

"Divorce"

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[0 : 00] Good morning. There is almost no unhappiness so poignant as the unhappiness of an unhappy marriage, and almost no tragedy so great as the disintegration of what God meant for love and fulfillment into a non-relationship of bitterness, discord, and despair.

So writes commentator John Stott as he begins his commentary on our passage this morning. Today we will be looking at something, a topic that for some will be difficult, painful, and personal. Jesus' view on divorce and marriage.

And it is a weighty one. It is one filled with many, even conflicting, emotions. And I, as your pastor, stand here with not a little fear and trepidation in preaching about this.

My hope in prayer is that I will bring clarity and compassion to this topic. My hope is that we might not merely have an academic discussion, nor merely an emotional response, but that the glory of the kingdom of God might shine through this passage to us this morning and might bring healing and hope into your lives.

[1 : 48] We are continuing in our sermon series in the Sermon on the Mount this morning. It is page 760 in your pew Bible. We are looking at Matthew chapter 5, verses 31 to 32.

And as you turn there so we can look at it together, just let me remind you, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is painting a picture of the kingdom that He is proclaiming that He is going to bring and that it is at hand.

The kingdom that He is, our Savior King, will be establishing through His life and death and resurrection. And the immediate context of this verse is in a series of applications after verses 17 through 20, where Jesus said, I am the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, and now I want you to obey Me as I instruct you about how to live in this kingdom driven by the gospel.

Verse 20 there says, you must have a righteousness that is greater than the Pharisees. You must have a distinctively Christian view of these topics.

And so with this, let's ask God's help as we look at God's Word this morning. Lord, there are some whose heart rates just jumped, whose blood pressure rose because of what we're talking about this morning, because these things are deep and meaningful.

[3 : 29] Lord, I pray that Your comfort and Your peace and Your truth would be with us. Lord, help us together to sit under the teaching of Your Word.

Let it refine us. Lord, perhaps this morning You will bring conviction of sin. Perhaps this morning You will bring a healing balm and comfort.

Certainly, Lord, this morning may we be reminded of hope and of Your great love with which You have loved us. Lord, I ask for Your help this morning that I might speak the words that You want me to speak and that together we might see the truth of Your Word.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So Matthew, chapter 5, starting in verse 31. It was also said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

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.

[4 : 54] My friends, as we look at this passage this morning, it's fairly straightforward. Jesus calls us to uphold a distinctively kingdom view of marriage and divorce.

What does that look like? Well, let's look at it together. I think we're going to look at it in three stages. Here's your outline if you're an outline person. We're going to look at the context, both cultural and biblical, of this passage.

Secondly, we're going to look at the content of Jesus' call, the prohibition and the exception. And then we're going to look at the gospel glory that comes in the call of Jesus.

So first, the context of Jesus' call to us, cultural and biblical. Verse 31, it was also said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

Jesus is referring to and quoting what the Pharisees would have based their view on divorce and remarriage on in Deuteronomy 24, verse 1, where it says, if then 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 of the house, and it goes on.

[6 : 12] It's a longer passage. We're not going to look at all of the details, but what you want to see clearly is that there was established in the Old Testament a basis of divorce for, quote-unquote, some indecency, and we will just explore that in just a minute.

This divorce required the husband to give the wife who he was divorcing a certificate that would authenticate this so that it was known that she was not merely abandoning the marriage, but that she was free then from the constraints and free to remarry because in the ancient Near East, a woman without a husband and a home was in a very perilous and vulnerable state, and so there was a protection that came from this.

It also served, if you read through Deuteronomy 24 carefully, it served as a warning that when he relinquished claim on this marriage by divorcing her, there was no going back.

This was a permanent action. You can read through Deuteronomy 24 more if you want to see it, but this was the biblical basis upon which the first century Pharisees understood marriage and divorce. Now, in the first century, there were two schools of Pharisees. There were the followers of Rabbi Hillel and the followers of Rabbi Shammai, and both of them saw marriage as a covenant with promises to provide food and clothing, love and fidelity, that is, faithfulness in sexual activity to the marriage covenant, and they saw that if there was a violation of these things, there was some grounds for divorce, for they would break that covenant agreement.

