

# Matthew 19:1-15

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[ 0 : 00 ] Take your Bibles, go into the book of Matthew, Gospel of Matthew. Matthew chapter 19 is where we are at. When we get to text like this, I'm so thankful that I am an expository preacher and that, you know, while I may not be the greatest and grandest of expositors and sometimes I feel like I don't do the text justice and don't always bring out the meat of the Word and really don't take my time to dive to the depths of it and I understand my own limitations in that.

But I'm thankful that God allowed me many, many years ago to declare this is where I'm going and he kind of sets the course for me rather than me picking and choosing text.

Because to be honest, I'm not so sure that I would always pick and choose the text that we come to, especially in particular days that we come to. Sometimes I would never choose these texts.

Matthew 19, the first part of it, at least where we'll be at this morning, verses 1 through 15, is one of those portions of text that if I looked back and I look at the early part of my ministry in which I was just what I would call a topical pastor, or topical preacher, not that there's anything wrong with that. I'm not disparaging it at all. At times there are times that it's fitting to preach a topical message. But primarily I was picking and choosing text based on how I felt that day, based on where I felt like the Lord was leading me at that time.

I never would have picked this passage. I would have skipped over the first 15 verses and went right to verse 16 of Matthew 19 because that's a very familiar set of scripture to us and one that we love to look at. But rather when we get to this, at least we begin to see the fullness of the word of God.

[ 1 : 31 ] With that in mind, we just this past Wednesday night have finished up the book of Joshua. That is a book that I had never preached completely through. And now we are embarking, or at least we're going to attempt to embark, if the Lord allows us to tarry, beginning this evening, into the book of Judges.

Again, not a book that I've ever preached all the way through, but one that we are there because that's the course that we have set and the Lord has led us to it. Now while I have preached a number of messages out of the book of Judges, I've never preached entirely through the book of Judges, and I'm excited about that.

But the text that we have before us this morning is one that we have to be careful when we approach it. And I'm going to go ahead and tell you this on the first hand. Because our natural feeling when we read this is all of a sudden to get either defensive or legalistic about the matter, and we don't want to approach it with either one of those things.

We'll see from the depth of the text, and hopefully we'll see from the meaning of the text, this is never to come to us in a legalistic nature, but rather we are to come to hear the very Word of God and allow the Word of God to speak to our hearts and minds and to impart truth to us, not feeling. That's important because the issue that is put before Christ in our passage is a very contemporary hot topic button. And to be honest, it is a hot topic button even in today's time because as the book of Ecclesiastes tells us, there's nothing new under the sun.

[ 2 : 48 ] The matters that were a big issue in the time of Christ, surprise, surprise, my friend, they are still matters that are a big issue today because all things that are are things that have been.

And as the author of the book of Ecclesiastes reminds us, then that which was is that which is, and there is nothing new under the sun. And as we'll see in our text when we read it together, those who are approaching Christ and bringing up this matter were bringing it up with a cultural mindset rather than the mindset of wanting to hear just the very Word of God declare truth in that setting.

So our desire is not to come to it with any ulterior motives, not to come to it with any skewed mindset, but to come and say, Lord, speak to us, tell us the truth, and help us to understand it in reality.

So if you're physically able and desire to do so, I ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 19, verses 1 through 15. The Word of God says, They are no longer two, but one flesh.

What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate. They said to him, Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away? And he said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been this way.

[ 4 : 30 ] And I say to you, Whoever divorces his wife except for immorality and marries another woman commits adultery. And the disciples said to him, If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.

But he said to them, Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

He who is able to accept this, let him accept it. That some children were brought to him, so that he might lay his hands on them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them. And Jesus said, Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

After laying his hands on them, he departed from there. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for allowing us to gather together this morning. Lord, we thank you for the opportunity we have had to worship you in song, to spend time together fellowshiping among brothers and sisters in Christ. And Lord, now we come to you saying, Speak, Lord. Lord, may your truth captivate our hearts, may it captivate our minds, and may we be focused on what it is you declare to us, rather than what it is the world proclaims.

[ 5 : 41 ] Lord, we ask that you would show yourself in all clearness, in all reality, that you would be glorified and honored, and lifted up above our circumstances. And we ask it all in Christ's name.

Amen. You may be seated. This morning, I want you to see what it looks like to move beyond questions to the heart of the man. To move beyond the question into the heart of man.

Now, it may seem as if verses 13, 14, and 15 really do not fit with the particular passage of that which precedes it. As a matter of fact, many people would take these three verses and kind of set them aside on their own.

