

**I Wish Jesus Hadn't Said That....  
But I'm Really Glad He Did  
Mark 10:1-31**

Last Friday night I turned on the Tigers vs. White Sox game around the third inning. I heard the announcer say that the Sox were using their bullpen the whole game because their starting pitcher for the night, Chris Sale, was scratched from the lineup, and sent home before the game because of a clubhouse incident. The incident? He didn't want to wear his team's particular throwback jersey, so he in a temper tantrum, he cut the jersey up with a knife! But not just his jersey. He went all Edward Scissor Hands on his teammates jerseys also! He complained that they weren't comfortable. Well, you can draw your own conclusions about his actions – he was suspended for five days. For 9 million dollars a year, I'd pitch in Chewbacca suit. But I guess were cut out of a different cloth.

**I bring it up because it's a picture of what a lot of people want to do with the hard words of Jesus.** They would like to just cut them up, in effect saying, "No one wants to wear this." No one wants to abide by these words."

Last week we looked at some hard words regarding **sin and hell**, and today we are looking at Jesus' words related to **marriage/divorce, valuing children and entering the kingdom like a child, and selling all you have and following Jesus!** Many despise the words of Jesus regarding marriage. They are actually hostile to these words. Many don't value children and they don't understand grace, so that too is a problem for them too. And who wants to hear what Jesus says about money? What should one do? Cut out this section?

**No, we need these words.**

**God's design for the world ...  
God's idea of marriage, children, and wealth ...  
God's idea of salvation by grace alone ....  
is so much better, and so much more beautiful  
than anything we could ever come up with.  
His words are for our good and his glory.**

I have taken my title from my friend **Steve Timmis' book: *I Wish Jesus Hadn't Said That.*** Perhaps you've felt that way before. *Ever read the Bible and been annoyed? Inconvenienced? Angered? Ever found Jesus' words about your private life, about your sex life, about your financial life, to be a "pain the neck?"* I have.

**But I have also affirmed, upon further reflection on Jesus' words, Steve's subtitle – *But I'm Really Glad He Did.***

**Jesus asks us for more to sing a few songs each Sunday or to drop a few coins in the offering box. But those who follow Jesus words find his call to obedience to be worth it!** Timmis says:

I'm really glad Jesus did call me to follow him. I'm really glad Jesus did spell out just what it means to be his. I'm really glad Jesus did say all those things that invade my "private" world, break into my choices, and turn me and my lifestyle upside down. Because it is in that process of dislocation and disturbance that I discover Jesus to be everything I could ever need and my greatest delight in life.

The fact is, Jesus speaks truth because **he loves us**. Notice that little word to the rich young ruler in verse 21, "looking at him, he **loved him**..."

This discourse is the in the midst of Jesus' larger discourse on discipleship in Mark 8-10. Here, Jesus talks to his disciples. Notice **the private instruction to the disciples** in vv. 10, 13-16, 23. **Jesus hasn't deviated from his plan** of teaching the disciples about his death (predicted three times) and about what cross-bearing discipleship looks like. Here he emphasizes three practical matters related to discipleship. I want to highlight three truths.

### **#1: True discipleship involves submitting to God's plan for marriage (Mk 10:1-12)**

**v. 1** – Jesus leaves Capernaum and heads to Judea and Perea teaching the crowds – probably in both synagogues and open air. He's in and out of the holy Land. He's probably crossing over into the **area where John the Baptist preached**. That's significant and may be why the question regarding divorce appears.

**V. 2** – The Pharisee's question. Notice that they come up to "test" Jesus. **They aren't humbly seeking understanding**. They aren't asking Jesus to do a **marriage seminar**. So, understand that this passage doesn't say everything you would want to know about divorce and remarriage. Jesus is simply responding to the Pharisees, and **decides to make on main point about marriage, not deal with all the controversies surrounding divorce**.

So I'm not going to deal with all the controversies around it either.

- I don't have time to deal with all the possible scenarios anyway... That's for another time.
- I think **Akin and Platt** do a fine job of going into greater detail than in our commentaries on Mark and Matthew (see *Exalting Jesus in Matthew* and *Exalting Jesus in Mark*).<sup>1</sup>

So the Pharisees want to talk about **divorce**, Jesus wants to talk **marriage**.

