

One Flesh

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[0 : 00] 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 they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark, and you'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus and His life and His death and His resurrection. When we were in the first half, chapters 1 through 8, we were asking these two questions, who is Jesus and how do we respond to Him?

Peter gives this definitive answer in the middle of chapter 8 to Jesus' identity, proclaiming that He's the Christ. And from that point on in the Gospel, we're sort of following Jesus to the cross as He explains what it actually means to come after Him.

[1 : 11] And as we've seen, it involves tremendous joy, but also more suffering than we might choose or like. We're continuing that theme this morning, and we're going to be talking about a very painful topic for many of us, which Jesus is going to come and teach His disciples about divorce.

Now, as your pastor, I, of course, think about you all every week, but you've been especially on my mind this week, because as I think of our congregation, this family, I am painfully aware of the fact that divorce is not an abstract concept for us.

I know that many of you have experienced divorce personally, and just as many, if not more of you, have walked with a son or a daughter through their divorce.

And if you're a parent, you know oftentimes it's more painful to watch something happen to your child than to go through it yourself. You're tempted to wish that you could change places with them so they wouldn't have to suffer.

And so it's not just that it's a concrete topic for us, but it's also very painful and haunting no matter the circumstances. And so I imagine for many of you, as we talk about this, there are going to be all sorts of memories that are stirred up for you.

[2 : 36] And I just want to remind you in the midst of that, that Jesus was your shepherd before you showed up this morning. He's going to be your shepherd when you leave.

And he's also your shepherd right now. And he may not make you comfortable, but he does offer his comfort. And so Jesus is with you in the midst of that.

We don't just face the challenge of pain and memories as we talk about this topic together, but there's also some risks. There's some mistakes that we can make as we look at Jesus' teaching.

The first mistake is the mistake of assuming that everyone who is divorced has sinned somehow. I had a mentor who shared with me at one point, after his mother and father's divorce, when his mother would attend church, she felt like she was walking in wearing this big scarlet D on her chest, that she was known as the woman who had been divorced.

So it's important for us to recognize there are people who have sinned in this and there are people who have been sinned against. And so we need to be extremely careful in making assumptions about other people's stories.

[3 : 53] The other mistake we can make is for those who look back as they look at Jesus' teaching and they realize, yeah, there are ways that I've really failed in this area. And there's a risk of just wallowing in that shame and not knowing what to do with it.

And so it's important to recognize that as we talk about Jesus' word, it includes God's grace to us. That Jesus' forgiveness is real. And so we embrace that forgiveness and we walk in it. That's the essence of the gospel, right? The gospel assumes that we've made mistakes, that we've sinned, that we've failed, and we move forward following Jesus.

And so with that being said, I'll remind you as I say sometimes, I'm going to say something, not everything. And this is the beginning of a conversation, not the end of a conversation. And so if there are things that you want to discuss more, I'm happy to meet and do that. With that in mind, let's turn together to God's word. You can turn with me in your Bible. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone. No matter where you turn, this is God's word. [5 : 02] And God tells us in 30 verse 5 that every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. And so that's why we read now starting at verse 1.

And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.

And Pharisees came up, and in order to test him, asked, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? He answered them, What did Moses command you?

They said, Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away. And Jesus said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this commandment.

Verse 6, But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

[6 : 03] So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.

And he said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are a good shepherd and our good father.

And like a good father, you don't shy away from hard or sensitive or tender topics, but instead you speak to us clearly because you love us.

And we ask that you would do that this morning. We confess that your word is always too much for us unless you help us. And we confess that's especially true this morning.

[7 : 06] And so we ask for that help, that your spirit would be at work here, that you would speak clearly to us, and that you would comfort and be with us as we face perhaps our own failures, the failures of others, and memories that we would rather forget.

We know that your grace is enough. And so we simply ask for these things, knowing that we don't have to earn them or deserve them, but instead we ask for them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. We see at the beginning of this passage, Jesus is on the move again. The last time he changed locations was in chapter 9, when he was in Capernaum.