Too often, these have been used in Sunday school settings, or even in children's church settings, or even maybe from the pulpit, to promote the reality that the kingdom of heaven belongs to children.

Now, we need to stop right here and just kind of caution ourselves before reading into the text what is not there.

And we want to read this in light of something that we've already seen that pertains to this in particular, and that is when Christ set the child before them and said whoever becomes like this child will be a part of the kingdom of heaven.

[ 6 : 38 ] So we'll just put these things on the front end and then we'll kind of get into the text. What we need to understand is verses 13, 14, and 15 do not declare that the kingdom of heaven is belonging to the children.

It says that whoever will become like these, remember that childlike faith, that humility, that humbleness, that meekness? He is not declaring here that the kingdom of heaven belongs to these, but that it belongs to those who become like these.

Okay? We're not going to take time right now to get into the age of accountability and all this other stuff, and we're just not really going to dive into the text that far because we don't have at least the time to get into it.

I believe, just to put it out there, scripture, there is an occasion accountability. There is an age of accountability. There is this standard where an individual comes to the realization of his own sins. He repents of that sin.

He confesses Christ as both Lord and Savior and follows the Lord and believer's baptism, and at that moment is saved, but we're not really going to get into it. What we don't see here is that the Bible teaches that children have a special place, quote, unquote, in heaven.

[ 7 : 41 ] It is those who have a childlike faith that are members of the kingdom of heaven. We just want to keep it within the confounds of scripture. Again, we want to read into that something that it doesn't clearly teach, and I know to some of us we push back against that, but again, if we go back

to when Christ took that little child and set them before them, he starts speaking of childlike faith, right?

Not children in particular. So we do see that this fits with the verses which precede it, because even with the children, as he promotes them and he elevates them, he is moving from beyond the natural, or at least the society's interpretation of what is important, or what has position, or what needs to be elevated, or what needs to be belittled.

So we see here that this fits quite nicely with the text which goes before it. And really, we are moving beyond the questions that man have to really the heart issue of man.

Now, it tells us that these things take place when Christ is finished, what has just happened, really, that it happened very consecutively in chapter 16, 17, and 18, when he's had this great teaching, and he's had all these matters of what the kingdom of heaven looks like.

And it says that he comes into the area of Judea on the other side of the Jordan. Now, if we want to put it historically in its proper setting, he is on his way to Jerusalem. And the reason we know he's on his way to Jerusalem is because the major thoroughfare to get to Jerusalem was on that Transjordan, or the eastern side of the Jordan River, region in which many of the Jewish people would traverse.

[ 9 : 11 ] Because, if you remember from the Gospel of John, they didn't want to go through the Judean region, or the Samaritan region, that was between Judea and Galilee. They didn't want to go through Samaria because that to them was unclean.

Even though Christ makes a trip into that region and finds the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman at the well. But here we see that he's on his final trek. He's on his way to Jerusalem. We know that his final appearance because it is there, in which he will be betrayed, he will be handed over, he will be tried, in no less than six court appearances.

He will be found guilty of things that he is innocent of. They will convict him upon the charges of blasphemy, and they will crucify him on a Roman cross. He will be buried in a tomb, and he will stay there three days, and then he will be raised again.

But this is his trip to Jerusalem. He is on his way south, if you will, but he is going up to the presence of God in Jerusalem. And as he is going there for a particular feast, you remember, there are a number of people who are going with him, and this is why we see these crowds gathering around him.

And as he's traveling, or as he's on his way, it says the number of people are around him, and he heals a multitude of them, right? People are touched by him and healed by him, and it is amazing to see the power of God among man, even as they're making this annual trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.

[ 10 : 33 ] But yet we meet this encounter because there are also some Pharisees there. And this is here where we begin to see the first point of the message, and that is the desire of man.

But because questions come really rooted in our desires rather than in truth. It says, And some Pharisees came to Jesus and testing him and asking.

See, the reality is, most of mankind's questions to God are really testings of God. It is not the desire of man to seek truth, naturally.

It is the desire of man to test what God proclaims as truth. And what we see here is the Pharisees being, quote, unquote, the students of the law, understanding the word.

They come to Christ with a question, but their question, the root desire of the question is they are testing the Savior, not seeking the Savior. And quite too often, when people come to Christ with questions, their questions are not seeking who he is, but rather seeking to test the reality of what he declares about himself.

[ 11 : 52 ] It is more of a testing situation. I want to test Jesus and try him out and see if he can do what I think he should be able to do or see if he answers the way that I think he should be able to answer.

