

Mark 10:1-12
October 28, 2018

As we've seen in Mark as we follow Jesus around and get to know him—two things jump out:

1. He is super-kind to all those who come to him and ask for help.
2. He will smack down any who come to him to challenge him.

We witness an epic smackdown today. The Pharisees will be smacked down by Jesus today. Depending on your age and your speech patterns you might say that Jesus turns the tables on them. OR you might say Jesus flipped the script on them.

In an effort to understand—Younger people,

According to the Cambridge Dictionary when one 'turns the tables on' someone else it means, "to change a situation so that you now have an advantage over someone who previously had the advantage on you."

Older people--

Now, if you are younger you might prefer—'flip the script.' According to the English Oxford Dictionary 'flip

the script is first of all from North American and second of all, informal. It means,

“Reverse the usual or existing positions in a situation, do something unexpected or revolutionary.”

Whether you say flip the script or turn the tables—that is what Jesus does.

How does Jesus flip the script or turn the tables? The Pharisees come to Jesus asking about divorce and instead Jesus talks about the divine intention for marriage.

We are all apt to have misunderstandings about marriage what it is—why it matters and so on. Jesus will turn the tables and flip the script on us today.

We are apt to misunderstand the meaning and purpose of marriage—what is it?

Marriage is

PROP: God making two into one for his purposes.

Neither the husband nor the wife controls the marriage—God does.

A word before we start—divorce—this is the kind of topic that I would never just choose to preach because it would be interesting.

Nope, the Lord has a plan for us this morning—he wants us to see his great and grand purpose in marriage.

I also know that there are many here who learned about the pain of divorce not from a book but in your own life. The whole topic brings up serious heartache. Maybe it reminds you of the devastation of your parent's divorce—or of your own.

I could not possibly say everything today that the Bible says about divorce and remarriage. Not possible. It can be tempting to have questions swirling about in our heads and miss the point of what Mark is getting at here.

PROP: God making two into one for his purposes.

Let's listen again to Jesus—

“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.

² And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” ³ He

answered them, "What did Moses command you?"
⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." ⁵ And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

¹⁰ And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

PRAY

Remember what we heard from Jesus last week. He told us that sin is more serious than we think. So much so that if our hand causes us to sin—hack it off. That if our feet lead us into sin—slash it off. That if our eye looks to sin—yank it out.

It is no accident that right after that discussion—the seriousness of sin—that we are invited to think about sin in the closest of human relationships—marriage.

A test (Mark 10:1-5)

A reset (Mark 10:6-12)

1. A Test (Mark 10:1-5)

Mark again takes us to Jesus and as we join him crowds are crowding around him to hear his teaching. But not everyone is there to listen. The Pharisees had joined the crowd too.

The Pharisees regarded Jesus as an enemy. Remember, way back in Mark 3 they decided that Jesus needed to be destroyed. And from that point on the Pharisees attacked Jesus to try and expose him as the fraud they thought he was in front of the crowds.

That never goes well.

Who are the Pharisees?

In Israel there was no such thing as the separation of church and state, so the Pharisees were equal parts political party and religious leaders. It is an oversimplification but the Pharisees led both the parliament and the church.

The Pharisees saw Jesus BOTH as a political threat AND a religious threat. To them, Jesus was doubly dangerous.

You see, when the Pharisees saw the crowds thronging to Jesus they saw an imminent threat.

Why?

Because this Jesus had all the makings of a revolutionary and the crowds seemed ready to follow. So, the Pharisees prepared for a frontal attack—and Mark records it in verse 2,

² And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

Notice, Mark says they are trying to test Jesus. They know very well that in certain conditions divorce was allowed.

But the Pharisees came to test him. They wanted to twist his words—they did not come honestly asking questions but attempting to make him look bad.

What was the test?

The Pharisees viewed women as property and benefited by having a lax divorce policy. They wanted to expose Jesus and have the crowds turn on him.

³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away."

When Jesus says, "Moses" he means what does it say in the first five books of the OT? And they give something of a summary of Deuteronomy 24. They say—a man can get a divorce from his wife if he just gives her a certificate.

That's not quite right.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, [2] and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, [3] and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, [4] then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife....

Deuteronomy 24:1–4

Deuteronomy 24 was not concerned with divorce per se, but of a woman getting a divorce marrying someone else and then marrying the original guy.

Why?

