

Thinking About Marriage and Divorce Like Jesus

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[0 : 00] So Matthew chapter 5, verses 31 and 32. It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the grounds of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

And then if you have a Bible, you can flip over to chapter 19 with me. Chapter 19, verses 1 to 10. Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan, and large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? And he answered, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?

And said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

[1 : 08] They said to him, Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away? He said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives.

But from the beginning, it was not so. And I say to you, Whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery. The disciples said to him, If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.

This is God's holy word. All right, we are working our way through the Sermon on the Mount, and we come tonight to this passage. So, Last week, if you were here, we looked at the problem of lust and adultery that Jesus talks about.

And I'll say the same thing I said last week. As we come this week to a very controversial topic, the problem of divorce. Welcome, if you're a visitor. It's great to have you. Great to see you. You came on the week.

We're looking at Jesus' words on divorce and marriage. But we're doing that because we here at St. Columba's really value working our way through the Bible and never skipping any texts when we're working through a book.

[2 : 15] And so here we are in the Sermon on the Mount, and this is what Jesus is talking about. And divorce and marriage were controversial subjects in Jesus' day, just like they're controversial subjects in our day.

And so that's what this exact encounter is all about here. And let me just say that next week, the passage that Jesus takes up is about keeping your promises and not giving way to gossip.

And so next week, you'll come and you'll think, man, I'm ready to talk about gossip. You know, after two weeks on lust, adultery, and divorce, who doesn't want to come back and just think about gossip?

So that's what we're doing tonight. Let's see the context of the problem here and the heart of the problem and then the heart of marriage because that's what this is really about, the heart of marriage.

So first, the context of the problem here. So Jesus in the first century is in a very different context from us. And here he's teaching what's called the Sermon on the Mount.

[3 : 15] And the Sermon on the Mount is not directed only at very super spiritual Christians who want to really take their faith to the next level. And instead he's saying, if you're a follower of Jesus, this is what life in the kingdom looks like in the Sermon on the Mount.

But in a first pass through to the Sermon on the Mount, actually you come through it and you realize first your need, that every single section of the Sermon on the Mount shows you that you are not yet the person God made you to be, not yet living a fully kingdom life.

And that's really the first goal of the Sermon on the Mount. And then to show us what that looks like. So that's what Jesus is doing here. And in verse 31, he uses the language, it was also said.

And that's the same thing as what he has been saying in every paragraph where he's been saying, you've heard that it was said. Or it was also said. You've heard it was also said. That's what he's talking about.

And so he's pointing out this issue in his day of authority. Who has authority to interpret the Old Testament laws and teach them to people in the first century?

[4 : 16] That's what he's dealing with. And he's saying, you've heard your teachers around you. Take the Old Testament, interpret it, and teach it to you. But today I say to you. So he's saying, I have authority to tell you exactly what the Old Testament was all about.

That's really the heart of the matter. And he's saying that in the first century there are teachers, some teachers who are teaching on all sorts of things and twisting a healthy, true interpretation of the Old Testament and teaching it in really harmful ways.

And so here it's the issue of divorce. And there are Pharisees and scribes, not all, not all as it's sometimes said, but some in the first century that are teaching something really harmful about the concept of divorce and therefore marriage.

And they're taking Deuteronomy 24, where Moses introduced the concept of divorce in the first five books of the Bible, and they're twisting it and trying to make it fit a very free way of thinking about it.

And so it was a tradition in the first century by some of the Pharisees that a man could divorce his wife simply because he did not like her.

[5 : 30] So that's exactly what's being addressed. And so in chapter 19, this parallel passage, the Pharisees come and they say, can you give your wife a certificate of divorce for any reason? So you see how clear that is.

They're asking that exact question. And so it was very much the case that there were rabbis that were teaching that. And there were some that were even suggesting that you can divorce your wife in the first century for cooking a bad dinner.

It's listed in one of the ancient texts we have, the first century text we have, that was written down later, that a burnt dinner was grounds for a man to give his wife a certificate of divorce.

Okay, so this was happening. And Josephus, who's a first century historian that writes about this context, he says that there was a battle raging in the first century between two rabbis, Rabbi Shammai and Hillel.

And Rabbi Hillel, around this time, taught that divorce applies when any man is displeased with his wife. And now, you see, the point is, one of the things, well, as a side note, there was a lot of misuse and abuse of the Bible in the first century, just like today.

[6 : 41] And one of the things we can just say, as a side note here, is that misuse and abuse, using the Bible for very bad reasons, is never a reason to dismiss Christianity. There are very different things.

