

Mark 10:1-16

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[0 : 0 0] Mark chapter 10. Our text this morning will be in verses 1 through 16. Mark 10 verses 1 through 16. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together!

And then Jesus said, And he said to them, And they were bringing children to him so that he might touch them.

But the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, And permit the children to come to me, and do not hinder them. For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all. And he took them into his arms and began blessing them and laying his hands on them.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the time we have of gathering together. Father, now as we have seen your word and heard your word and read your word, we pray that you would speak to our hearts.

[2 : 0 1] You would speak to our minds. Help us to understand it. Not just to hear it. But Lord, give us an understanding. An understanding mind.

A willing heart to receive it. Lord, help us to have a desire to live it out for your blood. We ask that Christ be magnified in all of this.

And it's in your name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. The text before us has a parallel passage in the book of Matthew.

Matthew chapter 19, starting in verse 1. The text in Matthew has some little variances in which we will refer to. So if you want to jot that down, the parallel passage, we won't take our time to turn to it.

But it is found in Matthew 19, verses 1 and following. It is the same account. And it is through our understanding and reading of Matthew and even the reconciling of the other gospel accounts that we know that this event happened in the latter part, if not at the very end, of Jesus' public ministry.

[3 : 1 2] This event took place when he was on his final trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival. We mark the public ministry of Christ as being three and a half years. We mark that time frame.

Now, we know that he lived about 30 to 33 years in flesh before his crucifixion. But we know the public ministry, the time from when he was baptized by John the Baptist, went into the wilderness, tempted by the Spirit, and presented himself as the Son of God through miraculous deeds and teachings about three and a half years by the celebration of the Passover feast in Jerusalem.

We know that there are three that he attend. And we do know that this is one of those festivals. He is taking his way to Jerusalem to celebrate that. Probably one of the latter ones.

It is for that reason it tells us in verse 1 that he goes into the region of Judea. So he leaves, as some would say, the Galilean region, the northern region of Israel for the last time.

And he is in the region of Judea, which if we're in the Old Testament, we would say this is the southern kingdom of Judah. But he is on the other side of the Jordan. That is, he is on the eastern side of the Jordan.

[4 : 21] Now, if you know your scripture and you know your history, that would surprise you. For the Jewish people made a habit of going to the other side of the Jordan as they made their way to Jerusalem, for there was a portion of the land in which most Jewish people did not walk through.

Refer to Samaria. Jesus met a woman at the well there when he went through Samaria. But it was a very popular route to go on the eastern side of the Jordan and make your way towards Jerusalem. Many did it for legalistic matters, for they did not want to be unclean while walking through Samaria before they went into the temple.

Jesus is not worried about cleanliness. He has actually taken this opportunity to teach the crowds. And it tells us, as was his custom as people were gathering around him. And we should not be surprised that people gather around him, for by this time the miraculous deeds of Christ have already been well known.

The walking on the water, the feeding of the multitudes, the raising of the dead. Lazarus has already been raised from the dead at this point, and word has gotten out about that.

And if you remember, the religious leaders are trying to find out what they're going to do about Jesus and Lazarus, because the testimony is ringing out so true. And Jesus uses this opportunity to teach.

[5 : 36] And it is during that teaching that the Pharisees show up and they ask a question. So I want you to see this morning a question of the heart. A question of the heart.

And it tells us that some Pharisees came up to Jesus in verse 2. The Pharisees, who were notorious for really kind of going back and forth in discussion and even arguing valid points of the law.

Those who try so hard to catch Christ in a false teaching throughout his public ministry, come up to him and they began to question him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife.

And they began to ask this question. Now I want you to understand before we get into this. This is not just a teaching about divorce. That's why I want you to understand.

That is the question that is being asked. But this is not a one subject discourse. And we'll understand the context of it in just a moment.

[6 : 44] Really, this is a question of the heart. Because what is going on, it says, and they began to question him and test him. So the question regarding divorce is actually a test that is put before the Savior.

It is a way of the religious leaders, of the legalistic, to test the knowledge and even the direction of the Savior.

