

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc. Epiphany 3 Sunday Sermon on 2018-01-21

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE **by Fr Reed Merino**

This is going to be a teaching that requires two sermons. The first sermon will (or should) create anxiety or even fear on your part. The second will, I hope show you how to remove that anxiety.

It is what God reveals and requires about divorce and remarriage. This is a "red hot potato," as they say: which is why you almost never hear any careful and faithful teaching about it from pulpits and publishers. It has been a very significant issue in my own life, as you know, since Ann and I were split up for 5 years.

There has been a move under way for about a century to stretch the Scriptures regarding divorce and remarriage as far as possible in the direction of individual liberty and permissiveness; but this is very wrong. When studying the attitude of Jesus and the apostles, it is clear that they were quite determined to fight exactly that kind of permissive liberty. In Jewish culture, the man had great liberty of divorce, and in gentile cultures both parties did.

The reason that churches feel free to stretch the scriptures in that permissive direction is because they really do not know the character of God: what is really important to Him, and HOW important it is to Him. We have been stretched so far away from what God REALLY revealed that we no longer bother to take Him seriously, whether in His commands, His warnings or His promises.

This sermon is based upon what He and His apostles ACTUALLY said. I will present WHAT He taught about marriage and Remarriage; then what He taught about the consequences of IGNORING what He taught; and then, finally, what you can do if you have already "blown it."

I cannot cover it thoroughly in one or two sermons. It is covered in much more detail in the "Blueprint."

The relevant New Testament Scriptures are Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:10-16, 7:39. You should read these teachings for yourself: I will email this sermon to you.

From these texts, we are taught the following:

- 1. Matthew 5:31-32.** A man who divorces his wife forces her to commit adultery (i.e., when and if she remarries, of course); however, if he divorces her for "the

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc.

Epiphany 3 Sunday Sermon on 2018-01-21

cause of unchastity” this does not hold true.¹ Furthermore, anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery. [And remember, Paul tells us that those guilty of adultery – along with other forms of guilt – will not inherit the kingdom of God: 1 Corinthians 6:10]

2. Matthew 19:3-9. A husband and wife are joined together by God Himself, causing them to become one flesh; man is forbidden to sever what God has joined together. Whoever, therefore, divorces his wife and marries another person commits adultery against her (there is one qualification, but too detailed to treat here [This is the case “except for immorality” (literally, “a wife not of `porneia”)])

3. Mark 10:2-12. The two are one flesh and are not to be separated. If either party divorces and remarries, they are committing adultery against their true spouse (no qualifications).

4. Luke 16:18. Any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery (no qualifications).

5. Romans 7:2-3. The “law” binds a woman to her husband as long as he is alive, and if she marries anyone else while he is alive, she is an adulteress (no qualifications).

6. 1 Cor. 7:10-11. The wife is not to leave her husband, nor is the husband to divorce her. If she does leave she must either remain unmarried or be reconciled to him.

7. 1 Cor. 7:12-15. If a believer is married to an unbeliever and the unbeliever is willing to live with the believer, the believer must not separate from the unbeliever. If, however, the unbeliever leaves, the believer is to let them leave, and is “not under bondage in such cases.”

8. 1 Cor. 7:39. A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

Ordering all of these texts, we should readily see that the general rule is one of unqualified judgment against divorce and remarriage: remarriage is adultery. The two remain in a one-flesh union until death alone parts them. Three of the above passages

¹ The Greek term translated as unchastity or fornication (Greek: “πορνεία” “porneia”), is a broad term that can apply to many sex-related themes. It can refer to a specific form of sexual misconduct or to sexual misconduct in general. It can refer to relationships that God considers forbidden (e.g., marrying someone too closely related). Context must determine its meaning in any given text.

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc.

Epiphany 3 Sunday Sermon on 2018-01-21

are commonly used to introduce qualifications to this rule: 1 Cor. 7:15, Matthew 5:31, and Matthew 19:9. I go into that in detail in the "Blueprint", but the bottom line is that that you have to twist those passages to get them to say what people want them to say.