[7 : 54] Both saw that remarriage was possible when a divorce was given. So this was a common first century understanding. Now, there was a major disagreement between these two schools, for the Hillel school thought that some matters of indecency actually meant any matters or indecency.

And so, if a wife burned the toast, or if the husband saw a woman that he found more attractive than his wife, he could divorce her because clearly that was grounds.

There was something there that he found unacceptable. The Shammai, on the other hand, had a much more narrow view of understanding that this was on the grounds of moral unfaithfulness or infidelity in the way that we typically think of it with sexual activity some way outside of marriage. In fact, they were strong enough that they said, if you commit this, then the husband must divorce the wife on that grounds because of the broken covenant agreement.

Now, here's the third interesting historical piece that comes together. In the first century, over 90% of divorces were granted by rabbis in the school of Hillel.

[9 : 20] 90% over 90%. That meant that everybody went to the easy lenient judges if they wanted to get a divorce. Right? And the Shammai school said, well, we don't judge whether the legitimacy of the divorce is there or not, so they're all legitimate.

So, remarriage, for anybody, divorce, for any reason, functionally, was the first century culture in which Jesus is speaking.

The Jewish context in the first century was a for-any-cause divorce culture. Friends, it's not hard to see that we are not so different in our culture today.

The no-fault divorce is firmly planted in American culture and law at this point without the misogyny of the first century where the husband was initiating it and the wife was the victim of it.

But we've given more freedom, so anybody can do that. I'm not sure that's progress. It's an interesting question. Our culture today often views marriage as contractual, not covenantal.

[10 : 32] We see it as a 50-50. You do your part, I'll do my part, and hopefully that'll get to something worthwhile. It is a mutual benefit as long as it continues to be mutually beneficial.

And as soon as it's not, we abandon it. It's a shockingly self-centered view of marriage. It's shocking to think about marriage as something that is for my happiness, and if I'm not happy, I will leave it.

To lay it bare, we end up using marriage for self-fulfillment. This is not God's view, as we will see in a minute. And even when we are married, we find ourselves saying, I think I've grown apart.

We're going in different directions. I've developed new interests. And this gives us, it seems, grounds to abandon the divorce. So Jesus speaks not only into a first-century context of for any reason, but in the 21st-century context of no-fault divorce.

Jesus, however, is not merely speaking into that cultural context. He is also speaking with the weight of a biblical narrative about marriage that we need to understand for us to get these two verses clearly.

[11:55] Turning to Matthew 19, because if you want to turn there, we're going to spend a few minutes there, because in Matthew 19, Jesus ends with a discussion with the Pharisees, with almost the exact same words he says here.

But he has a much longer conversation with them, because the Pharisees come in an attempt to trap him and say, can you get divorced for any cause? And they're trying to provoke him so that one of the two schools will be angry with Jesus for how he responds.

And Jesus responds by saying, if you're asking about the grounds of divorce, you're in fact asking the wrong question. When they ask him this question about, for what reason can we divorce someone, Jesus says, do you remember where it began?

Do you remember what God established in creation? Go back to the beginning of what God intended. And so he goes back to Genesis, and he says, let us make man in our image, male and female he made them, and let them be fruitful and multiply.

And then he goes on in chapter 2, where he retells the story of creation in a way that brings man and women together to be partners in a marriage.

[13:17] When Adam wakes up and sees Eve, and he says, this now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. And says, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and join to his wife, and they shall become one.

And in this picture in the Old Testament, there's this mysterious but real union of two lives becoming in God's eyes, and in fact a oneness of body, mind, spirit, and life shared together that is meant to be permanent and exclusive.

The language of leaving and cleaving in Genesis 2 is covenantal language of this wholehearted agreement and commitment to the other party.

This is the basis of the traditional church vows that maybe many of us know, to have and to hold from this day forward for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death do us part, forsaking all others.

