

The Greatest Sermon: Honey Bunches of Oaths

Why would Jesus, right in the middle of a sermon about the Law, suddenly start talking about divorce — and then, just as suddenly, switch to talking about swearing oaths?

Those seem like two completely unrelated topics. They're not. Stay with me — this is going somewhere.

The Sermon on the mount:

- Beatitudes reveal who we are in Christ. Our Identity
- Then Jesus shows us how to reveal that identity to the world by being salt and light
- Next He shows that He is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, and that the Scriptures have been revealing the Messiah, and now He is here!

So the last thing Jesus brought up was the Old Testament, and how He is transitioning them to a New Covenant that will come at the Cross.

But now Jesus begins to talk about marriage.

Matthew 5:31-32 "Now it was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE'; ³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

- Jesus continues with the same language – you have heard it said, but I say to you...
- Remember, that is Jesus agreeing with the law, but disagreeing with their narrow interpretation of it.
- In essence, Jesus says here that anyone that divorces for any reason outside of sexual immorality by the other person, is committing sin. Plain and simple. No other exceptions.

Now, before anyone starts heaping condemnation on themselves if you have been divorced, or starts judging all the people you know that have been divorced – Remember – Jesus is still speaking under the law. And there is a

real strong possibility that He is pointing to something else that is even more important.

Jesus starts with You have heard it said WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE'

- Who said that and why was it said.
- Moses is the one that came up with divorce.
 - **Deuteronomy 24:1** "If a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that 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 from his house
- If a man kicked a woman out, then she became homeless and unsupported. Certificates of divorce were to help protect the women. That way she could remarry and not die.
- Divorce was not created to affirm the dissolution of marriages, but to be a compassionate answer for women.
- But by Jesus' time, this was distorted and corrupted.
- 2 rabbinical schools of thought.
 - Hillel – A man can divorce his wife for any reason. Indecency could be anything.
 - Shammai – A man can only divorce for adultery. Sexual immorality.

The first thing Jesus is doing here is saying that Shammai interpreted it right, and the liberal view of Hillel is just made-up wishful thinking.

But apparently, not everyone heard this teaching, or maybe had thoughts about it, so they bring it back up again.

Matthew 19:3-6 And *some* Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and saying, "Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" ⁴ And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, ⁵ and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

- This time Jesus gives some definition to what He is saying.
- God created 2 genders – Male and Female.
- Marriage is to be between one man and one woman.
- They become one after marriage.
- God is the one joining them together. Not the government. Not society. Not the couple. God.
- And He indicates that once they are joined together, they should never be separated.

When the Pharisees ask then why Moses allowed for divorce, Jesus explains:

Matthew 19:8-9 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

- Divorce was never God's plan.
- Because of sin, God allowed Moses to add this in, but that was not the intention.
- Then Jesus repeats His Words from the sermon on the mount.

This is His own disciple's response to this:

- **Matthew 19:10** The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry."

And it is a hard saying. But not harder than any of Jesus' other sayings.

In fact, so far everything concerning the law has been to show that you cannot keep the law. It's too hard.

But Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and has brought a New Covenant for us.

Why did Jesus choose to talk about marriage when discussing the law?

- What do we call the most important part of a wedding? Marriage vows. They are oaths. Covenants.
- Marriage is important to God.

- First institution – marriage
- First miracle – at a wedding
- The end is called the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Hosea was commanded to marry Gomer. Gomer is a prostitute. Why?

- God is giving a picture of Israel. God commands Hosea to be faithful to an unfaithful woman, Just as God is faithful to unfaithful people.

God is using marriage to demonstrate His faithfulness. But it is more than that.

- God's covenants are unbreakable.
- Even when we are unfaithful He is faithful.

If you recall, the only reason Jesus gave that was acceptable for divorce was sexual immorality.

- If I was writing the rules, I would have added lots more in. Like abuse. Or playing country music.
- But Jesus didn't. Why was He so strict?

Marriage was a picture of the covenant they lived under.

And sexual immorality is always a picture of worshiping another God in the Bible.

- **Hosea 4:12-13** My people ask their wooden idol, and their *diviner's* wand declares to them; For a spirit of harlotry has led *them* astray, And they have played the harlot, *departing* from their God. ¹³ They offer sacrifices on the tops of the mountains And burn incense on the hills, Under oak, poplar, and terebinth Because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the harlot, And your brides commit adultery.
- **2 Corinthians 11:2** For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, for I betrothed you to one husband, so that I might present you *as* a pure virgin to Christ.

What are the terms of the Mosaic Covenant?

Exodus 19:5-8 So now then, if you will indeed listen to My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." ⁷ So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words which Yahweh had commanded him. ⁸ And all the people answered together and said, "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to Yahweh.

- They agreed to keep the law
- Unlike the New Covenant that we talked about last week, this covenant was made between God and the people. They had a part in keeping it.
- In the New Covenant, Jesus does everything.

