, I don't assume everyone agrees with a single understanding or definition.

- i. Unfortunately, a great deal of energy has gone into changing public opinion about what marriage is and whether it's important or not.
- ii. When public opinion defines marriage... or what's right and wrong... versus what God intends... it's time to stop and remember where marriage came from... therefore who gets to say what it is.

d. I'm not here to tell you something new, I'm here to tell you something true.

- i. Marriage is not ours to define, change or adapt to our way of thinking – marriage is God's... He instituted (started) it at the very beginning of creation, and we are not the ones who get to define how it works.

III. **Jesus answers a difficult question about divorce today...**

a. Jesus has traveled with His followers toward His fate on the cross – we are seeing Jesus in His last few stops before His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

b. It was pretty normal for Jesus to run into Pharisees and teachers of the law when He got closer to Jerusalem and the surrounding towns.

c. In this instance, they seek to test Him – they are probably trying to get Jesus to contradict God's commands, and then they can discredit Him throughout the crowds.

d. So they ask, "is it legal for a man to divorce his wife?" vs 2

- i. And Jesus takes control of the situation by asking a question in return... "What does the Law of Moses say?" vs 3

1. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 24 that a man can just give a certificate of divorce and be on his way.

2. Yes, Jesus says, but that was not the way God wanted it from the beginning... it was because of the hardness in your heart that these things happened.

- ii. Jesus then clarifies the will of God –

1. From the beginning God created and established marriage for one man and one woman to live together forever in a covenant.
2. God does not want anyone to take apart the union that He puts together.

IV. **The hardness of our hearts...**

- a. In our sinful nature, we harden our hearts to God's will and deal with relationships on our terms.
- b. We have all these standards about how our needs should be met by others in relationships, but lower the standards when it comes to what we do.
- c. Isn't that the trouble? We have a terrible time loving others... and it goes back to sin.
- d. It is the hardness of our hearts, but God has a beautiful picture of our hearts turning from stone... to flesh – of reconciliation...

V. **God gives us a different direction.**

- a. In Ezekiel 36, God says, "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules." (Ez. 36:26-27)
- b. And I know I quote these verses all the time, but Paul also tells us in 2 Corinthians 5, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [as it was] For our sake [the Father] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:17-18; 21)
- c. Jesus paid... Jesus was crushed... Jesus died in our place.
 - i. Jesus paid for that divorce. He paid for that terrible relationship. He paid for the hardness of our hearts and doing our will instead of His. He paid for all broken relationships and selfishness and living life on our terms rather than His.
 - ii. And... in return... He gives us new hearts and fills us with the Spirit.
- d. He reconciles and gives new life, and enables us to live in a different way.

VI. **Marriage, family, and relationships need God's direction.**

- a. Too many people are listening to the voices around them instead of seeking what God wants for families in our world.
- b. When we live out God's design, the best results are possible – and we end up shining the light of Christ into the lives of others.
- c. God wants marriage to reflect Him in this world... and it is possible.
 - i. As married couples live in forgiveness, sacrificial love, and fulfill the covenant that ties them together by God's hand... we are like little microcosms of Jesus and the Church (His bride – Eph. 5:24ff).
 - ii. People look upon a godly marriage and see God at work in the world.

- d. And regardless of our marital status, we can hold up marriage and support it the way God defines it in His Word.
- e. And remember, it is the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that makes all of this possible... helping us not only to accept... but to actively promote God's design and will for marriage and families.
- f. God designs – God defines – and God always knows what's best. – Amen.