

Grace, mercy and peace be to you for my Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. So we have a few challenging passages here in Scripture and I'm going to try and make sense of them all. First off, let's look at whole the beginning of Genesis. So this is again, an account of creation and the account of man and woman being created, both of them, man and woman being created in the image of God. Now, woman being taken from man to be the helper, the helpmate, but the two of them both being created in God's image. It's not that man was created in image of God and woman was an afterthought. No. This is just a unique way of creation. God formed us out of the dust, both of us and breathed into both of us the breath of life and we became living beings. This is true for man and woman.

We were both created in the image of God. The image of God is neither male nor female. The image of God is the idea that God is a creature of love, that has free will, that is creative, all of the attributes of God, not the physical attributes but the other characteristics, the character of God. That's what we were created. And we were created to be united together as husband and wife. One flesh. We're to leave mom and dad and we're to gather together and become one flesh, and we are not to be separated. Of course, we know in our society that is not always the case, that there is divorce and there is a separation of the unity that God created us to be.

So first off, let's talk about this is an encouragement for us as we are praying for our children, our grandchildren, and maybe our great-grandchildren as they look at what it means to be married, that we should give them an alternate view than what our society does. Our society has this idea that if you feel something in your gut somewhere and you're attracted to someone, that must be love and therefore that's all the reason to get together. Of course, by the time you figure out that this person is completely incompatible with you and doesn't share anything of your value, you're already married and that really creates some problems.

And so we need to help people, help our young people to understand that marriage is as much about the mind as it is about the heart, that we are called to examine and get to know each other before we get physically involved. Too often in our society, we get physically involved first and then try and figure out whether we should be together for any length of time. And that's what our children or grandchildren and everybody else are getting from society. And we need to tell them that Scripture, Bible, Christianity has a message for the very practical way of being married.

First and foremost, we should be of the same faith. We should agree with each other about what we believe. That is part of the union of husband and wife. In Ecclesiastes, it talks about two strands being together and then a third holding them secure. And that would be husband and wife and God in the center weaved within our very lives to hold us secure. That is what enables us to withstand the trials and tribulations of this world so that we might remain that one flesh. That is the ideal.

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That is what God has intended for us. And that is what we should encourage and teach and train our young children to follow. That they should not get married without a thought of how the rest of their life is going to go. So that they might have some reasonable expectation that with work and with the word of God and with patience, they might be able to spend their entire lives together as one man and one woman in the bonds of marriage.

And then we get to the Gospel of St. Mark and the Pharisees trying to trip up Jesus asking Him about divorce and what is it legal and can they do it? Is it lawful? And of course, Moses gives them a certificate of divorce, especially for adultery or for abandonment. Those are biblical means by which God says it's okay to be divorced. But we also know that that's not always the case. That sometimes divorce happens for other reasons. And according to the scripture passages here, that is then a sin to divorced from the person that you were joined together with. And then if you marry someone else, that would be considered adultery. That is not an easy saying. And I know we have a society that is rampant with that and I know that we struggle with that here in our own church. So there are some of you who are on the other end of this who are already on the other side of this. And so how do we deal with this?

How do we address this in our own lives? Yes, divorce is a sin. Yes, getting married to another person outside of those couple of biblical reasons is adultery. And we need to be willing to confess that. This is sin. It's not a unique sin. The wages of sin is death, whether it be divorce and remarriage for other reasons than biblical reasons, whether it be lying or cheating or stealing or murder or anything else, the wages of sin is death. What we deserve from God is always His wrath and His vengeance and His punishment. That is what we deserve and we need to be clear about that. We need to own up to our faults and to our wrong way of doing things.

But we also need to remember this, the sin of divorce is also paid by Christ on the cross and is forgiven by Christ. It is not an unforgivable sin. And so if you are on the other side of that relationship already, if you are already there, you need to remember this, you are in the grace of God and there is forgiveness in God's grace and you need to know that and hold fast to that.

It is not like you're condemned to a life of constant judgment by God. If the divorce was not based on biblical grounds and if the remarriage was not based on biblical grounds, that is a sin, but it's not a perpetual one. You find grace and mercy and forgiveness in Christ because He valued your life so much that He came to become like us in our flesh and He suffered for us in our flesh so that we might have hope of redemption in the flesh. The church is considered a bride to Christ and Christ is the bridegroom and marriage is meant to help us understand what that

means. Christ does not abandon us just because we rebel against Him. He keeps the relationship together. And so our marriages are ideally meant to reflect that and to demonstrate that to the world around us.