And we're told verse 1 here, he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. Now, if you're familiar with where the Sea of Galilee is and where Jerusalem is, you'll know at this point that Jesus is taking a journey south.

In other words, Jesus is doing what I've already told you about the Gospel of Mark. He's heading towards Jerusalem. Jesus is on his last journey here as he makes his way to the cross.

[8 : 15] And as he does this, verse 2, these Pharisees come as we've seen before, and they test him. Now, we talked about in the past that this word test is not a friendly word.

They are not coming with genuine questions. They are not seeking understanding. No, instead, they want to trap Jesus. In fact, there's two ways that they can trap him here.

First, they are pulling him into this intramural Jewish debate about Deuteronomy chapter 24. Deuteronomy chapter 24 lays out conditions for divorce, and it says you can divorce if there is anything indecent.

Now, there were two camps to translating that phrase. One camp of rabbis believed anything indecent only referred to sexual unfaithfulness. Another camp interpreted it as almost anything. And so there was a strict camp, and only if there's sexual unfaithfulness, and there was sort of this no-fault divorce camp. So they're pulling Jesus into this debate to try to get him to weigh in.

[9 : 18] The other way they're potentially trying to trap him is that Jesus is now back in Herod's territory. Remember what Herod did back in chapter 6. He beheaded John the Baptist for opposing

his marriage.

And you'll recall that John the Baptist had married Herod, had married Herodias, his brother's wife. What did she have to do to marry him? She had to divorce her brother.

And so potentially the hope is we will get Jesus on the record against this. Herod took care of John the Baptist. Herod can take care of Jesus for us.

They have set this up. They're hoping here that Jesus is in a lose-lose situation. As he always does, though, Jesus turns the tables on them.

And in verse 3, he says, How about you answer your own question? You tell me what Moses said. In fact, he uses this word, what Moses commanded.

[10:17] He's poking them because they have to admit the next verse that Moses didn't command anything. Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.

Jesus explains for them, Okay, yeah, that's true that Moses allowed this. Why did he do it? Verse 5, Because of your hardness of heart.

Jesus doesn't take sides in this debate. He just says, Look, what Moses did was not condoning or allowing divorce. He was looking at a troubling situation and choosing what some called the lesser of two evils.

And so he doesn't resolve this debate for us. Is Deuteronomy talking about adultery or is it talking about simply protecting a woman who is in a vulnerable situation, who's being divorced for a frivolous reason?

Either way, Jesus' point is clear. Hardness of heart is not a good thing. Your focus is entirely on the wrong place.

[11:28] You are asking about how and when and whether you can get divorced. And instead, you should be focused on the beauty and glory of marriage.

You should be focused not on how you can get out, but how you can stay in. Now, I just want to note for a minute as we think about the Bible's teaching on divorce, this is one of many passages. And as we take all of those passages together, the church is in agreement for the most part that there are three categories of biblical divorce. In other words, divorce that is not against God's law. The first one is clear, adultery. This was at least what Deuteronomy 24 was talking about. Okay, so sexual unfaithfulness is a biblical category of divorce.

The apostle Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 7, there's another category, the category of abandonment. He says if one spouse leaves another, the one who is left, the one who is abandoned, is free to move on.

[12:31] They're free to get married again. And the third category is the category of abuse. Now, we don't have a specific biblical text that talks about abuse in marriage, but biblical scholars have considered abuse to be a form of abandonment.

It's a subcategory of abandonment. And so those are three categories as we think about a biblical divorce. We have adultery, abandonment, and abuse. And this is one of many passages that we pull together and look at to come to this conclusion.

But Jesus here is actually not interested in talking about reasons or pathways for divorce. What he says here is, look, you want to talk about divorce, but we actually need to back up.

What I want to talk about is what is marriage. Divorce is not going to make any sense. I cannot answer your question. We can't get to the heart of the matter until we get to the foundation of the matter.

