

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt12a

Almost everyone that I have talked to who has had an affair tend to say the same thing, "It just happened, I don't know how." Of course, when we talk further, I find out that they had been having an emotional relationship with this person for some time. They say, "They just get me" or "they really listen to me". They spend more and more time with this person, and they start entertaining thoughts in their mind about how it would be like to be with this person. It never just happens. It always starts in the mind and Jesus knows this.

3. Divorce 31-3

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

We need to understand the historical concept of this one. During the time of Jesus' ministry, within the marriage context, women were seen as property and had very little rights. Men could divorce them for just about any reason and that left the women in the precarious position of having to provide for herself. It was a patriarchal system that left women at the mercy of the whims of her husband.

There were two schools of thought in Judaism at the time. Each school was named after the Rabbi who was the main teacher. The Hillel school allowed men to divorce their wives for trivial offenses, such as burning a meal. The Shammai school only allowed it for adultery and nothing else.

Jesus seeks to rectify this by appealing to the moral law of not committing adultery. He is telling us that marriage is an institution ordained by God and that it is meant to be for a lifetime. While there are exceptions, He names marital infidelity as one, getting divorced on a whim without a good reason, leads to infidelity.

Again, we need to look at how Scripture addresses things to understand these verses. For example, there are different list of gifts in the Bible. Because of this, some say there are only 7 gifts, others say 12, and still others 25. The fact is that these list are not exhaustive lists, they are meant to address the major gifts as an example. Just because there might be a gift that is not mentioned in the NT doesn't mean that it is not a gift. In this passage He is trying to communicate the seriousness of marriage and that it should not be treated as just another contract.

In Chapter 19 He reaffirms this and acknowledges that while Moses allowed divorce for specific reasons, that the intent of marriage is that it is a sacred union intended to be for a lifetime.

So how do we apply this to our day and age? If you are a legalist, do you say to a spouse who is being abused physically, mentally, emotionally, or sexually, that they are out of luck and have to stick it out in a bad marriage? Jesus is not saying that adultery is the only reason for divorce. In a perfect world there would be no divorce. In the context of this passage and the fact that Herod the Tetrarch had divorced one woman just to marry another, Jesus is saying that divorce shouldn't exist, but that there may be legitimate reasons for divorce, but that those are few and far between. He is also protecting women so that if they are divorced for legitimate reasons, she is then free to

remarry. If the reasons are not legitimate, then the man is making her an adulteress if she gets involved with someone else.

In my opinion, the spirit of the Law in this case says that marriage is sacred and that every effort is to be made to save the marriage. Trivial reasons are not good enough to nullify the marriage covenant. Only extraordinary reasons should be given for the dissolution of a marriage. In my opinion, abuse ranks right up there with infidelity. It might not be the letter of the law, as Jesus did not specifically name it, but I think that it follows the spirit of the law which is, first to protect the institution of marriage and second to protect women.

4. Oaths 33-37

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' 34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

All of us have great intentions when we agree to things, and in order to show how serious we are about those intentions it is common to swear that we will keep our word.

People usually swear an oath because they are tying what they say to something greater than themselves. They are invoking God's name, or its' substitutes as guarantees for telling the truth. The reason for this is because your word is not good enough.

To the Jews they understood this to go back to this:

Num 30:1-2

Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the people of Israel, saying, "This is what the Lord has commanded. 2 If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

This was meant as a means to keep people from going back on their word in contracts and land disputes.

Jesus is telling us that when we are making binding contracts, invoking other things, places or people as collateral, when we ultimately have not control over those things, places or people doesn't make it any more true. Don't make yourself or God a liar by swearing an oath that you can't keep. It is far better to have a reputation for keeping your word that when you say "yes" it is yes, and when you say "no" it is no. Swearing oaths, may lead to us doing things we shouldn't in order to fulfill those oaths.

Has any politician who has sworn an oath of office, ever kept that oath?

Don't lie to yourself and others. Don't overcommit. Just do the right things and stay away from evil.

Because of Christians who have gone before you, if you go into court to testify, they now say, "Do you swear or affirm that you will tell the truth?"