

Jesus on marriage and divorce.

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself? The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

And bow your heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you see us as we really are, that you love us as we really are, that your Son died on the cross for the real us, not the imaginary us, the pretend us, the surface us, the front us that we like to put. But Father, you know the very, very depths of our hearts. You know those things that we do that are wrong.

You know those ways that we have wronged others and those ways that we have been wronged ourselves. And we give you thanks and praise that despite, from our point of view, you having perfect knowledge, still you loved us. You loved us perfectly. And you sent your Son to be the Savior of the world.

And that your words, Father, your Word written are words of sanity and wisdom and grace. And so, Father, we ask now that the Holy Spirit would fall with gentle but deep power upon us as we try to listen to your Word very deeply.

[2 : 20] And, Father, we ask that your Word would rule in our hearts. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Just in case you're wondering if you're a guest or if you're online, there are people here who are divorced.

There are people here who are remarried. There are probably people here or online who experience some degree of same-sex attraction. And there are probably people here who feel very uncomfortable in their bodies and wonder if they are in the wrong body.

And so, I should also let you know that I have done the remarriage. I have married divorced people. And so, it's in that context that I'm looking at a text like this.

And I'm also sort of very conscious that, depending on what I say, I could get cancelled. And that there are people here hoping that I'm going to be as strong and hard as I can.

And there will be people hoping that I can be as gentle and liberal as I can. And we come here with a wide range of expectations and worries as we come to the text. I guess what I want to say as we go to look at this text is the more I've studied the text, especially in our current climate.

[3 : 48] And I probably will say this several times. What Christ says are words of sanity, wisdom, and grace. That the words of Christ are words of sanity, wisdom, and grace into our culture and into our real lives.

So, let's look at the text. What we're going to do is I'm going to read through the whole text again relatively quickly. But I'll make just a couple of very just simple like connection type points for you. And then we'll circle back and look at the issues.

Try to listen to it sort of. But I want to, you know, one of the things I tell young people when I'm trying to give them some coaching about how to speak is that one of the things they have to guard against is they might have read this text before they get up to talk about it.

They might have read the text like 20 times or 30 times. Like, I don't know. I probably read this text 50 times this week. You guys get it cold. So, it doesn't necessarily mean, you know, that you just sort of remember what's in verse 5 or what's in verse 3.

Because you just heard it cold. So, let's read it again fairly quickly. And then we'll go back and look at it more carefully in its bits and pieces. So, if you're following along with this, it's on page 60.

[4 : 53] And here's what Jesus says. And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. And crowds gathered to him again.

And again, as was his custom, he taught them. Now, just to pause here. It's hard to know how this affects the interpretation of the text. But people who look at the text very carefully and look at a map and chart where he is and where he's going, he's probably come into the area that Herod Antipas rules.

Now, most of you don't have any idea who that is. But some of you, if you're familiar, you go back and read earlier on in the Gospel of Mark. I should have looked up the exact thing. I just can't remember it off the top of my head.

But in the Gospel of Mark, a little bit earlier, Herod kills John the Baptist. And John the Baptist is a prophet that's known to secular history as well, not just in the Bible.

And both Jewish and pagan history are familiar with John the Baptist. And John the Baptist is put to death by Herod because John the Baptist said Herod shouldn't have divorced and remarried.

[6 : 06] And scholars think when he's talking about Judea, if you look at everything very carefully, Jesus is now back in Herod's jurisdiction when he's doing this teaching.

So verse 2, Pharisees, I'm just sort of paused here if you're a guest. Probably the easiest way to think of the Pharisees is the Hasidim, the ultra-Orthodox Jews.

You know, when you see the people, you know, with the beards and the hats and sort of the one dreadlock, etc. When you think of Pharisees, think of them.

And think of a group that fundamentally is well-liked at the time. I mean, on one level, they probably make fun of them and don't entirely like them because they're sort of like holy roller types.