Now the reason that they are asking about divorce, if we want to understand it at least historically and in its proper context, among the rabbinical schools, the rabbinical schools of teaching, there were two great schools.

Now the Pharisees were all people who learned under certain rabbis. And by this time, we know that Jesus' teaching has far exceeded any other rabbi. For when he teaches in the synagogues, people say, what wisdom this man has.

He teaches as one who has authority. But we do not know where he is from. You remember that, right? He teaches with authority. Well, that authority would be certain rabbis, certain teachers and instructors who would have other disciples sitting at their feet and they would instruct them.

[8 : 02] Paul was a disciple of Gamaliel. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Remember that? And was instructed. So Gamaliel is the rabbi or the teacher. In the time of Christ, there are two schools of thought in rabbinical teaching.

One, and that no man can divorce a woman for any mean whatsoever except for immorality and unchastity. That there has to be some moral misconduct taking place before divorce is even allowable.

The other, the little bit more liberal school of rabbinical teaching is, you can divorce someone if they burn your toast. Or if they're unpleasant to you in any way, in any manner whatsoever.

And so there were these great teachings, each of them in the Jewish world and each of them in the Pharisees world, that you could divorce for any reason whatsoever.

If you were displeased or unhappy or maybe breakfast wasn't good that day, you can say, hey, I'm writing you a certificate of divorce and it's time for you to leave. Or the other teaching was, you have to stay married unless there is moral failure by some point.

[9 : 14] Now the test that is put to Christ is which school do you lean towards? Because, understand the heart of what's going on here.

The Pharisees were trying to get Jesus in trouble. Just understanding on the first, have you ever been asked a question by someone when they were setting you up to be in trouble?

I've told you this before. I remember one of the most formational exercises in my ministry life was, I was about two or three years in pulpit ministry. I'd only been a pastor. I was a very young pastor.

I was probably about the age of 28. I was with the young adults earlier and I kind of referenced this meeting. But it was the School of Expository Preaching in Hebrew Springs, Arkansas. I loved that place. I can look back and say that is one of the things that really had such an impact.

My wife and I went to that and this little church in Hebrew Springs, Arkansas would call pastors in and they would just teach you. And Herschel, York, instructor, one of the great instructors at our great Baptist theological seminary up there, would come and he would just teach these pastors, this is how you build sermons, this is what expository preaching looks like.

[10 : 22] It is there that I learned to preach expositively in about three days because I was mesmerized as a young preacher boy to see someone stand up. Even David Miller, he was there.

I don't know if any of you know David Miller. He died a couple years ago. But David Miller comes and he is a paraplegic, so he's in the chair and he starts quoting scripture. And he's preaching. And he was preaching through the book of Ruth.

And I remember he said, now if you'll go back to that third verse, the second word in that third verse. And I was like, wow, I need to learn how to study. But anyway, it was a great school. It was a great preparation.

It taught me a lot. I was challenged a lot. I shared with the young adults. I was sitting in the lobby of the hotel drinking coffee with a pastor and a friend. And I got asked questions I couldn't answer. And so I look back and go, that is something that is kind of one of the Ebenezers in my life.

Because I remember when I walked back to the hotel room, I told Carrie, I will never be asked a question I can't answer again. And so for the next six months, I decided to work out my theology and my doctrine. And I was in a church that had no visitors.

[11 : 20] Nobody ever walked in the door. Nobody was ever there. For some six to seven hours a day, I just got in the word of God and I wanted to be able to answer it. But that's not the question that got me in trouble. The question that got me in trouble is when I was sitting at a table and we were having a fellowship meal in this church fellowship hall.

And there was an older pastor beside me. Now, you got to keep in mind, there's pastors and pastors' wives around these round tables just like ours. And there's probably six, no, there's four couples at a table. There's eight of us.

I don't know anybody. There's this old pastor beside me, this old saint. And I love you old saints. I'm an old saint now, right? I'm there. He's probably about my age now. But he's an old saint.

He's right beside me. And he leans over and elbows me kind of like, you know, old men do, the saying goes. And he said, do you think the world went downhill when women went into the workplace after World War II?