What is it that we're actually talking about? And as we'll see, Jesus teaching about divorce only makes sense because of, in light of his teaching on marriage.

[13:42] And so we are also going to back up and stop talking about divorce for a minute and just talk about marriage because that's what Jesus teaches about here in verses six through nine. First, in verse six, it's interesting that Jesus does not start with the institution of marriage in the book of Genesis.

He actually backs up and talks about the fact that God has created man, male, and female. Now we might gloss over that in an earlier time period right here in America in 2022.

This is a reminder for us that marriage is between and marriage is only between a man and a woman. Amen. And that is not arbitrary, okay?

That is not something that God flipped a coin and said, you know, there's no real reason behind this. I'm just going to make a judgment call. No, there is a deep logic that's behind the fact that

marriage is between a man and a woman.

There's this oneness that Jesus is going to talk about later in the passage. He says they become one flesh. That one flesh requires there to be some mission, some purpose, some trajectory beyond and outside of that marriage.

[15:04] Full and true oneness means you're pointing to something beyond yourselves. That's why marriages are public ceremonies, typically. That's why we don't treat them like you would treat signing a loan on a mortgage because they are a public relationship.

Another way of putting it would be this. Unity and oneness must be about more than pleasure and self-fulfillment. And yes, that's the narrative that our culture tells us about any kind of marriage these days, that it is mostly about you.

It is only, in other words, a heterosexual union that fully points to something beyond itself and outside of itself. This is a simple logic. It is rooted not in bigotry, but in biology.

Only heterosexual couples have the potential for children. This does not mean you must have children for your marriage to point outside of that.

It does mean there is something intrinsic to a man and a woman coming together in marriage in a sexual union that points to a mission and a purpose beyond themselves, whether they are kids or not.

[16:26] Now, I wish I could spend more time on verse six. That is a brief summary. If you look with me on page seven, I've given you a brief summary of chapters one and two from this book called What is Marriage?

And I have a quote there from it. If you want to dig into the logic and the argument behind why marriage is only between one man and one woman, that is the resource I would point you to. And they say this, And then, drawing here, echoing Jesus' statement, we see this, The vision of marriage is about a comprehensive union of sexually complementary spouses, that is a man and a woman, where a man and a woman unite as a husband and wife to then provide children with a mother and a father.

Verse six, When we're looking to understand marriage, when we're looking to capture the vision of what God imagined at the beginning, we begin by understanding that it is between a man and a woman.

Okay, so I'm going to put a pause there. I realize that's the beginning of a conversation, not the end. That might raise more questions than it answers for some of you, and I'm happy to talk more about that.

[17:51] Okay? We'll move on here, though, because after laying that foundation, Jesus then tells us, verses seven and eight, that not only is this rooted in sexual complementarity, it is also what he refers to as one flesh.

A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

You know, if you've been with us for a while, that if the Bible wants to underline and highlight something, it repeats it. When you are married to someone, there is a sense in which two people become one.

This is certainly much more, speaking about much more than the sexual union between a husband and a wife. It is not speaking about less than that.

Okay? It is definitely speaking about more than just what happens sexually between a husband and a wife. It is not speaking about less than that, though. And so I want to pause here for a minute and talk about what it means when a man and a woman come together in sex, when a husband and a wife enjoy one another.

[19:10] There is something about the nature and reality of sex that makes two people one. And it is more than physical.

There is something about the reality and nature of sex that makes two people one. It is more than physical. There is something spiritual going on. There is something emotional that's happening. There is something there that is greater than the sum of its parts. And that thing that happens that we don't fully have language for that's greater than the sum of its parts, it is not just in the moment. It is afterwards, too. When a man and a woman sleep together, it changes something fundamental between the two of them moving forward.

In other words, there is no such thing as casual sex. There is no such thing as casual sex.

