

One Marriage - 15 January 2023

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Date: 15 January 2023

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] You may be seated. Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here, not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back over and over to look at God's word together.

It's good to be back with you all after being gone for a couple Sundays. I came back, flew back on Wednesday. I was supposed to be back in the Springs on Wednesday. I got caught up in some of that FAA nonsense that happened that day, so I actually didn't get back to the Springs until early Thursday morning.

But my first stop, my first leaving the house after I got home, was to go get my hair cut because it's important to keep it tight. And so I talked to my barber, and who I've been seeing, she's the only barber I've seen since I came to Colorado, so five and a half years.

[1 : 24] And so she knows I'm a pastor, and her mom was a preacher, so we talk about these things sometimes. And she asked me, you know, what did you do? What did they do while you were gone? Who was preaching? Did you have your assistant pastor fill in?

And I said, well, we don't have an assistant pastor, but we have a lot of army chaplains. And a couple of our army chaplains filled in for us. And she just said, what a blessing. And I said, that's right.

That's right. So we're just so grateful for Jeff and Drew bringing God's word while I was gone, and really just grateful for the presence of our military chaplains, not just Jeff and Drew, but also Andy Perch and Mark Fairbrother.

It really is a blessing and an honor to have those chaplains with us, and a huge, really huge compliment to us as a church. And so we're just grateful for them. I'm grateful for them to be here with us week by week, and then to be in our pulpit from time to time.

So a huge thank you to Jeff and to Drew. We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark together. And you'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and his life and his death and his resurrection.

[2 : 32] And we're picking up in this section that Drew started for us, this series of hard questions that come to Jesus. People are coming, and they're trying to trap him. They tried to trap him last week with this question about who should we pay taxes to?

Should we pay taxes to Caesar? And this week we're going to see another difficult and hard passage. In fact, it's not just a difficult and hard passage. I would say it falls into the category of a weird passage.

We're talking about this hypothetical situation where this woman is married to seven different men, and then what happens when she ends up in heaven.

And then Jesus, in the middle of it, drops this bombshell on us to say, oh, surprise, there's not going to be any marriage in heaven. If you're cynical, maybe you're thinking, yes, there is no marriage in heaven.

That's why it's called heaven. Of course, I certainly hope better things for all of you.

[3 : 33] Maybe as you think about this passage, you think this is boring or irrelevant or arcane. It's some sort of weird Bible trivia. In fact, the truth is very different. Drew last week talked about this deeper truth, this deep truth that appeared in that passage.

And in that passage, it was the image of God as the foundation for human dignity. I'm going to steal that from Drew this week and say there is another deep truth in this passage, and it's the deep truth of one of the great meaning and purposes of marriage.

And so there's a lot going on in this passage. We're going to focus on one thing, one question, which is why is there no marriage in heaven? And we're going to see the Bible presents us with a large vision for marriage that will provide us with encouragement, whether you're married, whether you're single, whether you're widowed, whether you're divorced.

And so it's with that question that we're going to turn to God's word. I invite you to turn with me. We're in Mark chapter 12, starting at verse 28. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone.

You can turn in your worship guide. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word, and God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it's sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

[4 : 52] And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 28. Sorry, verse 18. I completely switched verses on you. Verse 18, not verse 28.

And the Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

There were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and when he died, left no offspring. And the second took her and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise.

And the seven left no offspring. Last of all, the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be?

For the seven had her as wife. Verse 24, Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong? Because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God.

[6 : 02] For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we just come thanking you again for your tender love towards us, your care for us. That you're eager to instruct us and to guide us in the midst of our ignorance and our foolishness and our sin.

And so we ask that you would do that again, that you would be that good father that you promised to be, that you would speak to us clearly in your word, that you would help us understand the great and glorious things that you have for us in the life to come, that you'd encourage us and strengthen us for our life now.

And most of all, you'd show us Jesus Christ, that we would see him in his beauty and glory and holiness and power and authority, that you'd grow our love and our affection for him, our reverence and our all for him, and grow our obedience to him.