This is the marriage covenant. This is the vows. And this is a good creation pattern that Jesus points us to. And he says, this is a goodness that's made not just for the church, like baptism or communion, but for the whole world.

[14:49] And fascinatingly, there are sociological studies out there that say it's true. Marriage really is good. As broken and as difficult as it is, it is actually better where there is marriage than where there is not.

So Jesus says, from the beginning, there was a goodness that you need to be considering before you start talking about divorce.

And so in verses 8 and 9 of Matthew 19, he says, because of the hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning, it was not so.

Because we know that in the original creation, this marriage was a beautiful thing. But then as sin entered the world, sin entered marriage and made it hard and made it difficult.

And you can read through the Old Testament, and there is case after case after case of marriages that violate the covenant, that don't show the beauty of it.

[15:54] Over and over again, you see consequences of broken marriages where they weren't always permanent and exclusive. Jesus says, why then does the New Testament give this?

Because of sin. Because hardness of heart does enter in. And there are times when divorce may need to be accommodated or allowed.

Remember, though, that divorce was never commanded in the Old Testament, in contradiction to the Shammai school that said that you must. But it was always an accommodation where rather than provision, companionship, union, fidelity, there was abandonment, brokenness.

So in this, in responding in Matthew 19 to the question of the Pharisees, Jesus upholds a beautiful picture of marriage and says, this is where we need to start as we're talking about these things.

So friends, the first thing I want to say to us this morning as we're talking about this passage is, how can we grow in our faithfulness to marriage? How can we hold fast to our spouse?

[17:22] And listen, it's not easy. Every married person here will tell you there's lots of wonderful things about marriage, but it is hard work when two sinners live on top of each other every day, all

day.

When they entwine their lives irrevocably in the covenant of marriage, you're stuck. And it's hard. And you realize how sinful you are and how selfish you are and how unkind you can be and how easily you imagine that there might be something else out there that might be better, that the grass might be greener on some other side.

There is great blessing and great opportunity for growth in marriage, but it's worth fighting for. If you are married, fight for your marriage. Be defensive in it. Guard your heart and guard your marriage.

Don't give in to the temptation to wander with your eyes or with your imagination or with your actions. When you are tempted to long for another, when you see someone else starting to fill those spaces in your heart that your spouse needs to fit, you need to flee.

[18 : 49] You need to run away like Joseph running from Potiphar's wife saying, how could I sin against God in this way? In your relationships, make sure that you put your spouse first before others.

If you're married today, I want to ask you, how are you investing in your marriage? How are you making time and heart space? How are you creating the opportunities to share joys and sorrows together?

How are you seeking to lay down your life to serve the other? To love and to cherish till death do us part.

And listen, if you're here and you're single, what is your call in this? First, it's to see the original goodness of marriage.

I know in our church some of you are 20-somethings who've not been married and maybe you're looking around and wondering, do I even want that? Because it seems pretty broken. It seems really hard.

[20 : 02] Right? Some of you are later in life. I know some of you have been divorced. Some of you are widows and widowers. Some of you have never been married.

First and foremost, uphold, uphold the ideal of marriage that God has called us to value as a church. Think about how you can encourage your married friends to stay married and to love and to serve them in the ways that you have.

But also, take advantage now. Maybe God will call you to marriage in the future. Prepare for that now. Learn the hard work of relationships.

Learn how to resolve conflict with your roommates, with your coworkers, with your bosses. Learn how to serve others selflessly.

Not selfishly. Develop the basic skills that God will want to call you into if God calls you into marriage.

[21 : 14] And know, and we'll come back to this at the end, know that at the end of the day, friends, being married or being single, these are not the pinnacles of life. They are contexts in which God has called you to live out your calling to follow Christ and to let Him be the lover of your soul and the bridegroom who loves you with an everlasting love and for you to respond to Him with love and devotion and fidelity.

So marriage, it's a good thing. It's what God has given us. And Jesus brings this whole vision. He's assuming it as He's teaching these verses in 31 and 32.

So here we go. Let's look now. Having looked at the context, let's look at the content of Jesus' call. This is in verse 32. This is following the pattern that Jesus has been doing in this section.