[20 : 15] I invite you to look with me at verse eight of your worship guide, which explains this better than I can. There's this quote that I mentioned to you all a couple years ago from Cameron Diaz in Vanilla Sky with Tom Cruise, and she's playing this woman named Julie, and she's yelling at Tom in the car as they're driving because she's so frustrated with him.

By the way, I do not recommend that movie. If you watch it, do not come back and complain to me, okay? But she says this, don't you know that when you sleep with someone, your body makes a promise whether you do or not?

There is something about sex that draws two people together and makes them one, then and moving forward.

When you have sex with someone, you are saying physically what your marriage vows say verbally. You are saying physically what your marriage vows say verbally, and you are saying that whether you want to or not.

When Cameron Diaz confronts Tom Cruise, what she's saying is, you have done more than you realize. You don't realize the promises that you made to me when we slept together.

[21 : 41] One theologian puts it like this. This is the next quote. The essential moral problem with sex outside of marriage is that it performs a life-uniting act without a life-uniting intent, thus violating its intrinsic meaning.

There's no better definition than I can find for what happens between a man and a woman. It's that their lives are united then and moving forward.

When you sleep with someone, you are saying, I will never leave you nor forsake you. You are saying to them whether you want to or not, I will be with you in sickness and in health.

You are saying, whether you realize it or not, I'm committed to you for richer or for poorer. It is a life-uniting act with life-uniting power.

You make promises, your body makes promises whether you do or not. Finally, Jesus tells us here in verse nine, what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

[22 : 53] In other words, this is not just some sort of private arrangement that you have put together, but that marriage happens in the presence of God. Every time I officiate a wedding, there are two sets of vows.

The first set of vows, I say, you're going to make these vows before God and these witnesses. Because marriage is a public relationship.

And it's after that that they make vows to each other. Marriage is not a private event. Marriage is not a private relationship.

There is a third party involved in the vows that happen, the marriages in our church. That party is God. Spouses make promises to one another. They also make promises to the creator of the universe.

That's what marriage is. I want you to think about it in this way. There are some things that are so powerful that they are reserved for very special, specific situations.

[24 : 01] One example, there are some weapons that you will not use for home defense. Why? They're too powerful. The last thing you want is a bullet going through four doors into your neighbor's house.

Right? You're going to end up hitting someone who's innocent. If you're going to use a nuclear bomb, you don't use it unless you really want to obliterate something.

Right? It's too powerful for anything else. Do not use sex unless you want to permanently and exclusively join two lives.

It is too powerful for anything else. Do not use sex unless you want to exclusively and permanently join two lives.

It is too powerful for anything else. This is not because we hate sex. It's not because we're afraid of it. It's not because we're old-fashioned.

[25 : 09] It's because we recognize its true nature. We understand and realize how powerful it actually is. We recognize God's goodness. God says, look, let me give you this amazing tool.

It's going to be better than anything you've ever experienced before and it's going to glue two people together. So, wow, be careful with it.

It's great. It's wonderful. It's powerful. Also, be careful how you use it. And so, for our young adults, our youth, I want you to especially hear me.

You can believe in gravity or you cannot believe in gravity. If you jump off a building, you're going to hurt yourself. You can believe what I've just told you or you cannot believe it.

You can learn the easy way or the hard way. please learn the easy way. Either way, sex without vows is taking a great risk.

[26 : 20] Sex without vows is jumping off a building. Only vows make sex safe. Okay? Remember, John 8, 44 tells us about the devil.

He's a liar and the father of lies. What our culture wants you to believe right now is that sex is not a big deal. What the Bible teaches us is that it is an amazing, big, powerful deal.

Use it. Be careful where you aim it. Now, I mentioned before it's certainly more than sex.

It's not less than that, but it is more than that. And so, having discussed that one flesh unity, it's important to recognize that it is what one of the quotes I read you called a comprehensive union.

That when you're married to someone, the way in which you become one flesh, yes, it's inseparable from your sexual relationship and it includes everything else. It means that you're one financially.

