

“WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Mark 10:1-12

Introduction, Mark 10:1.

You learn a lot about a person from how they deal with adversity and how they respond to times of testing and stress and conflict. At the beginning of our text this morning we see the character of Christ in *three ways*.

First, He has told His disciples what must happen to Him in Jerusalem, He has told them the details of the torture, crucifixion and death. He knows exactly what awaits Him in Jerusalem and yet He turns and leaves Galilee to enter Judea to go to Jerusalem.

Whatever fear and trembling He had about the horrible pain ahead, whatever dread of the severe wrath of God's judgment on our sin, He courageously goes.

Take this to heart. Take notice of the infinite love the Son has for us that He would do this. He surrendered Himself completely for the sake of our sin and our salvation. He died to Himself for the sake of others. There is a lesson in discipleship for us in this.

Second, even with the personal and emotional pressures of His eminent rejection, suffering and death, He is still of a frame of mind to patiently teach and preach for the good of the souls of men. Jesus never wasted a day, He was never idle. He was always about His Father's work and always about the good of others. And He did this knowing full well that the majority of those He taught and served were hardhearted and completely unappreciative. Even knowing much of His labor would be fruitless, He faithfully labored.

May this encourage any of you who feel unappreciated and unthanked. May this encourage any of you who are daily faithfully doing what God has called you to do even though it's hard. You may be a teacher, a care giver, a wife, a mother, a single parent, a parent of a rebellious child, an elder, anyone who labors in a difficult field where there seems to be little harvest. The fruit is the Lord's business, the duty is ours.

It's not the "good and successful servant" that is rewarded, but the "good and faithful servant" who will know the joy of the Lord (J.C. Ryle, *Mark*, p. 197). There is a lesson in discipleship for us in that.

Mark 10:2-9.

Third, we learn a lot about the character of Christ by how He handled personal attacks and challenges to the truth of God, how He handled adversity and adversaries.

Marriage and divorce were political hot potatoes in Jesus' day. And if you don't think it was as bad as now, let me remind you John the Baptist lost his head over the marriage and divorce issue when he confronted King Herod over his divorce and taking his brother's wife.

There were raging debates among the rabbis and Pharisees over what constituted lawful divorce. But on this day they didn't really care about divorce, they cared about baiting a trap for Jesus. They aren't interested in learning the truth about very important spiritual matters, they just want to find a way to silence Jesus.

It's a little like what happened to Louie Giglio last week, the evangelical pastor from Atlanta. He received an invitation from the White House to give the benediction at President Obama's inauguration. But a few people went digging and found some negative things he said about homosexuality in a sermon about fifteen years ago and pressured the White House to uninvite him which they did. The powers that be silencing the Word of God.

The legislature of the great state of Washington introduced legislation to approve so called same sex marriage. Our governor supported it and now the citizens of Washington have officially approved it.

For the first time in US history not just one state but three states have approved of this after 30 some defeats of similar legislation. This is a monumental step in social engineering that will have grave consequences for our state and our nation. It's a significant slide on our path of rejecting God and silencing the moral standards of God's revealed Word.

Polls show that the younger generation of Americans increasingly are fine with so called same sex unions and I am concerned that may include some of us. The younger generation is not thinking clearly or Biblically about the issue.

One of the pillars of a free and moral society is being pulled down and the implications can hardly be exaggerated. The promised protections for institutions and person with religious convictions or conscience will be short lived. All Christian churches and all Christians will increasingly face harder and harder questions and some will experience serious consequences for holding their convictions and conscience, the least of which will be giving benedictions at inaugurations.

Jesus shows us how to respond under political and religious pressure in the public square. Notice first of all that while they ask Him about divorce He starts by laying a foundation for marriage. Allow me to remind us all of three basic foundational truths concerning marriage so we know where we stand and how to stand. Next week we will take up divorce.

(The three points that follow and some of the content is influenced by an article by Andrew Randall, "*What God Has Joined Together,*" Banner of Truth, October 2012, p. 22ff).

First, Marriage Belongs to God.

Mark 10:6-8 From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 7 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.'

In the beginning, God thought of marriage in heaven. God created it, God made it, it's His, it belongs to Him. The Bible begins with a marriage in a garden arranged by God and the Bible ends with the marriage feast of the lamb in heaven, Christ and His bride, the church a marriage arranged by God (Revelation 19).

The first marriage of the first Adam is a picture that points to the second marriage of the second Adam. All marriage on earth is a parable of the nature of the relationship between Christ and His Bride. Here all along we thought marriage was about us. It's not, it's from God and it's about God.

Marriage is not a human invention, it's not a social convention, it's not a government institution, it's pre-political. It doesn't belong to us, it belongs to the one who created it. The world may have forgotten this, but the fact remains, marriage was instituted by God from the beginning and is part of what He called very good. It's one of His greatest gifts to humanity.

Marriage is sacred, meaning it's holy, and to say it's holy is to say it belongs to God. It should be treated as we would treat something holy and sacred.

Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Jesus says in Matthew's Gospel, "Have you not read" meaning go back to the manual, to the original instructions. This is our authority for all of life and for how to live life. As the sovereign creator and ruler over all the universe, God has a right to say how things work. We do not have a right to change what He has made.

We can no more do this than we can declare that red is now green and green is now red or that from now on 2 plus 2 is 5. We cannot overrule God and do so with impunity and without severe negative consequences. What happens in Scripture when someone stands up and shakes their fist at God?

Second, Marriage is Defined by God.

When God created marriage He defined it, He said how it's to work and what its purpose is.

God made man and God made woman and He made them distinctly different yet complementary. We are created with physical, psychological and emotional differences that perfectly match and complete each other. Feminists and homosexuals can try until they're blue in the face to say there are no differences or that the differences are of little or no consequence, but the fact remains, we are either male or female and the differences are real and significant and every cell in our bodies is marked with either an XX (female) or an XY (male).

Gender confusion results when people try to wrestle control from God's design. They can't stand the limitations God has set so they reject His idea and make up their own. Hence the sliding scale of gender identity verses sexual identity. They don't like the box of male or female so they start making up their own, bi-sexual, transgender, homosexual, intersexual, and on and on.

Genesis 1:27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

When God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, He created him a complementary helper suitable for him, one who corresponds to him. Equal and different, no inferiority or superiority.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

It’s designed to be a permanent and exclusive union. “Forsaking all others until death do you part.” For as long as you both shall live, not for as long as you both shall love. It’s the most lasting relationship you can make.

The bond of marriage is holier than the bond between a parent and a child. The bond between a parent and a child is meant to be broken one day. “A man will leave his father and mother ...”

It’s also designed by God to be a fruitful union from which He plans a godly seed (Malachi 2:10-16). That fact that some marriages don’t produce children doesn’t change that it’s one of God’s designs and purposes for marriage.

Marriage as created and designed and defined by God and affirmed by Jesus is between one man and one woman and based on their fundamental make up it is designed to produce children. This is a simple recognition of reality. To do anything different is contrary to nature as Paul says in Romans 1:27.

When sin entered the world, it began to distort and pervert everything good that God made, including our sexuality and the purpose of it. All sexual activity outside of a marriage between one man and one woman is a perversion of God’s order for sexuality and God calls it an abomination, something to be abhorred.

No congress or governor or president or popular vote can change that or trump what God has said.

Third, Marriage is Performed by God.

Matthew 19:6 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

What God has joined together!

Two people don’t just marry each other, a minister doesn’t just marry a couple, God Himself joins two separate lives and makes them one.

The Jews viewed the husband as the lord over the marriage and the one who decided if and when to make or break it. Jesus counters saying God is the Lord over the marriage.

God performs marriage and He only performs it between a man and a woman. Whatever kind of relationship two men or two women have, it’s not a marriage, it’s not a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. We shouldn’t use the phrase “same sex marriage.” It’s an oxymoron and a contradiction in terms. That’s why when I have used the phrase this morning, I have called it “so called same-sex marriage.”

This is the message of Jesus to His disciples and to all who wish to be His disciples. Marriage belongs to God, marriage is defined by God and marriage is performed by God.

Application and Conclusion.

It's clear from our text that Jesus puts a very high standard on marriage. He honors marriage and considers it holy. This is holy ground.

Because it's a relationship that has such great potential for good or evil, the greatest care should be taken in understanding it and in preserving it.

How should we respond when challenged on these issues? Here at First CRC my hope is we will welcome all sinners in our midst, and we will, with truth and love, call all sinners to repentance, and we will not approve sinful acts. We will hold out the good news of the gospel to all people, that God by His Spirit calls us to repentance and enables us to live according to holiness.

We will stand with anyone who struggles with these issues. We will honestly tell the truth and walk with anyone in any temptation. When you fall we will help you stand and continue to speak to you the unfailing grace and forgiveness of God. We all need help for each other to pursue holiness.

At some point we will be asked to allow a so called same sex union in our church and I am confident our council will say no, and then face the consequences.

Christians are to obey and submit to authority up to the point at which the authorities require something God's Word prohibits or prohibits something God's Word requires. We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

A tidal wave of change is coming and we must be prayerfully prepared to know how to respond. We live in a treacherous age, in an unfaithful age, in a casual throw away culture. We must fight for marriage as God created it and defined it and defend it at all costs. The disease in our culture has a remedy and that remedy is to restore honor to marriage and the marriage bed. It will take courage, vigilance, prayerful dependence on God's grace. May God have mercy on us all.

Prayer: Holy Father, we ask that you would cause and enable all our marriages to increasingly be a reflection of the love relationship that exist between Christ and His Church. Lord, we know that doesn't just happen overnight and we know that we are far from your best for us, and we know that we can't get back to where we should be without your divine intervention and help. Lord begin today to spread a revival of marriage vows the way Christ loves His Church. We ask you for this in the name of Jesus, for the sake of Him and His glory in the Church. Amen.