So rather than getting out of this that God is constantly pointing his finger at anybody who's divorced, we need to remember that divorce like any other sin is condemned by God. And divorce like any other sin is also forgiven by God on the cross. And so again, if you're on the other side of things, go to the cross for your grace and mercy.

Now, if there are issues that you're still struggling with then it might be time to come talk to me and try and work those things out, but I don't know how many times mainly and primarily I think what Jesus is trying to communicate to us here, and I saw this happen a lot in the Chaplain Corps, is our marriage as a Christian is meant to be a witness to those around us of the love of God and even a marriage on the other side of the divorce can be that as well. But is meant to be this concept that no matter what happens, no matter how difficult it is, we are patient with each other, we are forgiving with each other, and we can walk together and find hope.

In our case as the church, as the bride, fortunately our bridegroom is eternally patient with us. Fortunately, we know that our bridegroom will forgive us, will bring us back, will take us home to be with him every single time. And that is what we are to hold on to, that is the fact that we need to remember because he chose to fulfill the law. The message that was given by the angels, the 10 Commandments that were given by God through the angels to Moses, make it very clear, not only adultery but everything else, "Honor your father and mother, no other gods. Don't misuse His name. Honor the Sabbath day. Do not covet." All of it is good. All of it was declared fit and right and all of it has been destroyed by us and all of it has been restored in Christ. And that is the message that we need to remember.

And it's not just about marriage and divorce, it's about any relationship. The whole point of this is there is a commitment in marriage between one man and one woman. Yes, it is in that and only that. And so Scripture is also making it very clear that no matter what the combination of people is, if it's not one man and one woman in the bonds of marriage, it is wrong. It is sin no matter what.

But we don't stop there. We also say that there is grace in that sin. There is forgiveness even if you're on the other side of it. Even if you've already gone through this and you're on the other side of it. We need to remember this. God's desire is not to constantly judge you. That's not what He wants to do. He wants to show you through His son how much He loves you and how much He has forgiven you. This is just one example of what we need to be forgiven of so that we might put our trust and our hope and our confidence in Christ because He calls us brothers and sisters. He calls us by name and makes us children of God.

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That's also a part of marriage that is not separated from the whole idea of husband and wife. Marriage is meant for procreation, for the creation of children, for the next generation. And so we are called to be united together and committed to each other so that we might raise our children in the faith, so that they might know the love that God has for us, so that they might create biblical holy bonds of marriage, so that they might give the next generation. Christianity is only one generation from disappearing. If we don't train and teach our children and our grandchildren, what's left? And so, marriage is the means by which we create the stable environment for the next generation to grow up in the faith, to understand the bridegroom Christ and His love for the bride, the church. And that is reflected in the relationship of husband and wife.

And even in this broken and fallen world, even in the mixed marriages and all the combinations that we have as a result of that breaking of the bond, there's still grace, there's still mercy, there's still forgiveness. We are called not to be simply the church that condemns that which is not in Scripture. We are called to be the church that offers the love of God to a fallen broken world. The law condemns enough. We don't need to hammer it home. They won't know that we are Christians by the way that we perfectly judge your sin.

We are known by God and by the community by our love. Or at least that's what we're called to do. And so in this broken world and in the multitude of broken relationships that we know exist in this world, we have an opportunity to bring the love of God into it, to heal those wounds, to heal the brokenness because He came to sanctify all and He is not ashamed to call us brothers and we can put our trust in Him because He has chosen us as His children and we are safe in those bonds. Just like right after talking about the whole husband and wife and the breakup of that, it goes right into the little children, "Unless you believe like a little child." In other words, unless you trust absolutely without wavering, without any thought of your own effort or your own worthiness, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It's all about what He has done for us. And thankfully, even in broken relationships, even in broken trust, there is still forgiveness, salvation and life everlasting.

And someday we will see Him, the Bridegroom will bring us home and we will spend the rest of eternity celebrating the marriage feast, which has no end. And what a glorious day that will be. Until then, let us strive to make sure our marriages are strong and focused upon and centered around the word of God that will bind us together. And let us remember even in broken relationships, let God bind them, bless them, and heal them so that we all might know His mercy and His peace. May His grace and that mercy and that peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.