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"The Road to Resurrection: Honoring Family"
Mark 10:1-16

Some misplaced quotation marks were largely responsible for these interesting items in a church bulletin announcing two new Sunday School classes and their locations: "Marital Team-Building in the Fellowship Hall" and "How God Overcomes Our Big Mistakes in the Sanctuary."

In a culture that often reflects its values in television icons, we have gone from Ozzie & Harriet to Modern Family.

It always bothers me a little when Christians refer to their beliefs about marriage as "traditional values", as if they should be preserved because they are traditional.

To this, I would say that we are not interested in defending traditions. The only values we need to defend are those that are God's values for us.

What are these? Jesus partly answered this in his teachings that reflected on the proper roles for husbands, wives and children, in the course of His last journey to Jerusalem, His Road to the Resurrection as recorded in Mark's gospel.

As Jesus was walking his Road to the Resurrection, he taught his disciples how to keep alive the new life to which he had introduced them.

In chapter 9, He speaks of honoring all people, to the least of them, and then of honoring other believers, including those not "part of us", and emphasizes how important this "law of love" is.

The writer Mark skips some time between ch. 9 & 10.

[Display map]

Between these chapters, Jesus has gone from Capernaum, south over the mountains of Samaria into Judea, then east across the Jordan into Perea, where he was now in the territory of Herod Antipas and Herodia, who had imprisoned & executed John the Baptist.

In Mark 10:1-16 we can learn as much from the way Jesus spoke as we can from the words themselves.

In these verses, Jesus spoke about the family in ways that were confrontational, compassionate, and constructive

1. Jesus confronted the wrong family values of those who did not accept Him.

In Mark 10:1 we read, "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."

Jesus was willing to minister to this multitude, even though he knew many would reject what he said, or accept it only intellectually.

Are you and I willing to do the same?

A. Sure enough, there are among them hostile Pharisees who confront him with the intention of rejecting his claim to be Lord.

They hoped to make John the Baptist's experience with Herod the same for Jesus.

Herod Antipas had divorced his wife in order to marry his niece, Herodias, stealing her from his own brother.

While in Herod's jurisdiction, the Pharisees pose a question: v. 2 "The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" testing Him."

They hope to expose him as an opponent of the Law of Moses.

Jesus emphasizes that marriage, as a

relationship between a man and a woman, goes back to God's purpose at the beginning of creation.

Piper: Marriage is a work of God and gets its meaning from God. And its meaning is mainly the portrayal of the covenant love between Christ and his Church.

This is God's original message about marriage.

In vv. 3-9 we also learn that we honor the family by considering marriage to be for a lifetime, and honoring God's purpose for husbands.

Mark 10:3-9 "And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." 5 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. 6 But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

B. The Creation principle: Marriage is intended for a lifetime.

Hebrew customs were quite chauvinistic. Before Moses' day, a man could marry, but then aban-

don a woman. She would then be unable to marry again, & might have no support.

To improve the situation, Moses said the husband had to give her a certificate of divorce.

The grounds were her "displeasing" him, and one interpretation of this was that a wife could be divorced for over-salting or overcooking a meal !!

Jesus takes them back to God's intention at creation: a man should not divorce his wife. Marriage is intended to be for a lifetime.

Illus: When asked if she had ever had times she considered divorce from Billy Graham, Ruth replied, "Divorce? Never! Murder? Yes

In marriage, God takes two and makes them one. The marriage is sacred because of its spiritual meaning. Divorce occurs because at least one party's human will resists God's purpose.

C. The husband's proper role is to so love his wife that his love will nourish the marriage:

Eph 5:25-30 (NKJV) "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that

she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body."

This applies in many areas, but it usually starts with communication. Using an automotive metaphor, one wag once said, "If more men were self starters in the area of communication, fewer wives would be cranks."

Piper: "I think the aim of Jesus here is prevention, not destruction. He is talking to those who can still turn back. And he is saying: marriage is God's idea: he designed it, he described it, and he does it. It is one of the deepest realities in the world. Deeper than any of us knows. What God joins together he joins deeply together - deeper than feelings, deeper than promises, deeper than sex, deeper than friendship. "One flesh" is a deep, deep mystery. That is exactly what Paul calls it in Ephesians 5:32."

trans: So Jesus first teaches that we honor the family by considering marriage to be for a lifetime, and honoring the husband's God-given purpose.