But they're basically respected people. So when you see the word Pharisee, sort of think Hasidim or ultra-Orthodox Jews. So the Pharisees came up and in order to test him, asked, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

[7 : 11] Now the word test there isn't as if they're testing, hoping that he can become a Pharisee or get qualified to be a teacher. It's meant to be. They're trying to get him in trouble. So it's what's called a dishonest question.

It's not an honest question. They're not really interested in the answer. What they're interested in is getting Jesus in trouble. So once again, in the Pharisees, verse 2, came up in order to test him, asked, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

And Jesus, in verse 3, answered them, what did Moses command you? Verse 4, they said, Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.

And verse 5, and Jesus said to them, now it's sort of an important point here to notice. Jesus didn't ask, what did Moses permit?

He asked what Moses commanded. And that's a bit of a subtle distinction, but it's going to be important for us to enter into the text. They want to know, in a sense, what the loopholes are.

[8 : 20] And Jesus didn't say, can you list the loopholes? He said, what was the command? Like, what's the fundamental command? And they give him loopholes. Verse 5, and Jesus said to them, because of your hardness of heart, he wrote this, he wrote you this commandment.

Now, there, in other words, it's a technical word for a word in the Torah. So, it's because of your hardness of heart that this is in the Torah, or the Torah.

Actually, the Torah is the correct word, the expression. Then verse 6, but from the beginning of creation, and now you'll note, he's going to quote.

And he quotes from something else that Moses wrote, because they're quoting from a book called Deuteronomy. And now he quotes from Genesis chapter 1. But from the beginning of creation, now quoting, God made them male and female.

End of quote. And then in verse 7, he quotes from chapter 2 of Genesis. And says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

[9 : 28] End of the quote. And then he adds, so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

And some of you who are familiar with Christian weddings, a text like this is often read at a Christian wedding. And the language has influenced Christian weddings very deeply.

Now verse 10 and 11 and 12, something which, when I read it, probably struck some daggers into some hearts. It created some pain. We're going to read it. We are going to circle back to it.

But here's what he says at verse 10. And in the house, the disciples asked him again about this matter. And Jesus said to them, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. Now, some of you are just experiencing pain and dread.

[10 : 27] And some of you are thinking, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Doesn't Jesus say something different somewhere else? I thought he was going to say something different. And there's all sorts of things going on in the room. But let's circle back.

So here's the first thing to think about when we're looking at the text. And I hope this... Learning to parachute doesn't teach you how to fly a plane.

Learning how to parachute doesn't teach you how to fly a plane. So one of the things I like to sometimes do on a Sunday afternoon is watch one of those mindless action flicks. I'm tired. You know, psychologists and all will tell you that getting up and speaking in front of a whole room of people is one of the most stressful things that people can do.

And so all these chemicals are produced in my body because of the stress. And part of the result is afterwards I can often feel quite down and tired. And so one of the things I often do is watch mindless action films.

And one of the things which is common in mindless action films is that the good guys and the bad guys are fighting in a plane. And at some point in time, the bad guy wants to get out of the plane using the parachute.

[11 : 34] And the good guy realizes he can't let the bad guy get away with all the parachutes and there's a fight over it. And in fact, I was just watching a movie the other time where the bad guy successfully got out of the plane with the parachutes. And the good guy jumps out after them to, of course, try to fight them in the middle of the sky.

And it's all very, you know, dramatic and all of that stuff. And normally in movies like that, it doesn't have both of them splatting to their death. But some of them survive, usually the good guy, which is why people watch movies like this.

However, so just think for a second. And, you know, you get in a plane with somebody and it's the good guy. And the good guy is just sitting at the controls of the plane. And you say, you can fly a plane?

He said, listen, I've jumped out of planes with parachutes a hundred times. I'm an expert at jumping out of planes with a parachute. But you say, but do you know how to fly a plane?

And I'm an expert at jumping out of planes with a parachute. Of course I can fly. No, no, no, no, no, no. He says, you know, most plane accidents happen with takeoff and landing.

[12 : 37] You would do the wise thing. You'd get out of the plane. Okay. So this is very important that the Pharisees are having, want to have a loophole discussion with Jesus.

They, it's sort of a little bit like in our culture where it's almost as if there's more of a focus on divorce and the grounds for divorce than there is as to what marriage actually is.