**The Jewish law permitted divorce.**  
**The only question was "on what grounds?"**

**Matthew 19:3: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife **for any and every reason**"**  
Here in Matthew, Jesus inserts the "exception clause" in verse 9:

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<sup>1</sup> For two sermons with different views see John Piper <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=458nNfBTMAAs> and Kevin DeYoung <https://www.universityreformedchurch.org/sermons/what-did-jesus-think-of-divorce-remarriage/>

“And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery.” (Matt 19:9)

Mark doesn't include the exception probably because it was **assumed**.

- Others say it was because Matthew was referring to the **betrothal period (and maybe a reference to Mary/Joseph)**, but I think that's far fetched.
- The text in view is not Mary and Joseph, and the issue is marriage not betrothal, but Deut 24.
- It's like Matthew 5, you can assume that the assumption was a “legitimate complaint”
- But scholars debate...

So Jewish law permitted divorce but for what reason?

There were two schools of thought, one more **conservative (Shammai)**, and the other more **liberal (Hillel)**.

- The debate really had to do with Deut 24:1-4, where divorces is permitted on grounds of **“indecency.”**
- But what is indecency?
- Some viewed this as adultery (Shammai), but others (the school of Hillel) thought it could mean anything like burning your husband's toast. For the latter, divorce was granted for any matter.

James Edwards says, “The sense of the question asked of Jesus seems to have been, **“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any grounds other than adultery?”**”<sup>2</sup>

They come to the law asking, **“What can I get away with?”** (Garland).

The Pharisees liked having a permissive divorce policy, and they wanted to keep it that way. But an additional reason for asking this question may have been to associate Jesus with John the Baptist, who was beheaded in this very reason, for his words about Herod Antipas' marriage to Herodias! (Mark 6:18)

**V. 3** – So what does Jesus say? Jesus responds with a question. “What did Moses command?”

**V. 4** – The Pharisees respond with Deut 24. We should note that Deut 24:1–4 did **not require** divorce. It was a **concession**. Many Jews thought it was a **requirement**.

**5-12** – Notice what Jesus does. He doesn't really talk about divorce.

His question is, **“What is marriage?”**

- **DeYoung, “It's like trying to learn to fly by only practicing crash landings.”**
- It's important, but that's not all there is. Why don't you focus on flying first.

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<sup>2</sup> Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark* (p. 300). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

Jesus says that it was because of **the “hardness of heart”** that Moses gave this certificate. That is, it was a **result of sin**.

Jesus acknowledges that divorce will occur, but does **not** say divorce is **required**, and it certainly **was not God's original intent**.

This divorce concession was to **regulate the fallout from people's hardness of heart**.

- It provide **protection** and welfare for the innocent victim
- It protected the woman from **brutal abandonment** (Garland).
- It deterred **wife swapping**.
- It was meant to keep the social upheaval associated with divorce to a minimum (Ibid).

**But Deut 24 does not express the divine intention of marriage.**

And that's what Jesus is interested in talking about: God's plan for marriage.

Markan scholar, Stein gets to the heart of the section saying:

**“True discipleship, Jesus teaches, is not to be lived out in light of concessions given due to the fallen nature of humanity but in light of the ultimate divine intention.”**

Jesus is most interested in God's design for marriage, not talking about the exceptions, or lack of exceptions, for divorce.

### **God's Plan for Marriage**

So what's God's plan for marriage? Jesus highlights four truths.

#### **1. Marriage is God's idea; not a human invention (6a).**

- Look how Jesus goes back to “creation” (Gen 1:27; 2:24). Where did marriage originate? Creation. Who created man and woman? God did.
- The Bible begins and ends with a wedding. Marriage is embedded within the grand narrative of the whole world...
- God defines marriage. We don't define marriage. We submit to his definition and design. Marriage gets its meaning and significance from God.

#### **2. Marriage is between a male and female. (6b)**

- God made them “male and female.” God made the genders. Sin may have twisted one's desires, but the design is for a man to marry a woman.
- This is not a cultural statement. This is a creation statement. It's timeless.
- God's design is for our good and his glory; its for our own flourishing.