And if you remember this past Sunday night or Wednesday night when we were closing the book of Joshua, we saw the reality that God always proclaims his goodness and displays his goodness to his people before he calls for the question, right?

He is always showing himself as true. He is showing himself as faithful. He is showing himself as righteous. And then he calls man to respond to what he has already declared about himself.

The question comes to man after the display of God's goodness, faithfulness, kindness, mercy, and love. So what we find, it is a very bad position to say, well, I'm going to go try God out.

And we don't test God to find out if he's going to be those things because the reality is the things that he's already done in our lives prove that he is those things. And so when the question comes to us, it is a question of how we will respond to goodness, not do we need to test Jesus and see if he is who he says he is.

[12:58] But the Pharisees come here with this desire and that is to test him. And they ask him this question, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all? Now let's make sure that we have this in context because who is this that is coming to him, right?

These are the Pharisees, right? Who are the Pharisees? The Pharisees are the religious leaders, the scribes, and really the law keepers of his day, right? They are the people who would ensure that all of Jerusalem would know the law, have a right interpretation of the law, and at least they were trying to make sure people lived according to the law.

It is the Pharisees who came up with the oral tradition, which would be later recorded into what we call the Mishnah or the written tradition, which contained over 634 interpretations of the Ten Commandments, right?

They took 10 great sayings and made 634 legalistic laws. This is what the Pharisees did. They had all the education, they had all the training, and they devoted their time to understanding how to interpret the law.

Now when they come to Jesus, they're not just asking him a question. Their desire is not really seeking truth. Their desire is to corner Jesus into making a proclamation. And the reason we know this is because at this time, there were two great schools of what you call rabbinical thoughts.

[14:13] There were two leading rabbis who had schools. You remember Paul went to a rabbinical school. Paul studied at the feet of Gamaliel. Remember that? Gamaliel is one of the great Jewish leaders and rabbis who had a great school and people would sit.

Well, there were two great rabbinical schools, and you'll have to forgive me, the name of one was Hillel, and I can't remember the name of the other, but there were two differing interpretations. One rabbinical school said that the only reason that you could ever divorce your wife would be because of unchastity or uncleanness, some kind of uncleanness among her.

If she committed adultery or if there was an adultery in a relationship, now ladies don't get upset at me because by I say wife, it means both sides, right? The woman could divorce the husband for the same reason. And this is based upon Moses' declaration in the book of Deuteronomy where he does this and he lays out their certificate of divorce.

Now the other school, because when Moses declared this, the declaration in the book of Moses, in the books of the law, the book of Deuteronomy, Moses says that a man shall give a woman a certificate of divorce for any uncleanness.

Now the argument was what does that word unclean mean? One rabbinical school said unclean means that she's committed adultery. The other rabbinical school said, well, if you just think she doesn't look as good as she ought to look, or if you found someone who's more pretty, or if maybe she burned your food, or if maybe anything improper is in her, that could be considered unclean.

[15:46] And for any reason whatsoever, you can divorce her. And you see the differing in these two opinions. You had one very liberal interpretation and one very legalistic interpretation.

So in coming to Christ and asking this question, they were not really seeking truth. They wanted to corner him in because no matter which answer he gave, half of the religious leaders were going to oppose him. But let's bring it to our day and time.

Most of the questions we bring, our desire is not to know the truth, but rather to see how far we can go. Because the matter of the interpretation of what Moses had declared in the book of Deuteronomy was not what has God said, but rather it was how far can we go and it still be okay. Because the desire of man is always seeking to know the boundaries. How far can we go and we still be okay?

When do I know I've went too far? When can I say that I'm okay? And just how far can I push it? A lot of children here, we've been blessed with that.

[17:00] But how many of us have realized that when we look around our house and all of a sudden we see something that maybe a little child doesn't need and that child hasn't even noticed that thing before and all of a sudden we take that thing and we put it up high.

The one thing that kid wants from that moment on is whatever you have put out of reach. Because the natural inclination of man is to push the boundaries and see how far we can go.

Most of the times the questions we ask, let's quit picking on the Pharisees and let's bring it to ourselves. Most of the times the questions we ask our Savior is not a desire to know the truth but a desire to know how far we can go and get away with it.

Can I do this? Can I do that? When does this become wrong? When does this become right? When does this become sin? And friend, let's just be honest. The answer is never found in a legalistic answer but rather we are seeking to bypass the relationship so that we can know the boundary. Boundaries are set within a relationship not within a question and answer session. So we see here that man has no desire, at least the Pharisees here, have no desire for a relationship with Christ.