Like what is marriage? And if you don't know what marriage is, it's going to be hard to be married well. And so that's one of the things that's going here, that the, the, the, the, the critics of Jesus and actually even the disciples, they come up with loophole questions.

But Jesus, in a sense, says, I want to teach you how to fly. Not how to jump out of the plane with a parachute because the engines failed.

I want to teach you how to fly. And so he's teaching primarily about what marriage is. The second thing, see, and that can be seen here. Go back to the text. If you go back to verse, um, verse two, the Pharisees ask him a question.

[13 : 41] Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? They don't say, you know, what is marriage? Jesus, can you explain to us a little bit about what marriage is? Instead, they ask him a question about how to, how to be successfully divorced in such a way that you can be remarried.

Jesus, sort of seeing what they're doing, focusing on how to jump out of a plane that's broken rather than how to fly a plane. Well, says, well, what did Moses command you?

In other words, how do you fly the plane? They don't answer that. They give him a jump out of the parachute, out of the plane answer. Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce to send her away. Um, and then Jesus said to them, now, you can see here, there's a sort of a double hardness of heart.

In fact, actually, one of the things I think you're going to see, if I'm going to jump ahead a little bit to the end, I'll come back to it. But, um, in a sense, uh, what you see, if you go and you look at Jesus' teaching on this in several places, you see that he does, in fact, give grounds for divorce in some places.

And in this case, when they ask him for grounds of divorce, he doesn't give them what the grounds for divorce are. And what you have to do, if you're reading all of the Gospels and you're reading all of the, all of what Jesus says, it's, it's a little bit like, sometimes what we want is a rule.

[15 : 01] But what we really need is, is wisdom. And sometimes wisdom comes from asking two different questions or making different observations and filling out, figuring out how to navigate, you know, both types of issues.

And, and even when the disciples come, really what the disciples are going, it's as if they've missed what marriage is and they want Jesus to say what the loopholes are.

And so Jesus says, if you're just looking at the loopholes, you're not looking in the right place. Like, if your heart is all just set on looking at loopholes and grounds, you're not thinking about the right thing.

In another case, he does, he does give the, uh, not loopholes, but the grounds for divorce. But you need to have both types of questions presented to your heart.

Our hearts are hard. And because our hearts are hard, it's very easy for us to, to, to, to want to misuse marriage, abuse marriage, forget what marriage is, not really be concerned about marriage, be concerned about other types of things.

[16:07] And, and, and, and, and, uh, and that's because our hearts are hard. And it's easy for us just to be always looking at the marriage in terms of, especially if there start to be some trouble about when you can leave.

And Jesus is saying, I mean, obviously there's a time to ask that question about leaving. I've, I've, uh, had people in my office over the years. I remember this one couple that I had talking to them and they were having marital difficulties.

And it was one of those moments where I guess if I was a charismatic, I'd say God gave me a word of knowledge because out of sort of just listening to all of a sudden I asked, I asked the woman, I said, don't look at your husband.

I'd just like you answer my question. Is he beating you? And she paused and her lips quivered and a tear appeared. And she said, yes.

And I turned to the man and said, you have to stop beating your wife. And I'm going to tell her she shouldn't return to live with you until she can be very, very confident you're not going to beat her.

[17:13] It wasn't what he wanted me to say. So it isn't as if there's never times to talk about when to end the marriage.

But what Jesus is saying, if that's really all the things you think about, listen, forget for a moment loopholes. Think about what marriage is. Just think about what marriage is.

Think about what marriage is. Pray about what marriage is. So the hardness of heart is on one hand him making a bit of a comment about the particular people asking this question.

Because they're trying to get him in trouble with Herod. They're just looking at loopholes. In fact, there's a whole school of thought at the time that basically said, so, you know, if Louise burns the supper, that would be grounds for me to divorce her.

She burned the meat. Good grief. The marriage is over. I want a divorce. I want to remarry somebody who doesn't burn the meat. I mean, that's actually, I'm not making that up. That was actually a ground for divorce.