#### **3. Marriage involves a one-flesh union (7-8).**

- Keller: “This is to say that marriage is far more than an association or partnership for common goals. It creates a new unit, emotionally, spiritually, personally, and

even physically. **The marriage bond changes you permanently and the individual loses a great measure of independence.”**

- The man and woman leave and cleave. **Outside of your relationship to God, your ultimate allegiance is to your spouse**, not your parents, and not your kids.
- The one-flesh union changes everything. Two people have been united together.
- This union is a reflection of the union between Christ and his church (Eph 5).

#### **4. Marriage is intended to be permanent (9-12).**

- God is the Lord over the marriage.
- **Verses 10-12**, he talks to his disciples privately, and presses the point home. Again, Mark doesn't include any exception clause, whereas Matthew does. I believe because it was assumed.
- **There was no dispute or disagreement among Jews or in the Greco-Roman culture that adultery was a legitimate ground for divorce. So Jesus gives a blanket statement about all other causes (Bayer).**
- **If this is assumption is correct, then the sense of the statement is something like “Whoever divorces his wife [without sufficient reason] and marries another commits adultery against her ....”**
- **Jesus assumes in this discussion that divorce was unwarranted and therefore the remarriage was adultery.**

The thrust of what Jesus is doing is denying the Pharisee's hyper-tolerant divorce position, and stressing the original intent of marriage.

#### **Summary**

James Edwards:

**The essential thrust of 10:1–12 is the sacredness of the marriage bond as intended and instituted by God. Jesus does not conceive of marriage on the grounds of its dissolution but on the grounds of its architectural design and purpose by God. Human failure does not alter that purpose (Rom 3:4). The intent of Jesus' teaching is not to shackle those who fail in marriage with debilitating guilt. The question is not whether God forgives those who fail in marriage. The answer to that question is assured in 3:28, “ ‘All the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven.’ ” There is, after all, no instance in Scripture of an individual seeking forgiveness and being denied it by God. The question in our day of impermanent commitments and casual divorce is whether we as Christians will hear the unique call of Christ to discipleship in marriage. In marriage, as in other areas to which the call of Christ applies, will we seek relief in what is permitted, or commit ourselves to what is intended by God and commanded by Christ? Will we fall away in trouble and difficulty (4:17), or follow Jesus in the costly journey of discipleship, even in marriage? Will we sunder the divine union of “two become one flesh,” or will we honor and nurture marriage as a gift and creation of God?<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark* (p. 305). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

## Applications

1. **Embrace a biblical view of marriage.**
  - Times change, but this doesn't change. It's rooted in creation.
2. **Prepare for opposition when embracing a biblical view of marriage.**
  - John the Baptist was beheaded over it.
  - Don't be surprised if people hate you for believing the Bible. Remember, we're not out to win a popularity contest. We're out to obey the words of Jesus.
3. **When preparing for marriage, prepare for the long haul.**
  - That means think "companionship"
  - Choose wisely!
  - Be committed to a covenant!
4. **If married, cultivate a healthy marriage.**
  - Few things are as precious as marriage. Work on it!
    - Go on dates
    - Talk
    - Learn to Forgive each other – a whole lot
      - Don't do the fight or flight. Learn to forgive.
      - [B'Bque sauce story](#)
    - Few things will sanctify you like marriage!
      - You learn patience, grace, service, etc.
5. **Mingle the call to obedience with the tears of compassion.**
  - Few things in life hurt worse than divorce.
  - If you are divorced, please know that we love you. You are not "damaged goods."
  - Please know that divorce is not the unforgivable sin.
6. **Remember that Jesus is always forgiving and always faithful; He will never commit adultery against you, and he will never abandon you!**
  - Jesus is what our heart has always wanted.
  - This is a good word not only for singles, but also for married people.
  - Jesus is better than marriage. He's better than sex.
  - Interestingly, Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan, who was not crass at all, compared sexual intimacy to one's relationship to Christ. Basically, he said that the intimacy you may enjoy with your spouse is but a shadow of the pleasure we derive in our union with Christ. So don't go looking for something that only Jesus can give you! Love the Savior. Enjoy the sweet presence of the Savior. There's no one like him.

<b>#2: True discipleship involves depending on God's grace like a helpless child (10:13-16)</b>
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We see two things here that are counter-cultural.

1. **Jesus loves children (13-14)**

Nate pointed out last week that people didn't esteem kids like we do today.

We don't have a **patriarchy or a matriarchy**; we have a "**kindergarchy**." Kids dominate the home in many places. But they had not status in Jesus' day.

