

## Marriage - Yes, It is still “Very Good”

Grace and peace are yours from your Lord and Savior who loves you, Amen.

I find it intriguing and curious who people can adopt the mindset that the Bible is just a dusty old book from centuries ago, with very little that’s relevant, current, or applicable to this day and age. If ever there was a portion of Scripture that addresses a relevant, current and applicable topic – it would be these words from Mark chapter 10. Marriage... divorce... husband and wife relationships... families...raising children in the wisdom and fear of the Lord. Our society is reeling in pain and sorrow because so many do not crack open the Scriptures to learn from the Lord what he has to say about these topics. And when there is pain in marriage, even then many turn elsewhere for guidance. I’ve heard some say that things are so bad they question whether or not marriage is even a good thing anymore. Today our Savior answers this question with a resounding YES! Yes, marriage is still “very good” – both for man and woman as well as for the family and society.

This morning Jesus gives us the beautiful opportunity to hear again what God says about marriage, about divorce and about family unit. This is admittedly, a difficult and personal subject to address because it hits so close to home with just about everyone, but that is precisely why we need to take this time to hear, recognize and rejoice in what God has to say about his very good gift of marriage and family.

### I. For man and wife (2-12)

Jesus’ enemies approached him as he was teaching with a seemingly legitimate question. However, the Gospel writer Mark tells us they had other intent, to “test” him and catch Jesus in a falsehood. There was had no desire to grow in their understanding of the Scriptures or marriage. Their test question was whether or not it was lawful or right for a man to divorce his wife. If Jesus would answer that divorce *was* permitted, they would be able to accuse him of being “soft” on divorce. If Jesus would answer that divorce was *wrong*, they would be able to accuse Jesus of contradicting Moses.

Seeing that this was a trap, Jesus answered their question, with a much more pertinent question, “*What did Moses command you?*” They fired back quickly that Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. This is what was *permitted*; not what Moses *commanded*. The command was clear: “You shall not commit adultery; but be faithful to your spouse!”

Their reply revealed their ignorance and the sin in their hearts. They did not want to follow God’s law and God’s plan. They wanted to follow their own wishes, wants, lusts, desires; to do what pleased them. Jesus correctly pointed out their sin, “*It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law.*” God allowed divorce, not because he approved of it, but for the protection of the woman. If the man just sent her away, she would have no means of support. If she attempted to remarry, she would be accused of adultery with 2 husbands. With a letter of divorce, she could, in good standing, remarry. This was God’s way of providing for the woman when a hard-hearted sinfully stubborn husband refused.

The same sin in the heart shows itself today as people don’t want to follow God’s plan and design for marriage. People make their own plans, they re-define what it means to live together as man and woman. Marriage is good only as long as it’s convenient; or once the passion is gone then there’s nothing left to fight for. This is what happens when sinful hard hearts ignore what God says about marriage.

When we’re unclear on what marriage is, it’s time to tune in to the teacher and listen as Jesus offers words everyone needs to hear, “*But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' <sup>7</sup>For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*”

Marriage is from the beginning. God made us who we are: male and female. He set the definition of marriage: one man leaving behind his former family unit and being united to one wife, establishing a new family unit. This oneness is something that God joins together to be a life-long union that man is not to dissolve. This, along with the whole rest of his creation, God decreed to be “very good.” And even after sin entered the world, this design and plan for marriage, 1 man and 2 woman, still stands as “very good.”

God still joins man and woman together, as he did yesterday for Lori and James. Marriage is far bigger than “feelings” or a “convenient arrangement.” It’s a lasting committed love through thick and thin. In marriage God

bleses us with friendship and companionship. Marriage provides leadership and stability. Marriage is the proper place to express sexual love and in turn, God provides a place for children to be nurtured and grow. Marriage is most certainly still “very good.”

And yet even among Christians, sinful things happen in marriage – and that’s because of the sinful nature that resides in each of us. My wife married an especially sinful one. I haven’t always loved my wife just as Christ loved the church have gave himself up for her (as the second lesson explained). I’ve allowed my selfish nature to think of my own wants first. My sinful heart doesn’t always exercise loving, self-sacrificing leadership, and while that causes stress in marriage, marriage still remains God’s “very good” institution.

When there is sin and hurt, it’s time to do the uncommon thing – go first to the cross, not to the lawyer. Go to the one who has brought you together. Go to Jesus who has paid the price for all sin, who forgives you freely and completely. In the peace of his forgiveness we find the strength and motivation to freely and completely forgive each other. Repentance and forgiveness through Jesus is the only way to repair and restore relationships. It’s the glue that holds marriages together. It’s the way God builds up marriages.

## II. For families (vv. 13-16)

God loves to strengthen marriages because in doing so, he is also strengthening families – again an area of great concern in today’s society. Parents are concerned about their children, they want the best for their children... but what exactly does this mean? What is best for children, for adults for families as a whole – is highlighted here in the second portion of our text. What is best is “Time with Jesus.”

Sadly it seems that Jesus’ own disciples didn’t have the time for children. They were rebuking those parents for bringing their children to Jesus. Perhaps they thought Jesus was too busy teaching to deal with little ones? Not good! *“When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. “I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”* <sup>15</sup>*And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.*

Truly Jesus desires that we bring our children to him, regularly and often. Statistics and personal observations however are telling a different story. Sunday school attendance across all denominations shows 80-90% decline since the 1950’s. The overall percentage of our nation’s people in church continues to decline. If we’re not bringing ourselves and our children to Jesus, how can he bless them? How can they grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus their only Lord and Savior?

If we’re not bringing our children to Jesus, then where are we bringing them? The statement is true: **all parents teach their children to worship** – but *WHAT* are they worshipping... sports, leisure, sleep, themselves? What good will it do a child who knows how to throw a perfect curve ball, but doesn’t know what to do when the devil throws temptation at them? What good is it to know the top 10 fantasy football players when they haven’t a clue of the God’s top 10 – The Commandments? Kids spend hours learning how to win at Xbox but committing to memory basic Bible passages and hymns that teach them how Jesus lived, died and rose again to give them eternal life? Jesus was indignant at his disciples for hindering the children from coming to him – which gives all of us reason to pause and examine ourselves.

If we are finding that we as parents are hindering our children from coming to Jesus, then it’s we who need to repent and change our ways. The very good part is that Jesus is our Savior too. He extends to us his love and forgiveness. He puts his hands upon us and blesses us with a renewed strength and determination to bring our children and our families to Jesus regularly and often, to be more and more trained in what it means to follow Jesus and turn from the lies of Satan and this world.

Indeed, there is nothing inherently wrong with helping our children learn sports and music and whatever other extracurricular activities there may be, but we need to realize those are *extra*... those are *secondary*. Our primary responsibility is to bring our children and ourselves to Jesus so that he can bless them and us and our families. Yes, God’s plan for marriage and for families is still “Very Good.” It is very good to come to Jesus open arms – here in worship on Sundays, in Bible class and Sunday school... in family time Bible reading... in bedtime devotions and prayers. All these and more are the waiting and open arms of Jesus eager bless us, our children and our families with a child-like faith – a faith that simply humbly honestly openly trusts in Jesus and his promise of eternal life in heaven. May God grant such a faith to us all as we worship and serve him alone. Amen.