[18:18] Jesus is answering this question in a culture which was unbelievably permissive about divorce. And so he's talking about the hardness of heart there. But also just in general about a way to understand the Bible is that the Bible, especially the Old Testament, isn't written for angels.

It's written for sinners. So, I mean, one of the things which is really important for us then to get from this. When I married Louise, I married a woman with a hard heart.

And when she married me, she married a man with a hard heart. You've never gone to a marriage of two angels. You only go to a marriage of two sinners. The only marriages there are.

Two people who are sinful. Two people who are going to need God's help to deal with the hardness of their hearts. Obviously, there's more to their heart than just being hard.

But the hardness of the heart is reality that has to be taken into account. See, the Bible is very wise. In our culture, we say that we have like a soulmate.

[19 : 26] And the implication almost always is, is that I have a pure soul. And I'm looking for another person with a pure soul. And our two pure souls will have this pure soul marriage.

And the Bible says, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. You only marry a person with a hard heart. It's the only person you marry.

So, continuing in verse 5. Because of your hardness of heart, he wrote you this commandment. In other words, in the real world, there are, there is adultery.

In the real world, there is abuse. In the real world, there is abandonment. And God takes that into account.

It has to be dealt with. Verse 6. But, from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. This is now where he quotes from Genesis 1.

[20 : 28] But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. And then Genesis 2 is also talking about the beginning of creation. Which is verse 7. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife.

And the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. But therefore, God has joined together. Let not man separate.

Now, one of the things you can see here now, just sort of switching gears a tiny bit, but it's very important to see.

God only made males. God made human beings. And every human being is either a male or a female. They're either a man or a woman. And if they marry, they're either a husband and a wife.

You can't have two males marry, and one's the husband and one's the wife. Just as you can't have two females marry, and one is the husband and one is the wife.

[21 : 33] And I'm very conscious that I was sharing it with people that being on YouTube makes issues like this far more complicated if there's a troll out to get near us.

But that's what the Bible teaches. And by the way, that's what science teaches. And I know this is a very, very hard message for those who believe they're in the wrong body.

And I know that now has become a very complicated whole issue. And, you know, once again, as I say time after time after time, I have never experienced that.

But I can well imagine if that's your real experience, it's a very hard experience. But what the Bible is teaching is that since God has only made males and females, men and women, then the way towards wholeness is to be at peace and to be at home with your biological sex.

And to not listen to ideas that sex is assigned at birth. And we are a very imperfect congregation. But we would love to walk with you and pray with you as you try to figure that out.

[22 : 57] And to learn what it means to be at peace with your body. And obviously this text, when people, well-meaning people, sometimes well-meaning, not always, say that Jesus never says anything about same-sex marriage, they're just simply wrong.

Because this is something which he says very, very clearly and very unambiguously. That God designed human beings to be male and female.

And he designed, in a sense, that a male could marry a female and a female could marry a male. And there's no other option. And, you know, once again, here's the text is sane and the text is wise.

If you are listening to this or you are present and you experience very, very powerful attractions to the other sex.

So, you know, at the end of the day, goodness is good for you. And keeping God's word is good for you. It might be that you will, in a sense, live with frustrated desires for the rest of your life if you come to Christ.

[24 : 28] Jesus died for males and females. He died for men and women. He died for the divorced and the single and the remarried. And he died for all and he loves all.

And it might be that there will be a long season of frustration that you will have if you follow Christ. And this means that you can't then pursue certain ways of living.

I mean, for heterosexuals, it means that I can't pursue lots of different women to have sexual knowing with. And it might mean for a man who only experiences or overwhelmingly experiences sexual attraction only to other men, it might mean that they can never marry.

But you can't foreclose the graces that you feel by doing what is good. And the grace and the power and the beauty that you do in the world from following what is good.

And the other thing is, as my friend Christopher Yuan has said, you know, in a sense, so he lived a very, very active life as a gay man, became a Christian and knew he had to walk away from that.

[25 : 39] The question for him isn't whether God will do a miracle so that he now only finds women attractive. The question for him is whether he will meet a woman that he can marry as one flesh.