**13-14a:** So this looks like a nice lovely occasion. CJ mentioned that there are no interference from Pharisees, no wild demoniac in sight... **Parents taking photos! But the disciples are present.** Sigh. They aren't the warmest group of guys, and seem to be really good at the ministry of "**forbidding**." They were good at "Cut it out!" (CJ). The disciples viewed children like an **annoyance, a distraction**.

But Jesus "**rebuked them**" and became "**indignant**" with them. Not receiving children made Jesus angry! Why?

- **They were misrepresenting the character of God!**
- They were misrepresenting Jesus!
- **They were saying, "Jesus has no time or concern for kids."**

Did the disciples not remember the events of the preceding chapter? **Look at 9:36, 42.**

Biblical examples of dishonoring children as image bearers include **Herod's** killing of babies during Jesus' day, following the similar evil practice of **Pharaoh's** killing of babies in Egypt. In fact, children were not held in high esteem in Roman days, similar to our day. By Jesus time, it is reported that the Romans had a trash heap out beside the home, where they often left unwanted children. Children were left in the dung pile or in the trash; and if people wanted the kids, they would pick them up. Sometimes, these kids were raised to be **prostitutes, and gladiators or slaves.**

**14b:** Jesus tells the disciples to allow the kinds to come to him. Jesus loves them. And so must we.

- Many are orphaned.
- Many die of prevented diseases.
- Many need foster parents.
- Many are functionally fatherless.
- Many are in the womb and need an advocate.
- Many are trafficked.

You can't do everything for children in this fallen world, but you can **do something**. But that's not the main focus here, the main focus re children is this:

## **2. Jesus says to learn childlike dependence from them. (15-16)**

So here's the gospel.

- The analogy of children isn't this: "**Children are innocent.** You must be innocent to enter the kingdom."
- **Parents of young children would not say this! They would say that their child – though they love him or her deeply – is a living illustration of *sin!***
- Jesus is drawing attention to the child's ***neediness***.

- You must come like a child – **helpless, dependent, bringing nothing to the table.**”  
Come like a child with all their **candor** – honest, forthright.

We are only Christians because of **grace.**

- **We come to God bringing nothing but our sin.**
- **We have nothing; we need everything.**
- We come helpless, and by grace, the King welcomes us into the family!

**And this dependence on grace isn't merely for entering the kingdom, but for everyday living.** Every day we look to the Father for grace.

**Do you want to become a Christian? “All you need is need.”**

- **But unfortunately, many don't have it.**
- All who come like a child receive great **blessing.**

### **#3: True discipleship involves treasuring Jesus more than any idol (10:17-31)**

This Rich young man is the antithesis of Jesus' previous illustration of a helpless child.

#### **A. The Problem: Idolatry (17-22)**

Salvation is not a matter of **external reformation** – being a decent moral person – but a matter of **internal transformation.** One must have a new heart. **Jesus must replace idols.**

**V. 17** – He has many things going for him.

- He runs to Jesus
- He knelt down before him
- He ask a good question. People want to live forever. How? Kale? Cross-fit? No....

**18-19** – Jesus responds with a question and then cites the commandments. **“Only God is good.”** He wants this man to **reflect. He wants him to reflect on perfect goodness.** The man is actually looking at it...

Jesus doesn't cite the **first or tenth commandment.** That's what he's about to get to.

**20-21** – **This man doesn't think he's a sinner.** That's a problem. So Jesus uses the law to show him his need, zeroing in on the first/tenth commandment (21). But notice again, this is out of **love!**

**V. 22** – The man went away sad because he didn't want to part with his idol, his functional Savior.

**Jesus doesn't call everyone to give up all they have, but Jesus does call everyone to renounce all functional Saviors – all idols.**

We can't **universalize** this text, but we can't **minimize** it either.

- Jesus alone must be your Savior.



- He must have first place in your heart.
- You must see Him as more precious than anything!

The rich man thought may have thought that he could **just add something to his life** to be saved.

- Jesus says, becoming a Christian is like an **explosion. Everything changes.**
- **It's not something you add; it's someone you become.**
- Notice how **personal salvation** is. Jesus says **I want it all. I want you.**
- He says **I want that thing that's killing you.**
- **I want to be your everything and give you life.**
- **But this man will not surrender to this internal power struggle.**

If you're a Christian you know something of this struggle.