2. Jesus was compassionate to those hurt by sin against the family.

After this, Jesus continues the subject in answer to the questions of his disciples:

In answering the disciples, he is addressing those who are open to his Lordship, & his approach to them isn't confrontational, but compassionate.

Verses 10-12 say when they were "In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. 11 So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

At first, this seems like Jesus is saying the same thing, but he is really saying some new things.

From vv. 10-12 we learn that we honor the family by upholding the principle of mutual faithfulness and honoring the wife's proper role.

A. First we need to mention that elsewhere, God's Word does permit divorce:

1. Mat 19:9 "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.""

In Jesus' day, it was not always necessary to mention the exception of adultery because the pre-

vailing law was that the penalty was death, and that would pretty effectively end a marriage.

2. The Bible also allows for divorce when a believer is deserted by an unbeliever: 1 Cor 7:15 (NKJV) "if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace."

Such permission, however is never a recommendation.

B. The important thing to see is that what Jesus does here is to elevate the status of the wife.

At the time, women were respected little. A woman could commit adultery against her husband, and her husband could commit adultery against another husband, but never against his own wife!

The Pharisees were unwilling to do what Jesus did: He recognized that a man could commit adultery against his wife! Jesus had compassion for those hurt by sin against the family.

C. Jesus also does something new in treating women the same as men.

He is declaring that Herodias is equally at fault with her husband because she divorced her husband.

But more important, there is in Jesus' words a principle of mutual faithfulness .

This elevates the woman's role to a place it never had before. In the OT, women were rarely addressed, but in the NT, they share the task.

Their task is not only to love their husbands, but to support them in ways that will help them be all God wants them to be.

Eph 5:21-24 (NKJV) "submit to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

Matthew Henry wrote: "Eve was made by God not out of His head to rule over Him, nor out of His feet to be trampled upon by Him, but out of His side to be equal with Him, under His arm to be protected, and near His heart to be loved." [Topic: Husbands and Wives Subtopic: Duty of Wives Index: 1627]

In this, wives have a unique role in demonstrating to the world the fact that submission to Christ is not a demeaning principle, but a liberating one!

trans: So from vv. 10-12 we see Jesus' compassion to those hurt by sin, upholding the principle of mutual faithfulness and honoring the wife's purpose.

3. Jesus was Constructive in his words about children.

From vv. 13-16 we learn that we honor the family by considering children valuable, and honoring their proper role as well.

Mark 10:13-16 "Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." 16 And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them."

Our world today often undervalues children, and, at an increasingly alarming rate, people even abuse them.

Piper: "He did not say, "Don't hinder them because to these belong the kingdom." He said, "Don't hinder them because to such as these belong the kingdom." Don't hinder them - help them, lead them to me for blessing, because they represent the kind of people who will inherit the kingdom.

“Well who are they? Who are the "such as these"? The next verse (15) gives the answer: "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." People who receive the kingdom - the wise and gracious rule of God over their lives - as a child receives the provision and guidance it needs, will enter the kingdom and live with Christ forever.

“At the heart of the answer is this: children stand for something. They point to something. They represent something. They signify something bigger than themselves. They stand for the kind of dependence and helplessness and need and insufficiency and faith that is required of adults to enter the kingdom of God. To "such as these" (verse 14) belongs the kingdom. That's the meaning of their unique existence. They point the way to salvation: to such as these belongs the kingdom.

Jesus was indignant at the disciple's behavior, and pointed out the virtues that others should imitate.

Conc: Depending on the attitude of his listeners, In these verses, Jesus spoke about the family in ways that were confrontational, compassionate, and constructive.

What attitude do you bring toward him? Hostile, open or wholly accepting of his Lordship?

The Road to the Resurrection involves honoring Jesus' words for the family.

We honor the family by considering marriage to be for life, and honoring God's plan for husbands.

We honor the family by upholding the principle of mutual faithfulness and honoring God's plan for wives.

We honor the family by considering children valuable, and honoring God's purpose for them as well.

Action: Invite Jesus Christ to examine your heart, to see if you are coming to God's kingdom with child-like faith.

Pray this week that God will help you and those around you to see the family as Christ does.

Speak to or write to at least one person every day this week, and encourage them to fulfill their purpose in their earthly and heavenly families.