Guys, if you're asked that question in public, keep your mouth closed. I was 28. And I said, yes, I do.

[12 : 23] And there was a woman across the table who blasted me for the next 30 minutes. And I got beat up. And he was just elbowing me the whole time.

I'm like, man, you set me up. And now my wife was beside me. She's a homemaker. She's a full-time mom at home and loves it. And she enjoys it. And that's what she wants to be.

At that time, it's not like I was a newlywed. Nobody at the table knew that. We'd been married about this time, like nine years, still newlywed. But about 10 years, actually, about this time. We had 10 years of marriage.

We had three kids, and she was loving it. But the lady across the table was not a homemaker. And she let me know she was not. And her husband was trying to crawl under the table.

And he was embarrassed. But she blasted me. And I got beat up. Now, looking back, would I answer the question the same way? Yes. But I would have a better defense for the lady that was blasting me after that. I'm not getting into that right now.

[13 : 17] But I got set up by that man. Big time. He found a young preacher. I'm going to see what happens to him. And that's exactly what's going on with Christ.

They want to see if they can get him in trouble with the competing argument. They're not really concerned about divorce. But the way Christ answers this question teaches us a lot.

I know that's a long introduction. Very long. We'll try to be quick, the rest of it. Because look at what's going on here. Number one, look at the nature of man.

Look at the nature of man. Again, don't just focus on the subject that's being discussed. It says, some Pharisees came to Jesus testing him.

And began to question him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. Here is the nature of man. Man wants to know what is the most I can do and get away with it.

[14 : 16] How far can I go? Is it lawful? Is it permissible? And this, my friend, listen to me, is not just about divorce.

It's not just in your marriage life. Man naturally wants to know how far can I go and it be okay. From the very youngest of our age, we want that.

Children want to know how far can I push the boundaries. How far before I get in trouble. How far before it is wrong or right. And as we mature and we grow up and we enter into those beautiful, ugly, adolescent years.

And we're pushing them just a little bit further. And then we go a little bit further and we become adults. It is the nature of man to long for someone to tell us. What is lawful?

How much can I get away with? What is permissible? And that's a dangerous thing because the reality of it is, is in our free will, we have the freedom of choice.

[15 : 24] But we long for someone to tell us how far is too far. And what I found in scripture is that God is really good at not telling us.

Because he's not called us to rules and regulations. He's all, pastor, there are all these things, the Ten Commandments and all these. Right. And your understanding of the Ten Commandments are blown out of the water.

And when Jesus teaches about them in the first pages of Matthew, right. Because you say, well, if I don't do this and don't do this, I'm okay. But then Jesus said, but if you have hatred in your heart, you've committed murder.

So now the standard, how far you thought you could go, has just been so far. Oh, well, if I don't commit adultery, I'm okay. But then Jesus said, but if you've looked at a woman in lust after her, you've already committed adultery.

And now all of a sudden, the standard is expanded and magnified. And what we thought was the limits are now unattainable. And we long, we want to know what is, quote unquote, legal.

[16 : 24] What is okay for me to get away with? And that's the question that all men ask, a holy God, and all men ask, even Christ. And we get asked more than anything else.

Can I do this? When the reality is, is that God is not calling us to rules and regulations, but he's calling us to a relationship. We know that. But in a relationship, we don't always set the standards because they are birthed out of love.

They are birthed out of knowing one another. And you're no longer asking, can I do this? Is it legal if I do this? Rather, you're asking, is it going to be beneficial if I do this?

And our whole perception changes. Because if you're in a marriage and you're in a relationship and you're asking one another, is it okay if I do this? Rather than your decisions being birthed out of your love for one another, then that relationship is unhealthy.

It is something that is really operating on rules instead of intimacy. And what we have found is it is the nature of man.

[17 : 31] We find it in each and every one of us. Because here's the reality. It may not be divorce. It may be something else. But the longing question of your heart is, how far can I go?

Because that's the very temptation that was given to man in the garden. God told Adam not to take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and eat from it.