[7 : 28] We ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. So we are picking up in this series of confrontations with Jesus, where the religious leaders are trying to trap him or trick him with hard questions.

And as I've mentioned before, these are not sincere questions. These are not people who are seeking understanding, but instead they are out to get Jesus. Last week, we saw the Pharisees and the Herodians were talking about taxes to Caesar, and we're told explicitly, verse 13, they were trying to trap him in his talk.

This week, the Sadducees want a crack at Jesus. It's their turn. And we find out right off the bat, verse 18, the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection. Now, the way you can remember this and never forget it is to remember the phrase that the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection.

That's why they were sad. You see? And that's the cheesy way that I have never forgotten, that the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection.

Not only that, the Sadducees lean heavily on the first five books of the Bible. They privilege those over the others. And so they present this question about the resurrection, but it's actually a trick question.

[8 : 44] They are trying to demonstrate how stupid of an idea the resurrection is. In fact, some people think that this was a question that they didn't come up with, but that people had been asking for a while.

This was the gotcha question that the Sadducees had. When they really wanted to make someone who believed in the resurrection feel stupid, they would whip out the hypothetical situation of the seven husbands.

Now, that takes us to verses 19 through 23, which will be wildly confusing if you're not familiar with the Old Testament background. So we have to talk about this for one second. In Deuteronomy chapter 25, there's this practice among ancient Israel that will be very strange to us.

And it goes like this. If a man dies and he has not had a child with his wife, it is his brother's responsibility to come in and have a child with her.

And that child will not bear the brother's name. The child will bear the name of the deceased man. And the purpose, the point of all this is to make sure there's never a line that dies out.

[9 : 49] This gets into protecting ancestral land and all sorts of things going on in the Old Testament that we're not going to go into together this morning. All we need to do is understand the fact that that happened to know what's going on with this question.

So they say, hey, let's talk about this scenario. This man dies. He has no kids. There's this obligation from Deuteronomy 25 from Moses that a child has to be raised up. So one brother comes in, but he dies.

He's not able to raise up a child. And then the next, and then the next. And we end up with no child but seven husbands. What is going to happen? Now, this is a scenario that they're bringing in.

And the point of all this is to say, Jesus, there's no answer to this. We all know the resurrection is stupid. And we've proved it. We've proved it stupid because how in the world could someone be married to seven people all at once?

And Jesus here, just like he did last week, verse 24 lays the smackdown on the Sadducees. He tells them they have two problems.

[10 : 53] You know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. Verse 25, he actually rejects the premise of their question. You think that you've trapped me because there's no way that you could be married to seven people at once.

Well, you haven't trapped me because guess what? There's no marriage in heaven. Your whole question, your whole objection falls apart.

We'll come back to that. We'll come back to no marriage in heaven. We have to talk about what Jesus says next. Verse 26, he then says, let's talk about not just marriage in heaven. Let's talk about the resurrection.

And he references the passage about the bush, which is Jesus' way of saying, let's talk about Exodus chapter 3. Exodus chapter 3, verses 1 through 6 is what Britt already read for us this morning.

It's the story of Moses meeting God in the burning bush. And God makes this important statement to him in that saying, I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am the God.

[11 : 52] And he says, I am the God of these people who we all know have already died. And so how could God say, I am the God of deceased people? What shouldn't he say? I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

I was their God. No, he is their God, which is a way of saying God doesn't view them as dead. So Jesus says, look, you are mistaken about a lot of things. One thing is you're religious leaders and you don't even know your Bible very well.

And not only do you not know your Bible very well, you don't know these first five books. I'm actually quoting from Exodus, the second of the five books. So I'm beating you at your own game. You can't tell me, oh, well, it's something that shows up later in books we don't respect.

I'm taking the book that you do respect and showing you that you are wrong. And so Jesus just completely dismantles their argument. He rejects the premise of their marriage question.

And then he proves to them from their own privileged books that life after death is real. And so it's with all of that background we get back to our question, which is what about the marriage thing?

[12 : 58] Why is there no marriage in heaven? The challenging thing about it is that Jesus doesn't actually tell us in this passage. When we come up against questions like this, we actually have to look at the whole Bible, see what the entire counsel of God tells us so we can begin to understand.