[18:13] They just want him to set the boundaries that will cause conflict. We understand that.

Friends, listen to me. In any relationship we have, a parent relationship, husband and wife relationship, friend relationship, church relationship, our boundaries are not set by rules and order.

Our boundaries are set better by relational environments. Right? The more we know one another, the closer we grow to one another, and the more we understand what it is we should and we should not do.

So we see here the desire of man is not necessarily to seek the truth but to seek how far he can go in the truth. The second one is very easy and very quick because the desire of man always diminishes the position.

Number two, it diminishes the position. When we begin to operate upon man's desire, we always belittle and diminish what God has declared. We see this, the greatest, in the story and the account of those who are bringing their children to Christ.

Now to us, and rightfully so, we should be a little bit discouraged here because as they're bringing these children to Christ, it says the disciples began to discourage and to rebuke them and say, get away, don't bring the kids to Christ.

[19:21] And we rightfully should say, well, that's just wrong. And it is wrong because if anything, they were seeking the blessing of Christ upon their children. And I want us to bring our children to Christ, right? We want Christ to wrap his arms around our children and to bless them.

And we want his favor to rest upon them. And we want to put them in a position where his favor and his presence would be known and they would grow up in the admonition of the Lord with the favor of God being displayed upon their life.

But see, at the time of Christ, that had been so diminished and so pushed down because of the desire of man was self-promotion that children, and many of you know this, you were to be seen, not heard, never to be in the way, right?

To always be kind of in the background, to never be put forward. Now, we don't want to go to the other extreme of that pendulum and let children rule the roost either, right? There has to be order. There has to be discipline. You know, we see both ends of that spectrum.

But here we see this discouragement here and we see that happens when man gets his way and when the desire of man takes prominence, everything begins to be diminished because the question is, can a man divorce his wife for any reason at all?

[20:23] And I love how Jesus answers this. He says, have you not read? Have you not read? By the way, you need to understand that Jesus all of a sudden takes the stance that they are standing upon, be it the liberal, loose stance, or the ultra-conservative, legalistic stance, and he is all of a sudden putting their tradition in direct conflict with revelation.

He does not say, what do your teachers say or what have you heard? He says, have you not read? But at this time, the Mishnah had not been written. It was still oral tradition.

So he takes them back to the word of God because what we see here is that by tradition, we diminish things. By revelation, things are exalted.

Man in his tradition diminishes the reality of things. When we worship as a result of tradition, we diminish it. When we read the word of God as a result of tradition, we diminish it.

When we give, because that's what we're supposed to do by mean of tradition, we diminish it. But when we do it as a result of revelation, we exalt it. He says, have you not read?

[21:45] Now let's look at the third and final truth. You have this desire of man, the diminished position, and number three, the design of God. Because God takes them through Christ from this question really to the heart of matter and he takes them back to original design.

And he says, have you not read? By the way, there's some things that we have to hit here because they're here in the text and if we did not address them, we would not be fair to the text. Notice where Jesus starts when this declaration of marriage, right?

He says, have you not read that he who created them, by the way, he starts with the creator, not with the interpreter. Because every question we have finds its answer in the creator, not in other people's opinions.

He who created it has the right to define it. Just go ahead and affirm that. You may not agree with that. You may not like that. But if he created it, he defines it.

I remember, some of you are present, used to be Big Daddy's restaurant down here on Potts Road. There's a tool hanging up inside the restaurant.

[ 22 : 53 ] It used to be, it's not there anymore, now it's a cabinet shop. There was a tool hanging up on the wall. I remember Lowell Potts designed that tool and took it to a machinist and they made that tool.

And you know what was underneath that tool? What the creator told you that tool did. Because he designed it, therefore he told you what it did. Because creator always defines and determines what something does.

Always. So Jesus says that he who created them, now look at what he says, created them male and female.

This is where you have to address it. In the original language, male and female are the emphatic Greek text, which means they are put forward on purpose. I told you, it's a controversial issue.

I told you society has a way of pushing it back. But Jesus started with creation and he started with a man and a woman in a very definitive, separate position. And he put them forward intentionally.

[ 23 : 58 ] By the way, the struggles and the longings of mankind are not new. All the way back in the book of Romans, it says that God gave them over for where a man would desire another man and a woman would desire another woman.

And this was already taking place in the Roman Empire during the time of Christ. And it's something that had plagued the world for centuries and centuries and centuries. But when Jesus brings it to the forefront, when he begins speaking about design, he lays it out there.

