

Text: Matthew 19:3-6 (Pew Bible pg.975)

Title: “Marriage Options”

INTRODUCTION

In a few short weeks there will be a very important election. Early voting begins tomorrow with the election coming on Nov.6. Has it occurred to you that you and I will have an opportunity in many of the races in this election to affirm a particular worldview ... a particular way of looking at life and truth? With your vote you may affirm a worldview that is ordered by the truth of God, or you may affirm a worldview that says there is no such thing as “truth” so people just get to do whatever is most convenient and profitable for themselves. I trust you are carefully studying the issues where you will affirm with your vote biblical values.

Let’s open our Bibles to Matthew 19:3. I’m in a series of messages entitled “Hazmat ... The Most Dangerous Ideas in Your Culture.” These ideas are hazardous material because they have consequences. If enough people embrace a particular philosophy it will eventually affect their culture, their leaders, their laws, and the way they educate their children and young people.

Last week we talked about the lethal idea that there is no such thing as absolute truth; just my truth and your truth. And who’s to say that my truth isn’t just as valid as your truth if we all get to make up our own truth. And that’s dangerous because that leads people to simply to do what is right in their own eyes, which usually means what is convenient and profitable for me.

The antidote to that hazardous idea is another idea ... the idea that I represented with what I’ve called the “chain of truth.” The chain of truth is the worldview with four important links. It starts with the existence of the One True God. What He knows and what He thinks about any matter is absolutely true. So how do we know what God thinks about a matter? We know because He gave us the written revelation of truth in Scripture. So we have the Bible to show us what is truth. But God’s revelation of Himself was not complete until He became a man in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. So we have the personal revelation of truth in Christ. And the final link in that chain is a life of obedience to the truth.

If you will hang your life on this chain of truth, you will never go wrong. It becomes the way that we test every other philosophy or argument or worldview. Today I want to apply that to the matter of marriage. We live in a day where many people ignore the truth of God and His Word, and they embrace a number of marriage options, one of which is so-called “gay marriage.” Now I call it “so-called” because that phrase is really an oxymoron ... the two words are totally incompatible, by their very definition. It’s like saying cold heat or dark light.

We may think that questioning the nature of marriage is something recent, but it was going on in biblical times as well, even in the time of Jesus. Matthew 19 tells us of an occasion when Jesus is challenged by some religious leaders on the issue of marriage. Read Matthew 19:3-6.

You see, the enduring definition of marriage was established by God at creation and affirmed by Jesus in His teachings. No human or society has the right to change that definition.

Notice that Jesus gives us...

1. THE PROVISION OF MARRIAGE (vv.4-6)

Notice that Jesus began His answer with the words, “Haven’t you read...” (v.4). That tells us that Jesus is referring back to God’s written revelation, in this case, in the OT. He’s basing His answer to their question upon God’s written revelation of truth in Scripture.

Now, granted, there will be those who say, “Well, you’re just assuming that the Bible is true. But I don’t happen to believe that the Bible is true. There may be some good things in the Bible, but I don’t think it’s the final word. Societies change, and people get smarter as time goes on, so we need to adapt to the conditions that exist today.”

And a person has the right to that opinion. But that’s just what it is ... an opinion ... and a foolish one at that. They are telling you something about their worldview ... that we live in a universe that is random, with no standard of right or wrong other than just what someone happens to believe.

That’s a foolish worldview. As I said last week, the only worldview that makes any sense of life is the worldview that we live in a universe that was created by the One True God. He has given order to all creation by His natural and moral laws. This is called Truth.

So Jesus’ teachings about marriage are based upon the truth of God’s written revelation.

Notice also that Jesus says, “At the beginning the Creator...” (v.4). That tells us that marriage came into existence by the will of God, not man, and it was part of God’s creating the man and the woman. And it says that God distinctly “made them male and female” (v.4).

And at creation God was putting in place not just the one marriage between Adam and Eve, but He envisioned this becoming a basic part of life of humanity on the earth God created. That’s why God said at the beginning in Genesis 2:24 (which Jesus quotes here in v.5): “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

If this arrangement had only been for Adam and Eve, then God would have not said that a man would leave his father and mother. Adam had no father or mother to leave, because God created him as the original. So God, and Jesus, looked forward to how marriage would become a part of human society ordered by the truth of God.