You have heard it said, but I say to you. Jesus is taking it further. He's saying this is now the kingdom imprint on how to handle these issues.

And He says, 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.

[22 : 38] There are two parts of what Jesus is saying here and I want them both to carry the appropriate weight. There is a strong prohibition and then there is an exception clause.

The strong prohibition is this. If you take out the exception clause, if you ever were a grammar nerd, this is a subordinate clause. So you just remove the subordinate clause and here's the main clause of the sentence.

Don't commit adultery. Do not divorce because you are committing adultery. Now that's a very stark way of saying it but that's what Jesus is, that is the main phrase here.

Don't divorce because it's a violation of this vision of marriage that God has given us. Interestingly, when you look at Luke and when you look at Mark in Mark 10 verses 11 and 12 and in Luke 16, 18, they both summarize it just by saying this.

If you divorce, you commit adultery. Now, the assumption in this is that everyone remarried in the first century. That men couldn't live without a wife in the first century and that women were vulnerable and unprotected and so they needed to remarry in order to be a part of a household to be provided for.

[23 : 55] That was a cultural assumption that Jesus is making. So he equates divorce with adultery because there's a remarriage assumed in that.

Jesus is saying, because marriage is permanent and exclusive, when you divorce and remarry, you are committing adultery.

Maybe it's helpful to think about it this way. Sometimes we think about divorce as we want to change our context. It's kind of like we want to change our clothes or we want to move to a new house or get a new job.

We want to change the context in which we're living our daily lives. Tim Keller says, divorce is better thought of as an amputation because God has brought two to become one and if you are divorcing, you are breaking, you are rending this oneness like you'd have to cut off limbs to do so.

It is, as the old phrase says, tearing asunder what God has joined together. We need to let this sink in because our culture just doesn't think about it this way.

[25 : 21] There is so much divorce that we've become numb to the severity that Jesus puts on what divorce is. Divorce violates the original design of marriage and broadly it should not be so.

Having let that sink in, Jesus then says, except for there is a provision, there's an understanding that there are some places except for in a context of sexual immorality, there is then a place for divorce.

Why would that be? Well, what is sexual immorality? Some of your versions may read that it's marital unfaithfulness. It's a very poor translation of the word.

The word that's used there is a much broader word. It's broadly sexual immorality of all sorts of kinds. In other parts of the Bible it would include things like homosexuality and bestiality and incest and all sorts of things.

So, let's just, let's assume it's a broad term here, right? Any sexual activity outside of the healthy and proper boundaries of husband and wife.

[26 : 49] And the logic behind this seems to be that where sexual unfaithfulness has been, the covenant has been fundamentally broken by that violation.

And because of that it says divorce could be allowed in those contexts. And we need to understand that it's, that as we look broader, as we pan out a little bit from just this verse, we see that in fact there's another place in Scripture in 1 Corinthians 7 that suggests that Jesus isn't making a comprehensive statement on all the grounds by which divorce may happen.

But he's giving one very important one. Remember the rabbi said food, clothing, companionship, fidelity. And he was dealing with the fidelity one as he was addressing this in this context.

But what we do see is that in 1 Corinthians 7, 15 Paul addresses an abandonment of companionship. This is where in the context of 1 Corinthians believing, people who have come to faith in Christ who are now married to someone who's not a believer, the believer is thinking wait, am I unequally yoked?

Am I married to someone who doesn't share my faith commitment? And if that's true, should I abandon the marriage so that I can go marry someone who shares my faith commitment now? And Paul says no, you're married to this person, stay married to them and love them.

[28 : 25] But then he goes on and he says but if your unbelieving spouse says you know what, I'm done with this, you're not the same person I married, I am not here anymore, and that person says I'm gone, then you as a believer, that marriage covenant has been broken by that abandonment.

And so you are then free, and I believe that freedom is freedom to remarry in a similar way because the covenant has been broken in that way.