And we know that Satan said, oh, well, should you look at it? Can you touch it? How far can you go? And then we begin to push those boundaries. It is the nature of man to want to know, can I get away with it?

Is it okay? And it is there that we come and we test. We have a heart of testing. We want to know, much like the Pharisees.

And we don't wag our fingers and say, oh, look at them. They're judgmental. No, they're trying. And they're just speaking with the heart of man that all men want to know, how far can I go? That's the nature of man.

[18 : 32] Christ answers for us in the second matter, the narrative of Scripture. Now, in the text before us, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus answered them and said, what did Moses command you?

If we read the parallel passage in the book of Matthew, we will find a little variance here. And I'll highlight that for you in just a moment. But he says, what did Moses permit you? He says, what did Moses command you?

And they said to him, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. So notice the Pharisees, the men operating by man's nature, how we naturally want to know how far we can go.

Their reference point goes back to the law. It goes as far back as the law. It says, well, Moses permitted a man to do this. By the way, be careful any time you base your activity on something that is, quote, unquote, permitted.

Because just because something is permissible doesn't mean it's ideal. There are a lot of things that are permissible, but it does not mean it is preferable.

[19 : 35] And they said, well, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. And you can go read that. You can read it in the Old Testament. You can read it when you get into the book of Deuteronomy. And you can see.

And when you read the book of Deuteronomy, if you were with us when we were going through this, this was many years ago. We were going through Deuteronomy on Wednesday nights and Sunday nights. And we were making our way. And we saw all these things. What we saw was happening there is that when Moses wrote about the certificate of divorce, just the really the legalistic manner of having to write a certificate was elevating marriage of that time.

Because at that time, if you didn't like your wife, you could just say, hey, be gone. You're away. It's time you leave here. But to stop and actually have to write out a certificate of divorce and to make matters legal and to take the time to do it right, meant you had to pause and not in the heat of the moment do anything.

But you had to think through and actually take legal actions as to why you were doing what you were doing. And it was elevating the status of marriage at that time. And when the Pharisees go back and reference, their reference point is the law, what the law permits.

And that shouldn't surprise us because each and every one of us, our reference point is the law. Well, naturally, we want to know how far we can go. But in Matthew, what we find is that Christ says, have you not read?

[20 : 53] And he starts somewhere else other than the law. He actually starts in the way he answers them here. In Matthew, it says, have you not read? That in the beginning, God created them male and female.

So the reference point of Christ is the beginning. But the reference point of man is the law. This is a big difference here. You say, oh, well, Genesis to Deuteronomy, I mean, they're real close to one another, right?

They're still both in the first five books of the Bible. They're right there in Scripture. There's a very beginning of it. Right, there's a lot that happens from in the beginning. God created the heavens and the earth. And then we find Moses writing out all these laws found for us in the book of Deuteronomy.

There's a lot that transpires other than just flipping the pages through five books of the Bible. So the reference point of the legalistic natural man says, well, this is what the law says.

And then Jesus' reference point is, but this is what the word says. And the narrative of Scripture dictates how we understand any matter before us.

[21 : 59] He says, have you not read that in the beginning, God created them male and female. And he put the two together and the two became one. And for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, be joined together with his wife. And the two shall become one that should never separate.

And he takes it all the way back to the very first mentioning. And this should capture our attention. Because if we want to see what the narrative of Scripture is, and we want to see what Scripture teaches about any particular subject, any subject, you need to go where it is first mentioned.

It's called the law of first mentioning in Bible study. Go to the very first time that thing is mentioned. If you want to know what Scripture says about the church, where's the first mentioning of the church?

Matthew 16, right? Go to Matthew 16. And you know, from there on, the way the church is to be defined is referenced all the way back to the law of first mentioning.

If you want to know about God's response to sin, where do you go? You go all the way back to Genesis 3, for that's the first time God responded to the sin of man. God called them to account.

[23 : 10] He disciplined them, but he compassionately forgave them, and he clothed them, and he shed blood so that they could live in a relationship with him. It's the law of first mentioning. If you want to know what God says about marriage, don't go to what Moses wrote.