We could even put it this way. We need to know the scriptures. This is the problem that happens with the Sadducees. They don't know the Bible. If and as we do know the Bible, we're able to answer this question.

And it's very, very simple. It's this, marriage is a picture of something greater. Marriage is a picture of something greater.

Marriage points beyond itself. In the Old Testament, constantly God is using these marriage images to talk about his relationship with Israel.

Hey, you want to understand what it's like for me, God, to relate with you, Israel? Well, it's like a husband and his wife. This gets refined in some ways in the New Testament we see in Ephesians 5. Hey, you want to understand my relationship?

[14 : 04] The relationship between Christ and the church is the relationship. It's like the relationship of a husband to his wife. All of this saying, look, marriage is meant to point beyond itself to something more.

And so I invite you to look with me in page 7 of your worship guide. It says this, The Bible does not teach that there will be no marriage in heaven. Rather, it teaches that there will be one marriage in heaven between Christ and his bride, the church.

In fact, the biblical picture of marital sexual union is nothing less than an anticipation of an even deeper union with the divine.

And so another way of putting it is this. Why is there no marriage in heaven? Because when the real thing arrives, you don't need the sign anymore.

When the real thing arrives, you don't need the sign anymore. If you drove into our church building this morning, we have a sign out front that says Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

[15 : 05] And you know what you didn't do? You didn't park your car and then go and hang out by that sign and stand on the rocks. The sign has served its purpose, right? What did you do? You came into the sanctuary where the real event is happening.

The sign, it's good, it's beautiful, but it's meant to serve a purpose, which is to direct you to the real and greater thing. It has served its purpose as it's guided you into what is the real event at this church.

When I was with my family on the East Coast, we were staying close to Shenandoah National Park. And so we went into the park one day. And I remember if you go into a park at the very entrance, there's going to be a sign that says, Hey, welcome.

You've finally entered the park. You know what we didn't do? We didn't stop at the sign, take a bunch of pictures, and then drive back to our Airbnb. No, the sign tells us, look, this is the direction you head.

The real beauty, the real glory is inside the park. That's where you have to go to get the views. The intimacy and love that we experience in marriage is going to be even better in heaven.

[16 : 20] Jesus is not just teaching about marriage. He's teaching about what it's going to be like when we go to be with God. What is heaven going to be like? Jesus is saying this, heaven is going to be better than marriage.

Heaven is going to be better than sex. Those things will pale in comparison. They're going to be obsolete. You're not going to want to go back.

If you go to Tinseltown, if you go to the movie theater here close to us in Colorado Springs, as you're entering into it, you're going to see what? A bunch of different posters advertising coming attractions.

And that poster will tell you all sorts of things. You'll see maybe a picture of an actor or multiple actors who are going to be there. You'll have credits telling you who it is that's involved in this production. And then as you walk into the theater, you enter the building, you'll see more on the side right in the hallways.

And then you get into your seat in the theater. And do you see any movie posters there? No.

[17 : 24] Why not? Because you have the screen. And the screen is so much more than the poster ever could be. The poster is just one image.

The screen is able to show you this video. It's able to display something much greater and bigger. It makes the poster obsolete. The poster is just one image. And here you have video right in front of you.

You have the whole story. The poster is weak in comparison to the movie. The poster is small in comparison to the movie. It's insignificant. It can tell you something about the movie.

It can give you some hints. It can give you some direction. And the poster is not the movie. Marriage can tell you something about God's love for his church.

And it's not actually God's love for his church. That is something so much greater and better. However, you are not meant to stand outside and look at the poster.

[18 : 25] You're meant to go inside and watch the movie. You're meant to see it as a sign. You'll see on the back of our worship guide, C.S. Lewis gets into this concept in a couple places.

In his book, Till We Have Faces, which is fiction, he puts these words in one of his characters. This is at the top. The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing to reach the mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from.

My country, the place where I ought to have been born. Do you think it all meant nothing, all the longing, the longing for home? For indeed it now feels not like going back.