So Jesus picked marriage to talk about because it is the picture of the relationship of God with His people.

And He allowed for divorce due to sexual immorality because following after another God, idolatry, which God called spiritual adultery, was the way to break their end of the covenant, just as it broke the covenant of marriage.

And the thing about covenants – They are forever.

That's why Jesus said that if you get divorced, then remarry – it's still adultery.

How do I know for sure that Jesus is talking about covenants, and not simply giving out rules for marriage? Look at the very next verses in the sermon on the mount:

Matthew 5:33-37 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.'³⁴ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵ or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by

Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. ³⁶ Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of the evil one.

- Man says you should fulfill your vows. Don't perjure yourself.
- But God says don't make oaths at all. Just have integrity.
- Don't make an oath that does not mean anything.

Again, why is having integrity and not making a vow so important that it makes it into this sermon?

Because Vows = Oaths = Covenants.

And with God, Covenants are permanent. So if we make a covenant, like marriage vows, God holds those forever.

Are any of the 7 covenants God has made dead?

The Adamic Covenant – Is there sin in the world and is there provision for that sin? Yes.

The Noahic Covenant – Has the earth been destroyed by a global flood since Noah and is there still a rainbow in the sky? Yes.

The Abrahamic Covenant – Does Israel exist as a nation scattered all over the earth, and are all people blessed by through his physical lineage. Yes.

The Palestinian Covenant – States that if Israel disobeyed God, they would be scattered from their land, but eventually they will be returned. Is this still in effect? Yes.

The Mosaic Covenant – If people obey God's commands they will be blessed, but if they disobey they will be judged. Are sinners still judged? Yes.

The Davidic Covenant – Is there still someone from the line of David that is still on the throne reigning as King? Yes.

The New Covenant – God will clean us, give us a new heart, give us a new spirit, place His spirit in us, lead us into obedience, and we will be a part of His family. Still active? Yes.

All of those covenants with the exception of the New Covenant, are part of the Old Testament. Testament = Covenant.

We are still under all those covenants.

But Jesus is the fulfillment of them all.

In the Adamic Covenant, Jesus is that provision for sin.

In the Noahic Covenant, Jesus is the ark that saves humanity from total destruction.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, Jesus comes from Abraham's line and is the blessing that blesses the whole world.

In the Palestinian Covenant, Jesus is the one that will restore Israel.

In the Mosaic Covenant, Jesus is the one that takes the penalty of disobedience upon Himself so that the law can no longer judge those who believe.

In the Davidic Covenant, Jesus is the King on the throne from the line of David and will be seated on the throne forever.

And in the New Covenant, Jesus shed His blood to clean us, He creates in us a new heart, He makes us alive in Him, places His Spirit in us, gives us His life to live through us so we can be obedient, and we are made children of God through Jesus.

This is why covenant is so important to God. He relates to us through covenant, and His words stand eternal.

Now – going back to marriage.

- What if you got divorced? What does that mean in light of Jesus' teaching?
- Well, what if you sinned any other sin? And yes, divorce is sin.

- You would repent and know that by God's grace you have been forgiven.
- That's the grace part of the New Covenant. The power of the law is broken. Jesus has paid the penalty and we are made clean.
- It is sin. Divorce should not be the goal. But God gives grace.
- Does repentance mean trying to go back to your spouse?
 - Maybe. But Probably not. When we sin there are consequences we must live with even after we are forgiven.
 - If you murder and get caught you will go to jail. No matter if you repent, you still go to jail.
 - But God is with you even in the aftermath of sin – just like God making clothes for Adam and Eve after they sinned, God is with us.

If time permits – Brief explanation of when divorce is ok. Paul gave some allowance. Remember – it's purpose is to point back to God, not enslave us.

In Summary

- Jesus didn't come to give you a stricter rulebook on divorce, or a longer list of acceptable oaths.
- He came to show you that God has never once broken His word. Not with Adam. Not with Noah. Not with Abraham, Moses, David. Not with you.
- Every covenant God ever made; He's kept. That's not just a fact about God — that's His character.

And that's why He cares so much about your yes being yes.

- Not because He's a legalist keeping score on your vows.
- But because when you keep your word — to your spouse, to your kids, to the person you told you'd help move on Saturday — you are, in that moment, looking like your Father.
- Every promise you keep is a small picture of the God who cannot break His.

So if you've broken a vow — a marriage, a promise, your word to someone — you're not disqualified.

- You're not the first person to fail at covenant. Israel did it constantly, and God kept receiving them back.
- That's the whole New Covenant. Jesus didn't just fulfill the seven covenants out there in history for fun. He fulfilled them because He could do what we could not.
- Grace doesn't erase consequences. But it does mean you're not carrying this alone, and you're not stuck defined by the vow you broke.

Let your yes be yes.

- Not because you're strong enough to never fail — you're not, none of us are.
- But because you belong to a God whose yes has never once been no. And that's who you're becoming like.