Go to what God says in Genesis 2. The first time marriage is ever mentioned. And then you reconcile Scripture with the remaining truths because the further you read in Scripture, this is what happens.

You have a distortion of what it was supposed to be. Why? Because man has his hands all over it. In Matthew 16, we find that for this reason, that those who profess Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior, as the Son of God, are forgiven.

And for this reason, he will build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And the church is supposed to be on the offensive, pushing back the darkness. That's the first mentioning of the church. And the church is supposed to be pushing back the darkness on the offensive.

And they're supposed to be sharing the gospel, proclaiming it. By the time we open up 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing to a church that the hell has come into the church. The church was intended to be that which pushed against the gates of hell.

[24 : 25] But by the time we open up 1 Corinthians, we find that there are people and immoralities and uncleanness and all these things going on in the church. 1 Corinthians does not define the church for us.

It defines the church when man puts his hands all over it. And the distortion of what was originally designed should not be the standard we live our life according to.

That's a good way of saying God's desire for something is not defined by the way we mess it up. Just because it's permissible does not mean it is preferable.

And that's not just about divorce. There's anything in our life when we can say, well, how far can I go? Don't go and see what the law says about it. Go and see what God's desire is for it.

And look at the narrative of scriptures that teaches these realities and it teaches the truths that we must be confronted with this truth that Jesus himself says, it is not the desire of God that any man would leave his wife.

[25 : 25] And we find ourselves, and admittedly so, here's the reality. When we study the narrative of scripture, we will inevitably find that we fall short. We may live according to the standard of the law.

Is it allowable? And we may say, hey, as far as the law goes, and if we do this, we're kind of lying to ourselves too. I'm okay. I'm marking all these marks and things are right.

I'm doing pretty good. And then, but the more we study scripture, we say, wait a minute. That standard is so high. That standard is so broad. That standard is so deep. Because look at what it says.

In the house, the disciples began questioning him. So even those living with Christ now for about three years are struck by how serious this matter is. And they're like, wow.

In Matthew, it tells us that those disciples who had been walking with him said, Jesus, who can do this? If marriage is held to that level, what man can do this?

[26 : 25] And that's true. So this is not a judgment saying, oh, well, Jesus is not saying those who have been divorced, shame on you. Just like every other thing that comes up, he does not say those who have hatred in their heart, shame on you.

Or those who have had lustful thoughts, shame on you. He does not say those things. He does not come to you and wag your head. Those who have eaten too much food and are gluttonous pigs, shame on you. He does not do that.

He declares the standard of scripture that God wants more for you than this. which leads us to the third truth. We find the needed compassion when we realize how far we have fallen.

Because when we read the narrative of scripture, we find out there is none righteous, no, not one. That all of us have fallen short. That all men fall short of the glory of God and that there are none that we can say we have went and done all that is permissible.

We find the reality that while it may be permissible, it is not preferable. And we have found the reality that we have fallen short of what God has declared. So what we need is a compassionate savior.

[27 : 39] And what we need is someone who will take us in all of our brokenness and all of our failings and all of our mess ups and say that's okay. And the beautiful thing about the passage is we find connected to this teaching about divorce, we find that they were bringing some children to Christ.

It says, and they were bringing children to him so that he might touch them but his disciples rebuked them. And it is here that we begin to get a picture of the compassion of Christ, the one who taught such truth that brings conviction.

But he's also one that when he's in the house and he's telling the disciples, yes, I know this is too hard that people are bringing children to him so that he may touch and hold these children and bless them. And this shows us the compassion of that, right?

Because children are good discernment. Parents are pretty good too. I'm just going to put my child into the hands of some crazy person. And we see the compassion of Christ that he taught truth that convicted the heart of man but he was compassionate enough to welcome the smallest of children.

I love seeing the kids up here and I love seeing the young ones and I remember when I was a young pastor, I've always kind of made it my habit to sit on the front row.

[28 : 50] I just don't like sitting on the chairs up front, okay, on the platform. I never have liked that so I've always made it my habit of sitting on the front row and I remember very few early years of that.