At marriage the bride's family would give her a dowry—money or property to take into the marriage. If she were remarried there would be a second dowry and it could be the original guy would just marry her for her dowry.

It was a protection.

But Deuteronomy 24 is clear, the ground for divorce is indecency.

Some indecency means adultery. Moses is saying here, there are grounds for divorce in the case of adultery. It may not seem like it, but that certificate of divorce was a great kindness to the woman.

Why?

It was a way to protect women in a male dominated, patriarchal society. Men had to put their reason for divorce in writing and they could not just send their wives away for whatever dumb reason.

By the time of Jesus, divorce was a hotly debated topic. When Jesus asked them what did Moses command they only responded with a part of the answer. They essentially said, a man can divorce his wife if only he puts it in writing.

Do you see the problem?

The Pharisees in their answer don't reference adultery at all. They just say a man can get a divorce if he just puts it in writing. And there were many Rabbis and leaders who taught that a divorce could be lawful if she spoils a meal, doesn't keep house well or the neighbors wife starts to look a little better.

I hope you see the dire straits that this put women into. They were in a society that relegated them to a status of property. Marriage was not seen as a union of equals, like it was designed to be. Rather, the men were lords over their wives with no accountability or limitation on how they treated them.

Further, a woman could not initiate the divorce proceedings. Many women were trapped with unscrupulous, unaccountable husbands.

And Jesus steps in.

After they say, all we have to do is write it up, Jesus responds,

⁵ ...“Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

In other words, Moses gave you this command because you refuse to obey what God commanded. You are stiff-necked and unwilling to listen.

Divorce is not the design but when it is necessary at least the woman will have the dignity of a certificate of divorce. In other words, the divine intention for marriage cannot be determined by a text on divorce.

In still other words, divorce happens but if you fixate on what constitutes grounds for divorce you should focus on what constitutes the grounds for a good marriage.

Divorce is a sad reality in a fallen world, but lets talk about what marriage should be. Let’s talk about what God’s intention for marriage is.

Jesus flips the script.
Jesus turns the tables.

The test has turned around on them.

Their test leads to Jesus offering a reset. They were attempting to test him and he refused.

2. A reset (Mark 10:6-12)

Jesus—as the creator and one who came up with the idea of marriage in the first place—tells the Pharisees what marriage was supposed to be like.

Jesus stitches together three passages from Genesis to explain what he intended for marriage.

⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'

That is a quotation from Genesis 1:27.

By quoting from the first chapter in the Bible Jesus is not just recounting how creation went down, but what it means. In all of creation only one creature carried the image of God. There was only one creature that uniquely reflected the glory and grandeur of God.

Mankind.

And mankind has two God-given expressions, male and female.

What does that mean?

The takeaway here in this passage is that God made men and women and he made them equal. The woman was not man's subject, but man's equal. In other words, God created men and women BOTH to carry the image of God and to be equal.

The woman is not subject to the man but equal to the man. Now, equality of worth and value does not obliterate all creational differences. Not at all. There are differences between male and female but even in the midst of those differences men and women in a marriage are equals.

That is the design.

I would be remiss if I didn't ask in this spot—men do you see and treat your wife as an equal? If you do not you are missing the point of your marriage. Do you see your wife as someone who should just do what you say and be what you want? Do you see her as less than you and somehow inferior?

If you do, you are displaying the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees and you are missing the point of your marriage.

Jesus isn't finished teaching on marriage,

⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh."

That is a direct quotation from Genesis 2:24.

In Genesis 2, where this quotation comes from God himself is officiating the wedding of Adam and Eve. God stands as the one who created both and brought both together. To be together for his glory.

What Jesus is doing here is reminding us of the importance of marriage. The husband is to leave his parents and give his all to his wife.

The only relationship that trumps marriage in importance and weight is our relationship to God. Let us be clear about what Jesus is saying here—

Men—your wives are to be more valued and cherished than anyone else—more than:

- Your moms
- Your kids
- Your jobs
- Anything else in your life

Women—your husbands are to be more valued and cherished than anyone else—more than:

- Your mom
- Your kids
- Your friends
- Your grandkids

And as God draws a man and a woman together, there is something of a divine spark of creation. Two different people of equal value come together and shun all others to be devoted to each other.

That is what God intended.

And then Jesus summarizes what marriage should look like,

⁹What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Oh how important this is. Who has brought you together? God.

Every married person in this room has been brought together by the hand of God. You might think it a mistake, but you are thinking wrongly.