So God, not man, established marriage; and He determines the guidelines for marriage. He deliberately and uniquely created a male and a female who would be joined together in the first marriage, not two men, or two women.

And there are at least three purposes for this “one flesh” experience that God designed:

- Pleasure (loving intimacy between a husband and wife)
- Procreation (perpetuation of the human race)
- Prosperity (order and stability in society)

All three are equally important in God's design. It's not just for the personal pleasure of man and woman; it's for procreation (when that is possible) and for prosperity and order in society.

And God did all of this while Adam and Eve were still in the innocent, pure splendor of a sinless garden. It is part of God's gracious, loving provision for His creation.

The next thing we see is...

2. THE PERVERSION OF MARRIAGE

Matthew 19:6 - So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Sinful human beings found ways to pervert that pure gift that God gave to humanity. In OT times instead of being committed to one wife, some men (even some of those whom God used) had multiple wives. And men began to put their wives away (divorcing them) for just about any selfish reason they could find. And then there were men, like the ones in Sodom and Gomorra in Genesis 19, who engaged in homosexual immorality. So sinful human beings found ways, from the earliest time, to pervert God's pure gift of marriage.

And we see this in the question raised by the Pharisees who were trying to trick Jesus. They asked about one of those perversions of marriage ... when it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. And after Jesus gave them His answer in vv.4-6, they come back with a rebuttal:

Matthew 19:7 - "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

So they were saying, "Wait a minute, Jesus. Moses must have condoned divorce. After all, he allowed that a man could give his wife a certificate of divorce, outlining his grievances against her, and then he could send her away."

Matthew 19:8 - Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.

So essentially what had happened is that down through the centuries the perfect plan of God for marriage was perverted by man's sinful, selfish desires.

Now in the U.S. there have been at least three major assaults on the institution of marriage as it was designed and defined by God. The first assault came with what was called the "Sexual Revolution" in the 1960s and 1970s. Free love was the big deal. Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young sang a song called "Love the One Your With." The chorus of the song said, "If you can't be with the one you love, then love the one you're with." That was the attitude of "free love" that exploded in the sixties and seventies.

The next major assault followed on the heels of that with the rise in something called “no-fault divorce.” Prior to the no-fault divorce revolution, a divorce could be obtained only through a showing of fault of one of the parties in a marriage. It wasn’t just that two people didn’t love each other anymore. There had to be proof that there one of the spouses had committed adultery, abandonment, felony, or other harmful acts against the marriage. But that has changed, and since 1985 no-fault divorce has been available in all 50 states.

But the next major assault on the institution of marriage may be the most hideous, because it strikes at the very core of marriage. I’m talking about the initiative in the US to legalize homosexual marriage. Of course this has been preceded by an all-out push to legitimize all forms of the homosexual lifestyle, trying to make it a normal way for human beings to relate to one another.

ILLUSTRATION – One of the largest employers in Fort Worth has a campaign going that involves the distribution and display of something called a PRIDE mug. The company’s website has this notice:

“WHAT IS THIS CAMPAIGN? The PRIDE Mug Campaign is one way that individual employees can reinforce an inclusive environment in their own workspace. By having and displaying a PRIDE mug, you send the message that you are someone who values diversity. ‘It’s not just what is said, but also what is not said that is important,’ reminds (the) Vice President, Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Programs. ‘We need to recognize the power of different perspectives. Leaders also need to feel comfortable providing support.’ Displaying a PRIDE mug is one of many inclusive behaviors that encourage members of our workforce to bring their whole selves to work, to share their innovative ideas and to exemplify teamwork ... A sustained commitment to inclusion will continue to maintain and grow our business. What should you do with your PRIDE mug? Display it at work. Use it as a pencil holder, as a paperweight, or drink out of it. Any way you use it, you will be influencing the degree to which coworkers feel included, respected and valued ... In so doing, you are setting the standard without saying a word.” At the bottom of the announcement it says, “PRIDE is an employee resource group serving (the company’s) lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees, employee family and friends of LGBT people...”