Misuse and abuse, bad interpretation, does not need to cause us to dismiss Christianity, to dismiss Christ outright, right? This has always been happening. But the main point here is to see that he's talking to men, because in the first century, it's entirely the perspective of men, because for the most part, in the Roman Empire, in this context, only a man could divorce a woman.

So a woman could never come and divorce a man, right? And so he's talking directly to men, directly to a problem here. And women in that time were very dependent, for the most part, not always, but for the most part, for their livelihood on men.

And so a lot of these situations was basically men saying, I just don't like the person I'm married to, and they're giving that person the boot, they're handing her a certificate of divorce, and that probably means she's going to be out on the streets if she doesn't have a family to go back to.

And so it was a really serious cultural issue, as well as societal issue and moral issue, that Jesus is talking about here. And in Matthew 19, the trap, the issue is even bigger, because when the scribes and Pharisees come in Matthew 19 and ask, can a man divorce his wife for any reason at all, we're told that this is in the region of Judea, and we learn in the parallel account of Mark's gospel, that this is the region where Herod is the king, the regional king.

[8 : 13] And Herod had divorced, this king had divorced, had caused his brother to divorce his wife, Herodias. Herod married Herodias, Herod's brother's wife, and Herod went and murdered his brother just to make sure there was no blowback about that.

And John the Baptist stood up against them. John the Baptist said that this was wrong, this divorce was very unlawful and evil. And he got his head cut off for that.

And so in the region of Herod, when the scribes and Pharisees say to Jesus, can any man divorce any woman for any reason at all? They're trying to trap him. Because just like John the Baptist in Matthew 13 or 14 got ultimately executed for saying that's wrong, they're thinking, oh, Jesus, he's going to get trapped.

Herod's going to get him for this. Right? And so it's a real issue. What is Jesus doing here? He is, the fact that he brings this up in the Sermon on the Mount and what he's doing in Matthew 19, he's exposing.

He's calling this out. He's calling out this wicked problem that's here in the first century. And if you were here last week, you remember that the Pharisees, some of the Pharisees and scribes were talking about adultery in the most narrow way.

[9 : 29] In other words, they were talking about sexual sin in the most narrow way, making it really, really easy to obey and really, really hard to disobey when it comes to sexual sin. And Jesus said, no, look, the problem is your heart.

It's lust. Lust is the problem. That's where the line is. And he broadened the path of what sexual sin looks like. And in the same way, he's addressing the same issue today where there are some men in the first century trying to create a culture with as much latitude as possible so that they can move relationship to relationship to relationship and still be publicly seen as good, respectable people.

Right? So they want as much freedom as possible to be in any relationship they want to be in, as much as they want, but still be seen as men who obey the Bible, who obey the Old Testament. Right?

That's the goal. And Jesus is saying to them, you are preoccupied with the entirely wrong questions. That your heart, it's fundamentally an issue of the heart here, and if you're asking the question, you know, how far can I get before it becomes adultery?

Boy, that's the wrong question. Or if you're asking, what's the easiest way to get divorced without being thought of as a bad person? And he's saying to the religious leaders, you just want to maximize your personal freedom at the expense of women in the culture.

[10 : 47] And there's a pastor from the 300s named John Chrysostom who preached in Constantinople with Turkey today. And he preached in the late 300s.

And when he came to this passage, it's interesting because he's a lot closer to the first century context than we are. And he lived in the late Roman Empire in a time where it was still pretty much like this issue. We're still the same.

And so listen to what he says. It gives an insight into the reality of this culture. He says, he's talking to the men clearly when he's preaching. He says, for he who is meek, he who's a peacemaker, he who is poor in spirit.

These are the Beatitudes, right? He who is merciful, how shall he ever cast out his wife? So John is addressing the problem in his own day and saying, if you really say you follow Christ and you want to be a man of the Beatitudes, how in the world can you cast your wife out for no reason?

So it was still an issue in the late 300s, we're seeing as he preaches on this text. Now, that leads us secondly to the heart of the problem. The problem, what is the problem here? What's the real problem?

[11 : 49] The problem is Genesis 3. The problem is the fall, as we saw this morning. The problem is that we all approach marriage and our relationships in general with a posture of self-interest and self-centeredness.

That's the real problem here. We have that instinctively from the bottom of our souls, but it's also cultural as well, both in the first century and our century. And when they ask the question in Matthew 19, verse 3, is it lawful for any man to divorce his wife at any time he wants?