And here we're meant to take this as this description of heaven. And so we're learning not just about marriage specifically, but heaven in general. That heaven is the place where all the beauty comes from.

You experience something good and beautiful in this world. Well, it's a derivative good. It's a derivative beauty. It will be even better and greater in heaven. You experience some love and human connection in this world.

[19 : 31] Well, that's a derivative love, a derivative connection. It will be even greater and more beautiful when we're connected to God in heaven. It is a sign beauty, not an ultimate beauty.

In this second quote, C.S. Lewis goes on to say, Look, we make a huge mistake if we listen to a piece of music or we read a book and we think that's where the beauty is. No, the beauty is actually coming from somewhere even greater.

And that's just a channel through which it flows. In other words, marriage is the scent of a flower you haven't found yet.

It is the echo of a tune you haven't heard yet. It teaches you something small about something big.

I mentioned earlier that movie posters do serve their purpose. They tell you something about the movie. And if everything I've been saying is true, then marriage does serve a purpose. It tells us something that's true about God and his love for his people.

[20 : 47] And so what are those things? First of all, marriage teaches us about the safety, the security, the belonging, the faithfulness that exists between God and his people.

I've said this before a long time ago. You know, marriage at its best is when you look at another person and you say, I know your greatest strengths. I've seen you in your greatest moments.

I've also seen your greatest weaknesses. I've seen you in your worst moments. I know the truth about you. And I'm still going to stay.

I'm still going to stay. That's the faithfulness and the commitment. I've told you before, there are two kinds of people in this world. People who are interested in you and people are interested simply in what they can get from you, what they can achieve through you.

Marriage at its best is saying to another person, I'm interested in you. Your very presence is enough. Just the fact that you're in this house with me, even if you're completely asleep, doing nothing makes a difference.

[21 : 49] And so we learn from that what God's love is like. God's love has that same safety and security and belonging and faithfulness and commitment. God looks at his people and they're very worse.

And he says, I know the truth about you and I'm not going anywhere. I know the truth about you and I'm going to stay. Now you might be thinking, okay, that's true.

But that can be true of other relationships besides marriage. Well, it's not the only thing that we learn. And we also learn this, right? The greatest passion and joy that you can probably experience in a human relationship is in marriage.

We might think especially as expressed through our sexual relationships that show us this passion and this joy. And what we're learning from this passage, what we're learning about God and marriage is this.

However great the joy of sex is, the joy that you're going to experience when you're in God's presence is even greater.

[22 : 57] However great the joy of sex is, the joy that you're going to experience in God's presence is going to be even greater and better. However connected and loved you might feel in your marriage, no matter how glorious your marriage is, you will feel more connected and more loved in God's presence in heaven.

No matter how much pleasure and passion you experience in your marriage, you will experience greater pleasure and greater passion in heaven.

When you are watching the movie, you don't run back to go look at the sign. When we are in heaven with God in his presence, we will not be longing to go back to our marriages.

Not because they weren't beautiful or good, but because we now see the greater thing they pointed towards. That is how great and glorious heaven is.

The same individual that's quoted on page seven of your worship guide, Glenn Harrison, says, these two things actually are supposed to go together. The two things I just told you, that passion and faithfulness are always supposed to be connected.

[24 : 23] And so we also see this in marriage, that there is this passion and faithfulness. We don't separate those two things. They're things that go together. And finally, we learn from marriage about just the fact that God's love overflows.

We know intuitively the love between a husband and a wife, it often overflows into children. That's a symbol, a sign, an expression of their love for each other. It's so great that it multiplies and there's these new human beings that come out of it.

The same is true of what God experiences in himself in the Trinity. The love between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is so great that it overflowed into God's work of creation.

And so we just begin to get this greater vision for the way the world works. We don't want to stop at the sign. We don't want to park when we get to the entrance. No, God says there's greater and more beautiful things waiting for you as you follow after me.

The Sadducees don't understand. They have a small vision of heaven, even as they don't believe in it, that heaven is not this life all over again. Heaven is a fulfillment of everything our hearts want and desire and long for.