See, if you think about it, it's very wise. God doesn't want me to be attracted to lots of women. He wants me to be married to Louise. Right? Right? That's what he wants.

He wants me to become one flesh with Louise. And so this text actually opens up potentially a whole range of other types of things. That in any married couple, the attraction to other people is something that you have to put to death.

In Christ. Not celebrate, but put to death. And this is the same regardless as to the range of individuals that you find sexually attractive.

It is to be put to death because, especially for the man, you are to forsake your mother and father or leave your mother and father and hold fast to your wife.

[26 : 43] But we see here as well in verse 8 as it continues, And the two shall become one flesh, so they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

We see here that marriage is not a casual, short-term contract, but a covenant involving God.

And we see here in the text that, in a sense, marriage is something physical, and it's something in time and space.

But God has designed it to also, in a sense, be something transcendent and holy and sacred. That God is involved in the marriage.

Whether or not the couple acknowledge it. But God is present in every marriage in terms of sanctifying it and blessing it. That in marriage, there is something that you are...

[27 : 44] It's not just a civil thing that you're participating in or entering into, but something bigger than human and something bigger than civic. And actually, that's why it's really only the Christian understanding of marriage that can explain the problems that people experience when the marriage...

As the marriage starts to come to an end and when it ends. That for most people, it's not the same thing as if you had... I don't know, like me and Jono or something have a little contract because we're going to have a little business on coaching running.

And, you know, after a year, the contract breaks up and we go our separate ways. And maybe I'm a little bit sad. I'm going to lose some money. Maybe I'm mad at him. You know, there's that. That's not at all the same as the breakup of a marriage.

Obviously, some people, they break up the marriage and there's a type of callousness to it and apparent heartlessness and hardness of heart to it. But I would suggest that all that shows is that there's been a terrible tearing within them that they are not acknowledging.

And the one who is sort of more... doesn't want the marriage to end and it comes to an end, there's a deep wounding that happens.

[29 : 08] And that's also true often of the children for where there's a deep wounding. If there are children, the marriage and the marriage comes to an end. And our modern understanding of sex as being just primarily something animal-like and that marriage is something like a contract, that cannot explain the lived experience of people who go through the breakup of a marriage.

Only the biblical view does. But George, what about what Jesus said?

Are you saying that once... George, are you saying that if I have remarried after divorce, that my whole life is characterized by adultery with my wife?

Are you saying that Jesus says... that even though there was adultery or abuse or abandonment, that I now have to be single for the rest of my life?

That's a very good question. And I can tell you, you can look at the commentaries, there's been lots of debate about this. I'm going to give you my best attempt to try to help you in a way which is faithful to the text.

[30 : 32] Remember I said that if you look at this text, this text is a mixture of... It's an outline of sanity, an outline of wisdom, and an outline of grace.

It's all three. The sanity is... You know, if you've read Carl Truman's really excellent two books... I know I might get in trouble on this.

But it's actually, on one level, mind-boggling that to say that sex isn't assigned at birth could get me cancelled and in trouble.

That there's an actual biologic reality. Like, on one level, that's mind-boggling that that's a controversial statement. And it's...

The Bible here is sane. It's trying to get us back to sanity. But it gives us wisdom to understand what, on one level, at a surface level in our culture, we sort of have these views of marriage which combine with soulmates, but also like a contract thing.

[31 : 36] And this Bible brings in this sanity and wisdom about it. But where's the grace? Well, here's a couple of things about it. The first thing is this.

And this isn't looking for loopholes, but the fact of the matter is, is if you look at Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount, and in Matthew later, where Jesus talks about the same thing, he does say that adultery breaks the marriage.

And the implication is very clear that a remarriage is possible. And so I think partly what we're looking at here, and it's very interesting here, that when Jesus talks about the...

You know, look again at verse 10 and 11. Verse 11, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

If he was saying that there is actually no divorce, he wouldn't say what he said. That he'd say whoever goes through a divorce is still married to the first person, so they therefore can't be married to the second person.