There was a young boy. His family went to church with us and it was his job, at least he thought it was his job. He was my bodyguard. Now he was a little guy and he would sit with me on the front row every Sunday morning.

He became, he got, as he grew, he got a little thicker and a little thicker and I was like, alright, I got something going here. I got me a good bodyguard, right, so he would sit with me every Sunday and he would sit right beside me, just me and him on the front row.

It wasn't like here. Nobody wanted to sit on the front row. People were scared of me. I don't know and so it'd be just me and him and he'd sit right beside me and when I'd stand up to preach, he'd fist bump me. I'd come stand up and preach and he'd go sit back with his family.

He walked with me until I got to the pulpit and then it was done and I loved that. Our kids were there and they were always around and they knew they were there but it means something when the kids would come draw to you, right?

[29 : 50] We've got youth here that I remember when they were very young and one of the first things I tried to do when I came as pastor was to connect with the kids because I knew if the kids would welcome me the parents would be, hey, okay, maybe he's okay but look at the compassion of Christ.

They're literally lining up to bring the children to him so this is one who can tell you we've all fallen short but he's also one who got mad because the disciples tried to keep the children away from him.

So do you think he would have a problem with you coming to him with all of your mess ups and all of your failures and all of your stumblings? Notice the compassion that we so desperately need.

One that would take us when we have surely fallen short of the narrative of scripture and we may do what is permissible but we are not doing as we should do how God designed and desired it and it doesn't matter what area of our life we're looking at we have a savior who says let them come because kids aren't always clean, right?

They're not. One of our granddaughters loves me. All of our granddaughters I hope love me but one of them really loves me. She's really, she's a daddy's girl so she's just naturally a pop-pop's girl and she's only one I can hold that doesn't want to go to granny when I'm holding her and it's nice but then I'll hold her and she'll be rubbing my beard and she'll just be looking at me going oh and I'll say Harper are your hands dirty and she'll say uh-huh because usually we've just eaten and so then I got whatever she had on her hands is all in my beard but you know I've never like thrown her to the ground and said that's nasty.

[31 : 32] Why? Because I love her and all of her mess and all of her mess ups that's the way our Savior is right? He knows when we come to him we're coming with problems and he knows we're coming filthy but yet he says come anyway.

He says I know nobody can hold to the standard that God set because that's why I'm here so come anyway and it's a question of the heart because it leads us to the last and fourth thing is the new life that's offered.

He says permit the children to come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these truly I say to you whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all and he took them into his arms and began blessing them and laying his hands on them when we come to Christ we have to be those children that new life there's a new birth that comes through faith in Christ and all things are made new sure they are redeemed mess ups and they are redeemed failures and we will stumble again but we come in this simple faith saying Lord I trust that you are good and holy and righteous and you want me there.

One of the lies of the enemy is to tell us that scripture has so judged us God does not want us there but one of the beautiful things of the gospel is that he came to us so that he could be present so we could be there.

He wants us to be there and he wants us to come and he wants this new life that is offered to us so that we can come before him and find redemption and forgiveness and restoration and blessing in the arms of a savior that's waiting.

[33 : 13] See the question really was not about divorce the question was how much can I do and get away with it and that's a question of the heart when the question really ought to be who can I go to when I've done all this and there we find Christ waiting on you saying here I am and whoever tries to stop you if he rebuked his disciples he'll rebuke them too but we don't need to know how far we can go we've all experienced how far we can go the true question is who do we go to when we win as far as we can and we find him who is called Jesus Christ let's pray Father thank you for this day thank you for the word of God it offers such hope to a hurting world

Lord we know that when we look at the narrative of scripture none of us are righteous no not one for we dare not judge one another's mistakes and failures for we know our own so well but Lord we glory in a savior who's waiting to redeem and to restore Jesus may we never get over grace and mercy and may we never fail to share the good news of salvation found in you and you alone lead us as we go through this time may you show us what it is we ought to do to draw closer to you and it's in Christ's name we pray amen as we call it as we call it as we call it