He says, in the beginning, God created them male and female. And for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined together with his wife.

By the way, that means there's just the two become one. You say, well, when I read the rest of the Old Testament, there's this man that have all these wives. There's all this problem, right? But that's not the design. Go all the way back to the design, right?

Don't go to man's interpretation or even the way he lives. And we'll get to that in just a minute. And I'm trying to get there quickly. But he goes back to the design of how it should be. And he starts speaking of the reality that the two become one and they are no longer two.

[ 25 : 00 ] Now they're one flesh. And as someone said in the economy of God, one plus one equals one. Because now you no longer have two separate individuals. Now you have one individual who's put together in the lives of two. And this is really just a mysterious thing.

Paul says, that this speaks of reference of Christ and his church. But we see in the Gospels here that Jesus says this is the design of God and that they should never be separate. And then he goes on all these things and he starts laying it out here and he starts speaking of the reality and the permanence of marriage and how God designed it.

And then we see their diminished position because they say, well then why did Moses command us to give a divorce? Did you see what Jesus said? They said, Moses commanded us to do it and Jesus said, Moses didn't command you, he permitted you.

Man has a way of turning God's permissions into commandments. And Jesus says, he permitted you because of the hardness of your heart. That's a good way of saying the fall of man, man's sin. Sin has affected every area of our life. And the fall of man has ensured that the design and desire of God will never be lived out perfectly apart from Christ.

[ 26 : 07 ] And again, this is not getting legalistic. This is getting to the reality of the truth. Because the reason this is an issue is not because God designed it wrong.

It's not because it wasn't laid out right. It's because man has a hard heart. And we have a sin issue. Not a law issue.

We don't need a better interpretation of what we can and can't do. We don't need a better interpretation of how far we can go. We need a new heart. Now these things do happen. Divorce does take place. And it's going to take place. Children are lessened and diminished and cast aside too often and it should break our hearts. Things that are elevated in the presence of God are belittled and diminished in the presence of man.

And we shouldn't ask ourselves, well God, where did you mess up? The great, great prevailing question is Christ, how does our fall get us to this point?

[ 27 : 14 ] And we see that the design of God is so marred by the fall of man. Friend, listen to me. This pushes us further and further and further to the cross. Because only at the cross of Calvary can we find the problem of man redeemed, renewed, and restored.

Where is he going? He's on his way to Jerusalem one last time to hang on the cross of Calvary for my hard heart. I don't need a better interpretation of the law.

I need a savior who's willing to die because I've messed up the law. And praise be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we have it. I proclaim as Paul, oh what a wicked man that I am.

Who would deliver me from this wickedness and this messing up and marring. Listen, marriage is just one of the great designs of God that man has marred. Marriage is just a really, as some say, marriage is a window to society and it is and it just shows us because it is of the most intimate relationships and one of the greatest things and it's the original plan is all the way back in the garden and it's just one picture, it is kind of the litmus test of what man has done to the design of God but yet there's also God's desire that while we were yet sinners Christ came to die for the ungodly.

While we were yet sinners he loves us and redeems us and restores us and though we walk through these tragedies and though we walk through these trials and these circumstances we understand that we need to move beyond the questions and get to the heart of the issue and the heart of the issue is praise God for the work of Christ on the cross because we all fall short.

[ 29 : 08 ] Maybe you have a beautiful marriage and maybe your marriage has never walked on rocky ground though I seriously doubt it. I don't know of a single marriage that has never walked on rocky ground though maybe things are always peaches and ice cream around your house praise God be the glory and that's a wonderful testimony and please let me know what you've done while you're there and maybe everything is good and somebody will say I've never said anything but yes ma'am yes ma'am yes ma'am listen sometimes saying yes ma'am will get you in trouble you understand that right because how are you going to answer that does this dress look good does this make me look fat don't say yes ma'am there you're going to get in trouble right man so there's always something that will get us in trouble but we understand listen there are trials and troubles and maybe your marriage is not the issue but maybe there's another issue because the reality is that God's design has been marred by each and every one of us and if it wasn't for a savior hanging on the cross we would all be hopeless trying to follow our own desire diminishing everything he's put before us but through his work on the cross we are restored we're redeemed we're renewed and we are forgiven for his glory let's pray

Lord thank you for this day thank you for your word thank you for all you've proclaimed to us for the truth that teaches us even in hard moments Lord we want to give you all the praise and the glory and honor and we ask it all in Jesus name Amen Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen

[ 36 : 27 ] Amen Amen Amen