Therefore, Jesus and His apostles teach that the attitude necessary for the church to take in this matter, therefore, is that the marriage bond -- if a true bond to begin with -- is indissoluble because it is sealed by God Himself. And only He can break it -- by death. A man or woman may never bind themselves to another mate, while the first spouse is alive, without becoming guilty of adultery. Throughout most of the history of the Christian church this has actually BEEN the norm and the requirement. It is only in the last century that the new and MUCH more relaxed attitude has established itself within the church. [I am not concerned with or dealing with secular society's attitude.]

The Biblical attitude also continued into the early church:

The "**Shepherd of Hermas**," written in 140 A.D. (or some decades earlier), was very widely circulated and accepted in the early churches; some even ranked it as inspired Scripture. While the author does not claim to be representing the unanimous Christian tradition, at the very least the following passage shows us that a large number of Christians walked in the understanding we have described above.

"Sir," say I, "If a man who has a wife that is faithful in the Lord detect her in adultery, doth the husband sin in living with her?" "So long as he is ignorant," saith he, "he sinneth not; but if the husband know of her sin, and the wife repent not, but continue in her fornication, and her husband live with her, he makes himself responsible for her sin and an accomplice in her adultery." "What then, sir," say I, "shall the husband do, if the wife continue in this case?" "Let him divorce her," saith he, "*and let the husband abide alone: but if after divorcing his wife he shall marry another, he likewise commits adultery.*" ". For the sake of her repentance, therefore, the husband ought not to marry. This is the manner of acting enjoined on husband and wife."

This passage is the only clear and detailed passage on the subject written in the second century that I have been able to find, and it is in perfect harmony with the position derived from the natural reading of the New Testament that we have outlined above. Those who lay claim to the mantle of Biblical Christianity must admit the fact that the Son of God before whom we shall all give account has a much stricter attitude about remarriage than is commonly acknowledged by the Christianity of our day.

So this is the command of God. The churches can change, but God does not. And our judgment is based upon HIS commands and promises, not what churches' traditions have told us. That is the very reason WHY He caused His revelation to be written down under His guidance and power: so that those writings become what HE requires of individuals, congregations and leaders.

All Saints Anglican Church of Southern Arizona, Inc.

Epiphany 3 Sunday Sermon on 2018-01-21

If you take the time to CAREFULLY study what He revealed, you discover for yourself that what we are calling "Christianity" is actually what is left over after some very significant commands and very significant promises have been removed, by ignoring them or by putting a worldly "spin" upon them, so that they no longer mean what the words are actually saying.

And when it comes to the issue of marriage and divorce, worldly society and worldly Christianity have lulled you into a false "peace" about the issue, with such comforting sayings as "Well NO one is perfect; we all make mistakes..." or, "as long as you LEARN from your mistakes and are sorry for them, what more can God expect of you..." or, "Those teachings are IDEALS, not commands: don't be legalistic..."

But all such rationalizations are just one more way of saying things like: "Jesus didn't speak as clearly as He should have!" or, "That was just HIS opinion; and I have a right to MINE" or, "I just don't want to THINK about things like judgment, heaven, hell."

But if Jesus really IS who He says He is; If Jesus' teachings and commands are the teachings and commands of God Himself; If the majority of humanity is going in a direction that is led by SATAN, rather than by God; If we have to separate ourselves from the great majority of the human race into order to enter into the righteousness, peace and joy of God; If all of that is "TRULY true," then we had better quit sweeping our pasts under the rug. And we had better find out GOD'S way of dealing with our sins, rather than listen to the platitudes I mentioned before.

With regard to marriage and divorce, the bottom line is this: Jesus brought the way of Heaven to earth, and restored marriage to what had originally existed. The way of Heaven also includes several wonderful promises that make the way of heaven actually possible. And because He makes that way possible He has the right to REQUIRE it of all. Part of that heavenly way includes the creation of a very particular kind of union between husband and wife. To violate that particular kind of union is very, VERY serious in the eyes of God, so serious that it comes with, what seems to us fallen and hardened people, a terrible punishment.

BUT THERE IT IS! And that is what we HAVE to resolve. Next week, Lord willing, we will see what is God's way of dealing with it, if divorce and remarriage is part of our past.