Okay? So this is how we understand divorce and remarriage at trinity, or divorce. I want to speak briefly to remarriage, and I'll talk a little bit more about this in application in just a minute, but recognize that divorcing in the spirit of the age today, divorcing for any cause whatsoever, puts you exactly in the crosshairs of what Jesus is saying.

If you divorce and then you remarry, and that divorce has not been legitimate, you are violating your original covenant by marrying someone else.

Now, we'll talk about how to deal with that in a minute, but that's what Jesus is saying, and he challenges us how we think about it. So what then, how then do we respond?

[30 : 00] First, it means we should have hearts to stay faithful to our marriage, not to ask how can I get out, but how could I invest and build?

Not for what reason can I divorce, but how can we stay together? Some people ask, if a box can be checked, he committed adultery, she was unfaithful, does that mean I can just go ahead with divorce?

And I think as we look at this, Jesus would recommend a different pattern, a different approach, because he would say first, wait your marriage through the eyes of redemption and seek for reconciliation first.

Now listen carefully, I do not mean a cheap papering over, I do not mean a quick just forgive me, we'll get back to normal, no problems. The work of repair in times of betrayal and unfaithfulness is massive and huge, and the rebuilding of trust will be a year long or life long project, but it's worth it. Explore it, seek it, pursue it, and in the midst of it, be careful with your own heart that you don't allow bitterness and contempt to be the fruit of the hurt.

[31 : 37] There is appropriate grieving, there is appropriate setting of boundaries and even consequences, but seek to rebuild the marriage first.

And in that, my second advice is to be patient, not rash, and to give the Lord time to work. Now again, here's a major caveat, not to stay in an abusive situation where you are in danger.

If you are in a dangerous situation, it is right for you to remove yourself from that and to seek appropriate help from the church, from the police, from counselors, wherever it is needed.

Reconciliation can only happen in the context of physical safety, and that would be a prerequisite of any pursuit. But friends, give it time.

Wait on the Lord. Wait on the Lord to work in your heart to process the hurt if you're the betrayed spouse. Wait on the Lord to work in the heart of the offending spouse for them to see the depth of their sin so that their repentance will be real and deep and genuine.

[32 : 58] Separation might be an appropriate step, but for a season and with a purpose, not as an off-ramp, but as a purpose of saying we need space to do our own work so that we can try to come back together and reconcile.

Know that it can take time for this to happen. Thirdly, do this in community. Friends, it is so hard in the midst of these things because shame rises up on every side.

The betrayer feels shame and they just want to hide and they don't want to tell anybody that they've done this thing that is so hurtful to their spouse. The betrayed spouse often feels guilty.

What did I do? Did I deserve this? How could I have done better? And isolation is our response so often to these things. Friends, fight that response.

Take it to your friends. Bring it to the elders and to the older members of our church so that we can walk with you through this. Find friends who won't merely be your cheerleaders and say you were wronged, but who will speak grace and truth to you, who will help you see your own hearts.

[34 : 22] And friends, then, if having involved others, pursued reconciliation with patience, when it is clear that the other person has a hard heart and is unwilling, unable to take the steps to rebuild, then there is an exception.

then there is a place to say this marriage has been broken and this person who I'm married to has hardened their heart to not rebuild it.

This is where there is freedom and it is a real freedom. There is a real sense of this marriage is done in these contexts.

but friends, let me say this, even when we get to that point, no marriage should end in divorce without broken heartedness in the heart of a Christian.

Even if you feel relief from abuse or serial infidelity or emotional hurt and pain, even when it is the appropriate step within the scriptural boundaries, if you have not grieved, you're not ready to divorce.

[35 : 46] There should be brokenness and mourning for what God designed to be good, even when it is allowed and it is an appropriate step.

Now, there are many situations that I can't address specifically. What constitutes sexual immorality or abandonment? What about pornography?

What about emotional abuse? What about failure to provide? What about a spouse who says one thing but does the other? Friends, this is where time and discernment and community are all part of God's design to help you walk through what that looks like.

thing. I do want to address one other situation that some of you may be thinking about or maybe in and that is you may be sitting here this morning and you have divorced and as you look back on it you think I didn't divorce under these conditions.