Clearly, there's a question underneath the question here. There's a problem, I should say, underneath the question. And the problem underneath the question is this is not about divorce, ultimately. This is about the nature of marriage.

They've missed the nature of marriage, the essence of what marriage was always meant to be. And the reason for that is in their culture, in the first century, most people approached marriage thinking of it as a place to get benefits, personal benefits.

So in the first century, you got married because you wanted to extend your family lineage, make a name for yourself. You wanted to acquire land. You wanted to raise your station in life.

[12 : 58] You wanted to secure financial security. You wanted to take your place in the social order. That was the important thing. Extend your family. You wanted to have sons so that you could extend your family name through all the generations.

And that means that in the first century, the question was, what am I going to get out of this relationship? And so men clearly are coming at this from a benefits mentality, a marketplace mentality.

Now, I want to ask you, what has changed? What has changed in our 21st century? Not very much, I don't think, at all. I think there's basically, as many of the writers on this described, there's two basic approaches to marriage in our time, in our culture.

And one is the idealist view. It's a little bit more 20th century than 21st century, but it's still very much around. And the idealist view says, I want to get married only if I fall in love with somebody.

You know, I want to fall in love like you can fall into a swimming pool. You know, I want to go head first, and I want to fall in the depths. I want to find my soulmate. You know, and that's the only condition in which I'll know I'm ready for marriage, if I've really found my true soulmate.

[14:08] And the second approach, you might call the more practical approach, and I think this is a bit more of the 21st century approach for most people in a city like Edinburgh. And it is a tale as old as time.

It's part of what we think of in arranged marriages. It's the Jane Austen culture. And this is what it is. It's, look, I will get married, yeah, maybe, but I'm looking for someone who can bring me the best possible benefits.

I'm looking for somebody who can improve my financial standing, who has a good job, good career prospects, who can extend my friendship group, my friends like their friends, right?

Somebody who can bring me sexual fulfillment, right? And in both situations, in the first situation, the idealist situation, what happens? You say, I only want to get married if I fall in love, if I really do.

But at the same time, I know that in three to four years, like most people, I'll probably fall out of love. And at that point, I need to be ready to have my options open again, right? And in the practical views, you say, I'm looking for somebody who can improve my station in life.

[15:12] And if that person isn't doing that or can't do that any longer, then I need to have my options open again. And you see, just like the first century, the 21st century is still the same market mentality.

It's covenant, it's, sorry, contract mentality, not covenant. In other words, it says, look, if you can improve my life and I can improve your life, then I'm willing to make this purchase.

I will pay the price. I will make the purchase. I will come to this relationship like the open market. And that's very good. But boy, I need a return policy.

You know, I need to be able to take this back after three to four years to the store and return it, this relationship. And in other words, the Pharisees, some of the Pharisees and scribes in the first century and many, many of us in the 21st century have the prenup mentality.

We need a prenuptial agreement. We need to be able to go back on this thing if we fall out of love or if it's not working for us anymore. You see, the Pharisees, they miss the beauty of marriage.

[16:16] And I want to ask you tonight, modern people, have you missed the beauty and the essence of what real marriage is, what it's all about? But that's the real issue here. And the biblical idea is that marriage is meant not primarily to benefit us maximally, to give better circumstances, to bring personal fulfillment, to get us a better friendship group.

Not at all. Marriage exists primarily to break you. Marriage exists so that we can be broken in order to be remade.

Marriage is there. The essence of marriage is to be broken so you can be remade. That's the real heartbeat of what marriage is. And we come as modern people and say, why in the world, if it's to break me, why would I want it? Why would I ever want to come and do that?

And the reason is because marriage exists to break our self-interest, our self-centeredness, so that we can become truly great. So that we can become the people God actually made us to be from the beginning in Genesis chapter 2.

Now, anybody who is married in here tonight has faced or been in any kind of long-term relationship, you've, especially marriage, you've faced this reality. You know, you got married. And six months in, if that long, you looked at your spouse.

[17 : 31] And your spouse spoke to you and they said, you know, the thing about you is you're selfish. And you looked at your spouse and you said, and you know, the thing about you is you're selfish. And then if you're in a healthy marriage, what did you do?

You both looked at each other and said, we're both selfish. And we are here to move from self-centeredness to self-sacrifice, to become what?

More and more like Jesus Christ. And see, the essence of real marriage, the heart of real marriage is to say, I'm self-centered and you're self-centered. And we're here to break each other. And so we're here to help each other become more and more like Jesus Christ, self-sacrificial.