- The struggle when God is **pulling you to Himself. All of you.**
- **He doesn't ask us to simply add some moral act to our lives.** He asks for our entire lives and transforms us.

## **B. The Solution: Radical Grace (23-27)**

**V. 23** – Now Jesus turns to his disciples and describes the difficulty of wealthy people entering the kingdom.

Now, money is only one of many idols, so why is this one so hard? This idol is particularly dangerous.

- **Materialism breeds pride and self-sufficiency.** The proud don't come to Jesus like a helpless child.
- **Materialism deceives can create a false security in riches.**
- **Materialism turns your heart toward this world instead of heaven.** You can't serve them both! (Matt 6)

**24-25** – He elaborates with a well-known illustration to show the impossibility of entering the kingdom of God apart from grace. It's impossible – like a camel going through the eye of a needle.

**V. 26** – **The disciples are perplexed.** After all, this rich man seemed to be a very moral guy; and he was rich. **The common sense of the day was that the richer you were, the more blessed you were; the more godly you were.** But Jesus turns that thinking on its head. He says, nope. It's harder for the rich. So the disciples, are like, "Then who can get in?"

**V. 27** – **This is a key verse.** Fix your eyes on this verse. This is the hope and power of the gospel! No one can enter the kingdom – rich or poor – **apart from God's grace.** But the good news is that God can do the impossible!

**"with God nothing is impossible."** God does it.

- This statement is also made in **Luke 1:37 regarding the virgin birth.**

- How can a virgin give birth? God does a miracle.
- How can a rich man enter the kingdom? God does a miracle – a miracle of new birth.
- **Salvation is not a prize you earn; it's a gift you receive.**

### C. The Reward (28-31):

**V. 28:** Peter wonders that if “with man discipleship is impossible” then what good are his sacrifices? He’s essentially looking for affirmation.

**29-30:** Jesus responds by saying all the sacrifices that Peter and every other follower of Christ makes will be **rewarded a hundred fold.**

**You get a new family; more than that, You get Jesus himself!**

The scandalous thing is that Christ must take allegiance over even good relationships.

- He must be first place.
- Idols are often good things turned into God things.
- But you must have Jesus as first in your heart to be a follower of Jesus.
- **Jesus’ love is a jealous love.**

The word about **persecutions** had a special meaning to Mark’s audience. They were suffering under Nero’s persecution.

**But Jesus says following Jesus involves sharing in his whole way of life, including “light momentary affliction” (2 Cor 4:17).**

John Piper puts this cost/reward well:

This text does not mean that you get materially rich by becoming a missionary—at least not in the sense that your own private possessions increase. It means mainly that if you are deprived of your earthly family in the service of Christ, it will be made up a hundredfold in your spiritual family, the church. But even this may be too limiting. What about the lonely missionaries who labor for years without being surrounded by hundreds of sisters and brothers and mothers and children in the faith? Is the promise not true for them? Surely it is.

Surely what Christ means is that *he himself makes up for every loss*. If you give up a mother’s nearby affection and concern, you get back one hundred times the affection and concern from the ever-present Christ. If you give up the warm comradeship of a brother, you get back one hundred times the warmth and camaraderie from Christ. If you give up the sense of at-homeness you had in your house, you get back one hundred times the comfort and security of knowing that your Lord owns every house and land and stream and tree on earth. Isn’t what Jesus is saying to prospective missionaries just this: **I promise to work for you and be for you so much that you will not be able to speak of having sacrificed**

**anything.** That's the way Hudson Taylor took it, because at the end of his 50 years of missionary labor in China he said, "I never made a sacrifice."

**31** –This proverbial statement highlights the reversed, or upside-down nature of the kingdom. It's a good summary of these discourses.

- **Those who are great in the eyes of the world – the rich and famous – who refuse to surrender to Jesus – are actually last.**
- **Those who have nothing – but have Jesus- are actually first.**
- **If you have nothing, like a helpless child, but have Jesus, then you have everything.**
- **If you have everything, like this rich man, but don't have Jesus, you have nothing.**

**Looking at us, He loves us, and speaks to us.**

**I'm really glad our Loving Lord has spoken to us. Let's follow him by grace.**