I didn't divorce in the spirit that God would have wanted me to. What do I do now? Maybe you're married again, maybe you're not. Here are a few thoughts for you who are divorced and are recognizing that it's not God's plan.

[37 : 07] It wasn't part of what God would want. First, recognize that you can repent. Repent of the divorce. Recognize that it was done in sin if it was.

There is forgiveness for you. Grant Osborne in another commentary says, the present tense commit adultery in no way means that a couple will live in perpetual adultery.

It is not the unpardonable sin. It means that the present act and consummation of remarriage is adulterous. The couple should admit that and then begin to live by God's standards.

So this is a recognition. If you have remarried, then you should stay in that marriage. And that is the marriage that God has called you to in a redemptive way, live out the calling that He's called you to, to uphold the beautiful picture of marriage that we talked about earlier.

So if you're remarried, stay there. If you're not remarried and your spouse, your ex-spouse is not remarried, consider reconciliation if it would be possible.

[38 : 24] It may or may not be. And it may be that in even exploring that you realize wherever we were then, where we are now, is irreconcilable.

That is possible. You can't control that. But at least consider it. Friends, I say all these things with fear and trembling because I know some of you have walked this road already.

And what I want you to know is that Jesus sees you where you are. Some of you have been deeply betrayed and hurt.

Some of you have perpetrated harm on others and have been unfaithful. And some of you are in marriages now, but you're at a place where you're wondering, how can I get out?

the gospel is our only hope. You see, the gospel of glory and the call of Jesus, this is our third point, is that God has called us to a marriage that is even greater than the marriage between a man and a woman.

[39 : 51] God, in the Old Testament, God uses marriage language to describe the relationship between him and his people.

God is a loving, faithful husband who pursues his people. And do you know what Israel is? An unfaithful bride who abandons the covenant to go after other lovers, who worships other gods and serves other masters, who devotes themselves to others rather than God himself.

This is what was read earlier by Carolyn, Jeremiah 2.2. Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem. Thus says the Lord, I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown.

Jeremiah goes on in chapter 3, verse 20, and he indicts Israel. Surely as a treacherous wife leaves her husband, so you have been treacherous to me, O house of Israel, declares the Lord.

In fact, the abandonment of the covenant relationship was so deep that God brought the judgment of exile upon Israel, and he uses in Jeremiah 3.8 divorce language.

[41 : 16] She, and this is referring to Judah, this is technical, the southern kingdom watching the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom had already been judged for its unfaithfulness. The southern kingdom is wondering, what do we do?

And Jeremiah says, she saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister, Judah, did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.

Old Testament language is so poignant, isn't it? But along with this thread of unfaithfulness, we see unfaithfulness by God's people, we see the thread of God's redemptive faithfulness for his people. In grace, he pursues us in our unfaithfulness and promises a restored relationship. So in Isaiah 62 verses 3 through 5, looking ahead past the exile, God is saying, there will be a day that is coming

when I will restore my relationship with my people.

He says, you shall be a crown of beauty in the hands of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed desolate, but you shall be called my delight is in her, and your land shall be called married.

[42 : 45] For the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married, for as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

And friends, if you haven't, if you weren't here when we preached through Hosea a couple years ago, if you haven't read the book of Hosea, it is all about this picture. So in Hosea 2, the Lord says this, in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me husband, and no longer will you call me my Baal, for I will remove the name of the Baals, Baals were Old Testament gods other than the God of the Bible, I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more, and I will betroth you to me forever, I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and mercy, I will betroth you to me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.

And friends, as we trace this theme in the Old Testament through the coming of Jesus, and His life, and His death, and His resurrection, and we see how great a love with which God has loved us in this.

And Jesus, the risen one, is not only called the Savior, and the King, and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, but He is also the Lamb who invites us to the wedding feast, where we will be His bride, and He will be our bridegroom.

And so we see in Revelation 19, John saying, then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude like a roar of many waters, and the sound of many mighty peals of thunder crying out, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.

[44 : 45] Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, and the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me, write this, blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And He said to me, these are the true words of God. Friends, do you see that this is the good news of the gospel in marriage?