That's the real heart. That's the glory of marriage. The glory of marriage is that it has the potential to move us, to become more and more like the people we were made to be. And that's to see that we are to become more and more like Christ through our marriage to our spouses.

Now here in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19, when they ask this question, you know, can anybody get divorced for any reason at all? Jesus says, Deuteronomy 24, he points to this in verse 8, he says, was given because your hearts are hard.

[18 : 37] And so Moses gave you a concession for divorce. And so it's important to say tonight that divorce was given by God in the Old Testament under certain conditions. There is concession for divorce.

Jesus says that very clearly. And the concession for divorce that's given in a sinful and broken world, Jesus mentions adultery. But across the Bible, Christians have looked for centuries at this.

And we basically said that there are three big reasons that you can always remember through the three A's. The reasons for the potential of divorce are adultery, abandonment, and abuse.

And sometimes, in some of those scenarios, especially abuse, divorce not only is possible but necessary. Right? And so Jesus very clearly says there is a concession for divorce, absolutely. But he turns it back around in Matthew 19 and goes back to what marriage is.

And the reason for that, what's he doing? This is implicit in Matthew 5. It's very clear in Matthew 19. What is he doing? He's saying, Pharisees, scribes, first century people, 21st century people, why would you start with a question like that?

[19 : 40] Why would you start by asking, is it lawful for me to divorce my spouse for any reason at all? He's saying, no, don't start there. The important question is not how easy can I make it to get out of this thing. That's the question of the 21st century.

Instead, he's saying you should be asking instead, what is the heart of marriage? What is the heart of my relationships? How can I make this great? How can I make this beautiful? They should have come to Jesus and said, what can I do to make my marriage great?

Right? And one commentator, James Edwards, he says, the questions the Pharisees ask here is, quote, like trying to learn to fly an airplane, starting out by asking, what is the best way to crash this thing?

Now, thirdly, that leads us to, finally, the heart of marriage. So last week, if you were here, we looked at the problem of lust through the lens of adultery in the first century. And this week, I want to do the same thing I did last week.

Last week, we said, look, let's not just leave it on the negative. Let's give a positive vision for why a Christian view of relationships makes the most sense and does the greatest service to who we are as people and our culture.

[20 : 49] And now that is exactly what Jesus does in Matthew 19. He turns it around and gives us a positive view of marriage and tells us what it is. And so let me give that to you very briefly. In Matthew 19, verse 4, Jesus says that God gave marriage, quote, from the beginning.

And he's quoting there from Genesis 1 and 2. And it's very simple. What we can say about this is Jesus teaches that marriage is a pre-fall, God-given institution.

It was not created by Neanderthals centuries ago. It was not created by any government. That it's a God-given, pre-fall institution. And that means that because God created it, God gets to define it, not us.

God gets to tell us what marriage is and what it's for. And so it's no mere custom. It's no mere piece of paper. Boy, people love to say it's just a piece of paper. No, it's a God-given, pre-fall institution.

It's sacred. It's holy. Secondly, he says in verse 5, God gave marriage from the beginning. And he says, and God made them male and female. Male and female, he created them for one another.

[21 : 56] And so the second thing he says is marriage is for men and women. Men to marry women and women to marry men. And that's, of course, very important for us to say today that the Bible teaches that. But why does he focus on that in Matthew 19 in the first century?

And I think the reason is because the entire frame of the question, can I divorce my wife for any reason at all? If she burns the dinner, Rabbi Hillel says that I can just leave her. Why is he saying, no, marriage was made for men and for women?

You see what he's saying? He's saying that you're thinking, the men of this culture are thinking entirely from their perspective. And he's saying, you've got to look back to the beginning of history and understand that you have overplayed your male rights against female rights.

And that from the very beginning of human history, men can't just do what they want. And in Genesis 1 and 2, God made marriage for men and women for their mutual benefit. And as one writer puts it, as a sovereign creation, woman is not man's subject, but his equal.

And marriage is for the good of both equally. That's why Jesus brings that up. He's saying you've completely, you've overplayed male rights against female rights and you've completely missed Genesis 1 and 2. The third thing he tells us here in verse 6 is a man then is called to leave his parents and become one with his wife.

[23 : 15] And you see, when he says one, he's immediately saying marriage does not exist as a relationship for market benefit. It's not an open marketplace where you come and say, who can give me the best station in life?

Who can get me more money in my bank account? Who has a great job? Those are the people I want to marry, right? Who can give me the best friend group? He's saying, no, you're meant to become one. And it's not there for market benefit.