[25 : 37] Heaven is the place where we will finally experience in full what we experience now. Now, you might be thinking, okay, this is all nice and great.

It's a little pie in the sky, a little theoretical. So let's bring it down to earth. What does this mean for us as we think about our lives this next week as you're at Walmart on Tuesday morning or at the playground on Wednesday afternoon?

It means this. If you are happily married, let's say you have the best marriage possible. There are probably still moments where you think to yourself, is this it?

Is this actually all there is? And the reason you think that is because the best marriage doesn't fulfill. It's not going to fulfill your longings and your desires.

That's not a flaw. That's a feature. It was never meant to fulfill your desires and your longings. It's meant to whet your appetite for something more. It's meant to point you beyond itself as every good sign does.

[26 : 46] You're made for more. You're made for even greater intimacy and joy and connection and pleasure. Maybe you're not a Christian and you feel this as well and you're starting to realize maybe the world has sold me short a little bit.

The answer is yes, it has. There is more to reality than this world can offer you. The fact that your heart is not satisfied points you to that.

Maybe you're not happily married. Maybe you're unhappily married. And the world tells you, you know what? Romantic fulfillment is actually the purpose of life. That's the good life.

That's what it means to be truly human. And so you're being told you need to do whatever you can to get there. It is time. Your marriage isn't working out right now. Time for you to eat, pray, love.

Okay? So you're tempted to despair. You're tempted to abandon your commitments. And God says to you this. My precious covenant child.

[27 : 56] Marriage is meant to be an appetizer for you of a great meal and a feast that's coming. And the appetizer may not be what you want it to be.

And you're not going to miss the feast. You are not going to miss out on the party. You may have missed out on the poster. We're still going to watch the movie.

There is something better and greater than what's happening right now in your marriage. The opposite, by the way, is also true.

You can have a great marriage in an earthly sense. And you can miss out on the feast. You can have many great and glorious experiences in this life.

And the feast is for those who follow and love Jesus Christ. Wherever you are, there's a big vision here that God gives us for marriage.

[29 : 02] If you're single, you might be thinking, okay, what in the world does this have to do with me? And there may be moments of loneliness and frustration and real grief.

And I don't mean to downplay that in any way. You might be committed to chastity. And when you're faithful to that, when you refuse to use other people, when you refuse to separate passion from commitment, what are you saying?

You're saying, I hope in something much greater than marriage and relationships and romantic fulfillment. I know it's just a sign. I know it's just an appetizer.

And so God says the same thing to you. My precious child, you might miss out on the appetizer now.

Don't worry. You're going to be at my feast. You might miss out on something small now. Don't worry. You're still invited to the party.

[30 : 10] You might not see everything now, but you are going to see it in full in my presence, whether you marry in this life or not. There is a bigger reality to this world.

Of course, it's our Lord Jesus who teaches us these things here, and he doesn't teach them offhandedly, but he teaches them knowing that they're going to come at a tremendous cost.

Jesus knows more than we do. The things that we've talked about this morning, he knows the joy and the delight and the commitment and the faithfulness and the pleasure that exists between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

He knows that as he's walking in a man on the earth, and what does he do? He chooses to be separated at the cross. He says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Jesus chooses to be cut off from the place where all the beauty comes from so that we could be with him, that we could be with God in his presence.

[31 : 18] And so that's our hope. Our hope is not in marriage as good and beautiful as it is. Our hope is that we will be with God fully and finally one day, that no matter what happens with the appetizers, we will be at the feast.

In fact, that's what we're about to sing. Page eight, we'll feast in the house of Zion. We will sing with our hearts restored. He has done great things, we will say together. We will feast and weep no more.

If you're in Christ, you are going to make it to the party, no matter what happens with marriage in this life. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you that we have an inheritance in you, stored up, unperishable and undefiled, that can't be touched, that no matter what happens to us now, there is something greater and larger that we look forward to and we long for.

And we ask that you would grow that in our hearts, that we would look to you more and more and know that there's something that this world can't offer, that you do and will when Jesus returns.

[32 : 27] And we ask all these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.