[27 : 22] It means that you're one in where you live. It means that you're one emotionally. There is a package deal that goes with marriage. You are united to this person in every way.

There's a reason why in our vows we talk about forsaking all others. And so, it's this background, this meaning, this power to marriage that Jesus has to lay the foundation before, before he jumps back into the discussion about divorce.

Look, first thing you need to know about marriage, it takes two people and it makes them as if they're one. It takes two people and it makes them as if they're one.

And so, you're asking the wrong question. You have the wrong vision here. Your focus should not be on when you can divorce. Know that marriage is much greater and more powerful than you realize.

Let your focus be on the beauty of marriage and how you can stay together. You are one person now. Do not separate.

[28 : 30] You're one person. Do not separate. Okay, it's with all of that background, Jesus lays out the vision for marriage that we can jump back in now and talk about divorce.

Verse 9, he says this, what therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. And then, he says this interesting thing in verses 11 and 12, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. Now, that, at first glance, doesn't really make sense. How can you commit adultery when you're not married anymore?

Adultery, by definition, requires marriage. What Jesus is saying is this, even if you're separated on paper, you can't just undo your one flesh union.

Even if you're separated on paper, you can't undo this one flesh reality that's happened between the two of you. Paper can't take a person and cut them in half.

[29 : 39] Paper can't take a person and cut them in half. There is a sense in which you are still connected together because that oneness is so intense and comprehensive.

You are not business partners who have parted ways. You are one body that has been ripped in half.

You're not business partners who have just simply parted ways. When divorce happens, you are one body that is ripped in half. Now, that may sound harsh to say out loud, but the reality is if you have been divorced, you know those words are perhaps not strong enough.

If you've experienced divorce, what I'm telling you is something that you already know. You already know that it's one of the most traumatic and painful things that could ever happen to someone.

And so, I'm simply giving language for what it is that you have already experienced. This simply explains what we already know from reality, explains why it is so devastating and painful.

[30 : 59] Jesus is outlining the logic for us so that it finally makes sense. In other words, this is not, Jesus' words are not what's painful. Jesus' words describe and help us understand the pain of what is going on.

If you've experienced divorce, if you've walked with your child through divorce, if your parents were divorced, you know this is true. You don't need me to tell you. And so, that helps us understand Jesus' words here.

It helps us understand God's words in the book of Malachi. It says, God hates divorce. I had a mentor who was divorced and is in a mixed marriage now and he told me, he's a pastor, he said, Matthew, before I got divorced and I thought about those words, God hates divorce, I thought about it in terms of God's holiness and his law.

And that's true, but now that I have been divorced, I know why God hates divorce. He hates it because it's so devastating. He hates it because of the wreckage that it causes.

And so, in the midst of this, that's the glimmer of God's love. Jesus' warning here, God's teaching in the Bible is not out of cruelty or anger, it's not because God is mean, it's because God knows how painful it is.

[32 : 27] He wants to spare you. He wants to protect you. Now, you might be wondering why we haven't talked about Ephesians 5 and the fact that marriage pictures the gospel.

It does. Talk about that. The challenge before us this morning is simply that that's not the thrust of this passage. So, when we get to Ephesians 5, we'll talk about that. We're in Mark 10, and Jesus' argument here in Mark 10 is one based on the one flesh reality.

We're going to focus on that together this morning. I'll give you a few applications as we're here together. First, we need to know that we live in a society of self fulfillment and we follow a savior of self sacrifice.

We live in a society of self fulfillment and we follow a savior of self sacrifice. In other words, the vision that our culture has for marriage is completely wrong. self fulfillment gives us these reasons for divorce that make no sense in light of the one flesh union.

Self fulfillment looks for the first way out when happiness is declining or when needs aren't being met. Self sacrifice looks for a way to serve and meet the needs of others.

[33 : 50] Shine Mountain, I want to tell you three things about our marriages here together this morning. First of all, don't go it alone. Please get help sooner rather than later.