[32 : 43] It's a pretend marriage, but he doesn't say that. He implies that the marriage is a real marriage. In other words, the description of two flesh joined together by God, that that's actually what's happened. So I think what's primarily going on here is I've just said, like, I'm not going to give you my answer.

Somebody asked me just within the last couple of weeks, how do you know how many kids to have? Well, that's an interesting question to have.

How do you know how many kids to have, right? So I gave an answer to the best of my ability, given that it came cold, but part of how I said, there's these two things to consider, you know, and you sort of, you look at this, you look at this, you look at this, and you sort of figure it out in your context, and that's the answer.

In other words, I didn't say, well, the answer's five, or the answer's three, or the answer's nine, or the answer's 12, or whatever. You know, maybe the answer's 12, and none of us have lived up. No, I didn't say that. I gave two things. And as I said earlier on, you know, maybe there was two different ways that Jesus talked about this.

The first thing is, listen, if you're spending all your time thinking about grounds and loopholes, that's not the right way to be thinking about it. Think about marriage. Like, think about marriage.

[33 : 51] Think about what it is. Like, George and Louise, think about marriage. Like, have that be something which is really important to your hearts to navigate the problems that you're going to have. Think about marriage. And the other question is, well, sometimes things have to come to an end.

And in Matthew, he gives adultery, and in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, it's usually abandonment and abuse are somehow seen. So what the text, the second thing is, and this is a bit more maybe hard, and I'm having to watch my time.

He's not saying, I don't think, that the second marriage is unending adultery. There's a different word here used than the word for sexual knowing in the original language.

And I think what he might also be saying here to play around with, and this is something very important for people who are thinking about or who've gotten married. And by the way, this is also important because in our day and age, many people haven't been formally married, but they've been married common law.

And I think the same truth is there. Is that in some ways, the first spouse, common law or like legal, in some ways, they are present in and out of the marriage for years to come and maybe forever.

[35 : 20] And in fact, it sort of fits with the way that people in our culture tend to give advice around remarriage. Many, many people, you just go to like, there's good-hearted people in our community, and they'll tell maybe about how their sister got divorced, you know, or she left her husband, her husband left her, and then like within a month, she was taken up with a guy, but he's exactly the worst guy for her.

You know, because in a sense, the husband's still having a type of an effect on her, and there can be the comparison, there can be the contrast, there could be the repeating of cycles, and we use all of this psychological and therapeutic and technical language to get around the very, very simple thing is that you need to be aware of the fact that in some ways, off and on throughout your marriage, the first marriage spouses there, whether it's in contrast, comparison, not having ever gotten over it because of wounds and all, but there's some ways that maybe it's going to linger and recur at surprising times down the road.

But the final thing, and this is where the grace comes in, like one of the nice things about having this, I mean, on one level it's not nice because it's all nice and fancy and all and there's room for making notes, but it helps us to understand that what did Mark do?

Mark told us the true story of Jesus. Mark was an eyewitness for parts of this, but he knew all the eyewitnesses, and so it's an eyewitness testimony written while eyewitnesses were alive of the story of Jesus.

And so you're reading the whole story, and to understand any particular part of the story, you don't really understand the story until you come to the end. And what we've just seen twice, and the little bits just before this, is Jesus has shocked his followers by saying he's going to Jerusalem to die on the cross and rise from the dead.

[37 : 16] That's why he's going. He's going there to die. And why is he going to die? Because, friends, your heart and mine, whether you're single or whether you're married, whether you're divorced or whether you're remarried, your hearts and mine are hard.

And a man and a woman with a hard heart can't save themselves. And unless God does something that you cannot do for yourself, there's nothing you can do in terms of being made right with God.

Like, there's nothing. And Jesus is going to Jerusalem to die. And there's an image which we'll look at, I think, in two weeks, that the way for people to understand is Jesus' life and death and resurrection is a ransom.

It's that which delivers us from slavery to slavery to idols, slavery to death, slavery to our hard heart. And in Matthew chapter 14, there's another very powerful image of what Jesus is doing as he's about to die on the cross.