That Jesus has come to us to win us out of our sin and our unfaithfulness and our infidelity, out of the stain and the brokenness of our lives, God's to make us to make us His perfect bride.

If we came to Him, we would all be the adulterous, wayward spouse, because our faithfulness is never pure and perfect, because our unfaithfulness, our hearts are prone to wander.

But Jesus comes and He takes hold of us by His love and by His Spirit. He convicts us of sin and brings us to repentance and faith and by union with Him, we are now His bride.

[46 : 13] And how blessed are we who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is the good news of the gospel. And this is the power for us to respond to Jesus' call today.

Friends, if you've been convicted that you've not following, that you have not followed or are not following Jesus, repent of your sin and receive His forgiveness.

Know that this is not unforgivable, that Jesus by His life and death and resurrection will cleanse you from all your sin and free you from unrighteousness so that you can live a new life.

Friends, if you are in a hard marriage and you look at your spouse and you think, I don't know if I can keep doing this, look at your Savior and know how much He has loved you and love one another, not even for their sake, but for Jesus' sake.

Where there's been betrayal, let God's forgiveness of you be the starting point. And friends, where there has been or is hard-heartedness and abandonment, when it really is done, grieve with Jesus the breakdown.

[47 : 54] Let Him be the one who is gentle and lowly, who invites you to give Him your burdens. Let Him be your comfort and your rock and the lover of your soul better than any.

and for all of us this morning, let us marvel at the love that God has shown us.

Let us pursue Him and His kingdom. Let's pray. Lord, we feel the weight of these words, Spirit, and so often, Lord, those of us with tender consciences are overly burdened, and those of us with hardened consciences are untouched by Your Word.

Lord, I pray today that by Your Spirit, You would sort out in our hearts, that You would convict us of sin and of unrighteousness. Lord, I pray that You would also comfort and help those who feel great burdens of hurt, shame today.

Oh, Lord, do this work, we pray, Lord, so that we might know the amazing gospel of grace, that You have not loved us because we've deserved it, but You have loved us well.

[49 : 36] and in Jesus, You have saved us from our sin and made us Your own. What great joy that is. Be with us now, in Jesus' name, amen.

Friends, we're going to end our service with going to the Lord's Supper as the worship team comes up. There are lots of different ways we could talk about what we do when we come to the table.

One of the ways that I think we can frame it is this. This is the marriage supper of the Lamb, where we get to come and partake of the cup and of the juice to remember His great love for us.

It is a celebration of our salvation that He has worked for us and the love that He shows us in Christ. And if you this morning are here and you have placed your faith in Christ, then let this be a time for you to come and remember and rejoice in His love for you.

If God has convicted you of sin this morning, come and take so that you might know His forgiveness. If you find your heart hardened, let Him break your heart again by remembering the degree, the sacrifice that Jesus made for you with His very own body, His very own blood shed for you, bearing the punishment for your sin.

[51 : 10] If you're here this morning and you haven't placed your faith in Christ, we would ask, let the elements pass by. Don't take of it because it is an expression of faith, but rather consider the message of Jesus' love for people like you and me.

And know Jesus' invitation to come to Him and by faith receive His gift of salvation this morning.

Friends, we're going to spend a few minutes just in reflection.

The worship team is going to play from There is a Fountain Filled with Blood, just for us to have a few minutes of quiet before we take together. If you have not gotten the elements, if you haven't gotten one of these, there are ushers on the side who can get this as well.

So let's meditate as we prepare our hearts for communion. Thank you. for watching.

Thank you.

[52 : 40] **ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ**

Washed all my sins away, away, washed all my sins away. Beneath that cleansing flood, He washed all our sins away.

This is what the Apostle Paul wrote. **ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ**
Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Let's take a cup together. Oh, Lord, what great love that you have shown us that while we were still sinners, you died for us.

And, Lord, thank you now that because of the new covenant in your blood, Lord, there is nothing that can separate us, life or death or anything else.

[55 : 36] Oh, Lord, what great love you have loved us with. Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.