If you are struggling in your marriage, please talk to someone. It is not a badge of honor. It is not something to be proud of that you've never been to marriage counseling.

Okay? Remember, we've talked about over and over in the gospel of Mark, need is the price of admission. All of us are broken and need help.

All of us face challenges and sin in our lives. Divorce is one of the hardest things that someone can experience in this world.

If you don't believe that, you've never been divorced. Do not go it alone. Do not walk by yourself. second, don't believe the lies that our culture tells us.

[34 : 56] There's a genre of movie and novel right now that's been affectionately or pejoratively titled divorce porn. The most clear example is Eat, Pray, Love, the movie with Julia Ross, which presents divorce as this wonderful, beautiful thing where if you do it, you get to go visit Italy and meet a man who's a 10.

Brothers and sisters, you're harder to live with than you realize, and you ain't a 10. Okay? It's a believable myth.

Do not believe, eat, pray, love. That is not the reality of divorce. Okay? Finally, be careful who you marry.

Hormones in the Holy Spirit are both real. They are not the same. Marriage is a very, very serious commitment.

Can't get out of marriage lightly? Don't go into marriage lightly. It takes time for someone's character to reveal itself. It takes time for you to finally understand, oh, he has a real problem with anger.

[36 : 19] That doesn't show up on the first date. Okay? Trust me. It takes time to realize, oh, this person's emotionally unstable. Okay? That may not show up in month one. Be careful who you marry.

People can hide things for a time. They cannot hide them forever. forever. Take time. Know.

Know who you're marrying. Okay? Know what you're getting into. Don't go it alone. Don't believe divorce porn. Be careful who you marry.

What does this all have to do with the gospel? Well, part of what the gospel tells us is that God is coming to restore this world. And so when Jesus presents us this great vision of what marriage is meant to be, saying, look, let's get back to the way God intended it.

Let's not try to focus on these exceptions. Let's go back to restoring this world. Marriage is not easy.

[37 : 32] It actually turns out it's really hard for men and women to try to figure out how to get along with each other. Jesus' commitment empowers our commitment. Jesus' commitment empowers our commitment.

We look to Jesus' model and love for us so that we can give that love to others. I'm stealing this from another pastor, but he says marriage is two ticks and no dog.

You have to find the source of your love somewhere outside of your marriage. That source is God's love for you. Finally, it's Jesus' death that covers our failures.

In Matthew chapter one, we find that about Jesus' genealogy, all the people who've come before him that lead to Jesus' birth. And you know what? Jesus comes from a long line of people who messed up marriage.

Jesus comes from Jacob who was a polygamist. Jesus comes from Tamar who pretended to be a prostitute. Jesus comes from David, King David, who committed adultery.

[38 : 45] Jesus came from Solomon whose many wives led him astray. Which reminds us of this. Your hope this morning as you leave is not that your marriage would be perfect.

your hope this morning as you leave is not that your past has no mistakes and failures in it. Your hope this morning is Jesus.

Jesus is the one who lays out the standard for marriage. He's the one whose lineage includes many people who messed up their marriages.

Jesus is the one who dies to cover the sins of our failures and our mistakes. As long as you are breathing and alive in this world your story is not over.

Jesus is with you and for you. And so that's our hope that we're going to sing together on page eight. Jesus is a friend for sinners. We're told the first verse Jesus makes us whole.

[39 : 57] Jesus is our comfort. He helps our soul. And no matter what our story includes we know that we are his and he is ours.

So we're going to sing that. Let's pray together first. Our Father in heaven we praise you and thank you for your word even when it's hard and challenging.

I do ask for your comfort for your sons and daughters here this morning. As no doubt painful memories and experiences have been stirred up I ask that you would remind them that you are their good shepherd that you're with them that others may have left them or forsaken them but you don't and you won't and that your grace and your forgiveness are real that our hope is not that we would have perfect marriages but our hope is in you.

I invite you to stand for our closing hymn.