Further, and most importantly:

Neither the husband nor the wife is in control—God is. God is to be the one who directs your marriage.

This, here, right here, is the key to a good marriage. What is it? A mutual desire to follow God together.

That does not mean you are always going to feel like God has drawn you together. Often, you will feel the hard work of marriage. You will feel like there is nothing divine about your marriage. It just seems so hard. Keller has some helpful words,

"I'm tired of listening to sentimental talks on marriage. At weddings, in church, and in Sunday School, much of what I've heard on the subject has as much depth as a Hallmark card. While marriage is many things, it is anything *but* sentimental. Marriage is glorious but hard. It's burning joy and strength, and yet it is also blood, sweat, and tears, humbling defeats and exhausting victories. No marriage I know more than a few weeks old could be described as a fairy tale come true." Tim Keller

When God brings a man and a woman together—even though it is often ridiculously hard—God is in your marriage.

Away from the crowds, the disciples got close and asked again about divorce. He does not back down. When there is a divorce without the grounds of adultery or abandonment commits adultery in the new marriage.

As I said at the beginning of our time, this is not all the Bible has to say on divorce and remarriage. If you are interested in reading it, you can look to Matthew 19 and 1 Cor. 7. Adultery and abandonment are biblical grounds.

But those are exceptions.

The disciples' ears are ringing with this new teaching that Jesus gave. It is clear he turned the tables/flipped the script on them.

¹⁰ And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

That is shocking and so very counter-intuitive. And I am sure that there is a pall of condemnation that has settled in on your soul.

In a room this size there stand to be many people who were left a spouse for an unbiblical reason.

You might feel that you have a mark against your name for the rest of your life. Not so.

Jesus himself earlier said this,

“Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man...” Mark 3:28

All sins, even divorce.

Divorce is not the unpardonable sin. It is a sin that can be forgiven, like any other. Some sins have consequences that follow you around longer than others. Divorce is like that.

Marriages end in divorce because of the power of sin.

Jesus came to address the power of sin. Jesus came to put an end to the power of sin—he did not come into the world to condemn mankind.

He did not come to earth to point a finger at us and say—how dare you! You are all the worst! I can't believe what you have done! You got divorced? Don't you know what the purpose of marriage is?

No, he came to open a way to be united to God. When sin came into the world it was as if mankind divorced itself from God.

And yet, Jesus came running.

Think about the kind of love that Jesus is offering here. He is not loving those who are lovable—or deserve it—but he loves those that have divorced themselves from him.

And yet, Jesus came running.

The reality is that fallen mankind separated and divorced itself from a loving God. And yet, God in Christ came to gain us back. To reunite us to God and make us a new creation.

Any who are Christians are in Christ. Meaning that our identity is found in him. Get this, not in whether you are married or not.

Who are you?

You belong to Christ before you belong to another. He has the primary claim on your life. He has purchased you. You had divorced yourself from him and he has come to purchase you back.

Who are you?

His.

Husbands—you are FIRST and foremost Christians, new creations of the king. Not husbands.

Wives—you are FIRST and foremost Christians, new creations of the king. Not wives.

Singles—you are FIRST and foremost Christians, new creations of the king. Not singles.

PROP: God making two into one for his purposes.

Singles:

Marriage does not save you—nor is it some kind of magic elixir. It is hard. Please don't fall into the trap of thinking that you are second-class because you aren't married.

NO!

I realize those who are married are not always understanding or sensitive to you. For that, I'm sorry. We all stand on equal footing before the savior.

New Creations.

And if you are planning on getting married. Choose well. Choose someone you can talk with. Ladies if a guy is given to irrational, frightening anger—run from him.

In a marriage that will be directed at you.

Men—don't just get married to someone because they are willing—but because God draws you together.

Men:

Do you think of your wife as equal?

The purpose of marriage is not so that we could have some kind of personal servant who is dedicated to doing all that we want.

Your wife does not exist to meet all your needs. That is not possible. She is an image bearer of God just the same as you.

Ask her if she feels valued by you. If not, why not?

Women:

A word to those of you who have husbands that don't seem to listen or treat you right.
Speak up! Keep speaking up.

Keep talking to him, and appealing that he get help.

None of our marriages are what they should be. We are all in process. But those of us who are married, we are together to honor the Lord.

PRAY

"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood [6] and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Revelation 1:5–6