It's not an open marketplace. Not at all. Instead, what does he mean by the word one? What's the positive vision? He's saying marriage exists for utter companionship. For utter companionship.

Now here's the Christian revolution, the biblical revolution. Unlike almost every century in all of human history in the view of what marriage is, in every culture, every century, Christianity comes and says marriage is fundamentally about friendship.

And that is unlike any other culture or worldview throughout human history. Marriage is about friendship, companionship, really being one with somebody. And the Pharisees are asking, you know, how can I get out of this before I ever begin?

[24 : 20] How can I crash this plane, you know, as soon as it's taken off? That's what they're thinking in their hearts. And Jesus says, no, you need to be asking, how can I become the greatest of friends with my spouse if you're married?

That's the question. And that means, let me say to you today, if you're married or if you want to be married, if you're looking for marriage in your life, friendship is the most important condition before anything else in looking for a future spouse.

Friendship, friendship is far, far more important than physical attractiveness. Things like physical attractiveness, they go away, but friendship is really what makes a marriage great.

It's the real heartbeat. And a modern person will come to that and say, boy, you know, should I get married at all? You know, I'm not going to get married unless there's chemistry. I'm not going to get married unless I fall into love like I've fallen into a swimming pool.

Unless, you know, the electricity is really there in the bottom of my soul. And that's exactly backwards. Because, of course, in the early days when you're dating somebody, there's some electricity there.

[25 : 23] You hold hands for the first time, it's electric, right? But that's feelings. It's not yet the heartbeat of the definition of biblical love.

And the heartbeat of the definition of biblical love is love is not something we fall into. Love is the choice to be so committed to somebody that you say, I am willing to serve you self-sacrificially in order to make you great, in order to make you like Jesus.

That's the real heartbeat of love. And that's why you can hold hands on in the early days and there's electricity. But, boy, 25 years in, only, I would imagine, I'm not there yet, 25 years in, only then can you really look up and see the deepest of love, the truest love, the love that has been forged through the fires, through the suffering, right?

Love is not something you fall into, it's something you say, yes, you commit to. And oftentimes, the greatest feelings follow the decision. First, you've got to make the decision in order to really grow the feelings.

And that takes a long, long time. And so, lastly, in verse 5 and 6, he says, the two shall become one flesh. You'll leave your father and mother and you shall become one flesh.

[26 : 36] And so, lastly, we learn this language of leave and cleave, as we often say. He says, you've got to leave your father, your mother, you've got to hold fast for your wife. This is covenant language. This is the language of covenant, not contract, but covenant.

And covenant is a promise to pursue your spouse and self-sacrifice. All right, let me close with this. For those of you in the room that are married, Christian marriages, two Christians married in this room tonight, are you pursuing your spouse's holiness through your self-sacrifice?

That's the essence of what marriage is for. And the difference in that and the public idea of the contract is you don't come primarily to your relationship to get, but to give.

And when that happens, when both of you are mutually giving, self-sacrificially giving to one another, that is when relationship really becomes great. Really becomes great. And so people all day will say, I don't need a piece of paper.

You know, I don't need a piece of paper to tell somebody that I love them. But boy, when you come to a wedding day, I say this often at weddings, when you come to a wedding day, the piece of paper, signing the piece of paper, is exactly what you need.

[27 : 51] It's exactly what you need. It's the most important way to say to somebody, I actually love you. Because when you sign the piece of paper, you're saying, I'm committed. And when you make vows, you say, in plenty and in want, in plenty, in want, in sorrow, in every type of suffering that may come, in the greatest moments where you see my self-centeredness, in the greatest moment where I'm actually exposed, what are you doing when you make a vow and you sign a piece of paper, you're not saying, today I love you.

Everybody in the room at a wedding knows, today you two love each other. You like each other. But what are you doing when you sign the piece of paper? What are you doing when you make the vows? You're saying, in the future, one day, many, many years from now, I promise today that even when I fall out of love with you, I will love you.

And that day is coming. Even when you have fallen out of love with me for whatever I did that day, you're saying, I will love you no matter what. That's the nature of real love.

And that's the real power for the best possible marriage. What we need tonight is for all of us, no matter if you're married or single, in all of our relationships, for their maximal health, for them to truly be something that can make us great, we need to be able to come tonight and say, the problem in my marriage, the problem in my relationships is me.

That's the problem. It's right here. It's my heart. And that's the most important thing we can do. And only then can we have hope for relationships to really grow the way they were meant to. How does it work?