And it's this very powerful image of imagine all of the evil in your life. And you could take all of that evil of your life and you could put it in a liquid form in a cup that somebody could drink.

[38 : 32] And then imagine that not only all the evil that you've done could be reduced to some foul-smelling, foul-tasting liquid, but your evil and your evil and your evil is also added to this cup so that the evil of all of the human race is in one cup as a foul drink.

And what you see when Jesus dies upon the cross is him drinking that cup. He drinks your evil. He drinks your evil. He drinks your evil.

And faces the full consequence of drinking your evil. And then rises from the dead after having paid, having taken into himself that evil.

And that is why we Christians understand that salvation, when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, it's a pronouncement, a promise, a presence, and a power. A pronouncement, a promise, a presence, and a power.

It's a pronouncement because when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, there is the pronouncement that your sins have been forgiven. That you are, in a sense, clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

[39 : 40] That sin is no longer, the hardness of your heart is no longer the primary word about you, but you have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ. The offenses have been dealt with.

There's been a settling of accounts. There's been a payment of the ransom. There has been a drinking of the poison. You are free and clean and now God's child.

There is a promise that the final word about you will be welcome into my kingdom, that you are the adopted child of God through faith in Jesus Christ and the grace that comes from him.

And that the promise is that you will one day be in a new heaven and a new earth with a resurrected body, at peace with the creation, at peace with yourself, at peace with others, and at peace with God.

And there is a presence that when you put your faith and trust in Christ, that there is Christ with you. The Holy Spirit is with you. The Father has made his home within you.

[40 : 34] That you go through life dealing with your hard heart, not by yourself, but with the presence of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit to be present with you as you deal with it. And there is a power to deal with it.

And that is the promise of the gospel. On one hand, everything here is showing us our need for a Savior and our need for Christ.

And that is the great promise that we have. Friends, if you are in Christ, there has been a pronouncement made against you. You are mine. You are forgiven. If you are in Christ, there is a promise.

Your destiny is the new heaven and the new earth with a resurrection body. If you are in Christ, there is a presence. He is with you to walk with you, to deal with your hard heart. And there is a power.

You have the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the word of God to come and deal with those things in your life, to start to know some healing and deliverance and freedom on this side of the grave and full freedom in the new heaven and the new earth.

[41 : 40] I invite you to stand. Stand. And just bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you do not weigh our merits, but pardon our offenses.

That you don't sort of look at us and wait for us to be perfect enough before you love us, but that you see that we can never be perfect enough and still you love us and still your son is the means by which we can be reconciled to you.

And there is no other means other than Christ, his life, his death, his resurrection. And we give you thanks and praise that, Father, as we navigate singleness, as we navigate maybe the hope of marriage, as we navigate our marriages, that for those of us who are in Christ, that we do not have to do this alone and that you are, it's not that you are disinterested in us or these things, but that you love us, you love the real us, you care for us, you desire to see us show forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit to become more Christ-like and that we can call out to you in prayer, we can ask for the Holy Spirit, that you can begin to work on those wounds and brokenness and sin and rebellion and that make us us.

Father, we give you thanks and praise that we do not do life alone and we thank you, Father, that you do not invite us to even do it alone but with Christ, but in the company of his church. And we ask, Lord, that your Holy Spirit would do a work of renewal and reformation in our church, that, Father, you would use ministries like the men's ministry in small groups and the women's ministry in spiritual friendships and mentoring, times of worship, that we might, Father, be used by you as you bring healing and deliverance from wounds and sin and as we seek amendment of life and forgiveness and reconciliation and that you would make us that community used by you, Father, to bring that type of healing and wholeness.

and so ask, Father, that as we bring this time to a close and as we prepare to both pour out our hearts for the world but also to enter into a time of holy communion to you, with you, through the Lord's Supper, Father, that the gospel would become more and more and more deeply real to our hearts and that Christ's grace and his presence would become more and more real and formative to our hearts, that the Holy Spirit would be more real and active and deep in our hearts because we try to live life on our own but, Father, we know in our best moments under your word that we can't, that we need Jesus to be our good shepherd and we ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior.

[44 : 40] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.