That’s the kind of pressure that is being increasingly felt in the marketplace to accept not just homosexuality, but homosexual marriage. A moral wrong has been turned into a civil right.

ARGUMENT: You will hear people, even some Christians, say, “Well, those prohibitions against homosexuality in the Bible don’t really apply to us today. They were just the ranting of a homophobic Jew named Paul 2000 years ago.” I’ve even heard people say, “Jesus never addressed the issue of homosexuality or gay marriage, so let’s just leave it alone.”

ANSWER: Actually Jesus did speak to the issue of gay marriage when in places like Matthew 19 He defines what marriage *is* ... a God-designed union between a male and a female. And in doing so, Jesus defined what marriage *is not*.

In the “one-flesh” union that God designed marriage to be, God intends that a man is to be “united” to his wife, not to another man. And the wife is to be united with her husband, not to another woman. This is the way God designed marriage to work physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Actively supporting, or even passively condoning, gay marriage (personally or politically) reveals something about the worldview that you hold to ... that we do not live in a world that is ordered, held together by or accountable to God-given truth. Therefore everyone is free to do what is right in their own eyes.

Now I said that this issue of gay marriage may be the most vicious assault on the institution of marriage to ever come along. The reason is that it puts our society on an unprecedented slippery slope. If we are free to define marriage anyway we wish, and that it is perfectly acceptable for a man to marry another man, or a woman to marry a woman, what’s next? What’s to keep someone from saying, “Why can’t I have multiple mates? If you have your deviation, I want mine.” What’s to keep someone from saying, “I should be free to marry a child ... or an animal”? Where would it ever stop? And that’s why this is hazardous material.

God designed marriage the way He did because one of the purposes of marriage is procreation, which, of course, is not possible in a gay marriage. So gay couples who want children will adopt or gain a child through a surrogate. But here again is a poisonous, toxic idea when it comes to children. God’s design is for children to be raised by a father and a mother. It is best for their normal and healthy development. Same sex “marriage” denies a child in that household either a father or a mother.

And there’s one more thing about this slippery slope we’ll be on if “gay marriage” is legalized. It becomes the law of the land, and so those of us who teach and preach the truth of Scripture will inevitably be muzzled. It is an issue of freedom of expression and the separation of church and state. And for individual’s working for companies like the one I mentioned earlier may face reprimands or dismissal for refusing to condone or accept gay marriage.

Now let me pause here to say that homosexuality is not a “super sin.” It is sexual immorality just like having sex with someone who is not your spouse in marriage.

We should also remember that we are to treat those caught in homosexual sin in the same way that Jesus treated the woman He encountered in John 4. This woman at the well had lived a life of sexual immorality, but Jesus still loved and respected her, even as He told her the truth.

So there is the truth of God’s perfect, gracious, loving provision of marriage. But then there is also the dangerous perversion of marriage. And Jesus anticipates this so He also includes...

3. THE PROTECTION OF MARRIAGE

Matthew 19:6b - Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Now obviously Jesus is speaking about the protection of an individual marriage.

Hebrews 13:4 - Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

When God calls us to protect marriage He is doing so because He knows the boundaries in which his blessings can flow. When He puts restrictions of marriage it is because He wants us to enjoy the life He has for us, not because He wants to limit or stifle us.

But there is also a call here to protect not just individual marriages, but also to protect the institution of marriage.

Paul quotes this passage from Genesis and the teachings of Jesus in Ephesians 5. It contains some of the most extensive instruction on marriage to be found in the NT. As he concludes his instruction the Apostle exclaims:

Ephesians 5:32 - This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

What this tells us is that God has something in mind for marriage that is far beyond just the marital happiness of a man and a woman. What this tells us that God created the institution of marriage as a witness to the Gospel. Through a strong, loving relationship between a Christian man and a Christian woman God paints a picture of the Gospel ... that Christ loved and gave Himself up for us so that we might enjoy an eternal union with Him.