[29 : 22] In Ephesians chapter five, the pinnacle text about marriage in the Bible, we're told that two spouses that are married, a couple that's married, are to submit to one another like Jesus Christ submitted himself, gave himself in utter sacrifice for his bride, the church.

The power for a great relationship tonight is always, always, always for you to look at Jesus and to see the self-sacrifice that he gave for his bride at the cross to win her, to forgive her, to buy her back, to redeem her, to purchase her, to secure her forever.

And when you look at the cross, you can say, for all the ways I've broken relationships, I've been self-centered, not self-sacrificial in relationships. I can say, Jesus saved me, he forgave me, and he has now set me on a new path.

Let me take you deeper into that for just two minutes and we'll finish. In Genesis chapter two and three, we're looking at on Sunday mornings, we have the first marriage between Adam and Eve.

And Eve, we saw this morning, Eve took and ate from the fruit of the tree, the knowledge of good and evil. But in verse seven, it said that Adam was with her. He watched the whole time passively and did not do anything to stop it.

[30 : 46] The evil on the serpent was tempting her all the way, bringing her into utter destruction. He did nothing. He just watched, lazy and passive, letting his bride go into the arms of death.

That's what happened in the very beginning. Now, let me ask you, when you think about the nature of true marriage, a great marriage, what's a great marriage? A great marriage is where two people understand the goal is to serve your spouse to the point of great cost so that they can draw near to God more and more.

In that moment, this is hypothetical, this is hypothetical, but what would a great husband have done? What would a great husband have done when she ate of the tree and God came into the garden and God said, where are you?

Why are you hiding from me? You're exiled, you're condemned, you're cursed. You've purchased death in this choice. What would a true husband have done in that moment? A great husband.

What would he have done? He would have said, don't send her into the wilderness. He would have said, don't take her life, don't condemn her, don't judge her. Take my life for hers.

[31 : 56] A true husband would have said, I will give my life, I will be judged to save my bride. You see, what's the heart of a great marriage? The heart of a great marriage is when you're willing to give yourself away like Jesus did to bring your spouse closer to God.

But she was being exiled. A true and better Adam, a true and better Adam would have said, take my life, save my bride.

I want her to be close to you, Lord. A true and better Adam would have given him his own life away. What if there was a true and better Adam? What if there was one where we can say, our maker is our husband?

The true second Adam who came, who said, I will give my life away to bring my bride near unto God. And in Jesus Christ, that's exactly what we have.

And so today, tonight, if you are divorced, maybe you're divorced tonight, and you come and you say, you know, you've been talking about the heart of marriage and you've been talking about the beauty of real self-sacrifice that looks like Jesus.

[33 : 06] I have come through a relationship and out of a relationship that was the utter opposite of that. And I just want you to hear one more time that the Bible very clearly says sometimes divorce is permissible and sometimes divorce is even necessary in cases of adultery, abandonment, and abuse.

And that's exactly what Jesus is referring to here. But you might come tonight and also think, you know, I was the main problem in that relationship.

And I actually brought the pain through my self-centeredness. And I want you to know tonight that you still can see, you've got to see, that you can still have and need and do have, if you're a Christian, the ultimate marriage, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

You can have that. You know, think about David and Bathsheba. Think about the extent of God's love and mercy to those of us that have broken relationships and make great mistakes. David, King David, stole Bathsheba from Uriah.

And to cover it up, he murdered Uriah. Now, that's a divorce. Talk about a very serious divorce situation there.

[34 : 15] And it's a pretty bad scenario. And you know what? The Lord brought the Messiah out of David and Bathsheba's marriage. And that is a one-time, and once-only moment in redemptive history.

But we do see in it that the Lord is ready to show grace to all of us for the mistakes we've made in our relationships. He's ready to forgive. Jesus Christ's cross says that you have a true and better husband who will bring you to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to the feast.

And then lastly, if you're married tonight or if you're single, do you see tonight, no matter if you're married or single, that Jesus Christ came to be your groom?

and the more and more you run into the arms of Jesus, you're a great groom over and over and over again, the more you will find your relationships getting healthier and healthier.

The more you run to the arms of Christ, you're a great groom. That's the real source of power for healing and restoring and making our relationships exactly what they were meant to be.

[35 : 23] Let's pray. Father, as we come to the table, we ask that you would give us a vision of the marriage supper of the Lamb that is to come, our great groom coming for his bride.

And we say tonight, that's us. Lord, thank you. We want to experience that tonight at the table. So we pray that you would come and meet with us now as we come to the table. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.