

## **Marriage, Divorce and the Transforming Gospel of Jesus**

### **Luke 16: 14-18**

With tax-collectors and sinners coming to Jesus, it begs the question, 'If salvation is by God's grace, does it matter how we live?' The answer is that following Jesus is going to fundamentally affect how you see life. That is true for money, but also for marriages.

#### **Seeing things God's Way**

The Pharisees ridiculed Jesus because what he was saying about money was so counter-cultural to them, that they just scorned him. In response, Jesus makes it clear that God and man can see things very differently. It is possible, Jesus says for something to be highly exalted in the eyes of men, but for God to hate it. But it's what God thinks about something that matters. And whilst, since Jesus, we are now in the new covenant, God's moral standards haven't changed. Instead, through the gospel He gives us the power to live as he would have us live.

And that is going to radically affect, not just how we see money, but how we see marriage.

#### **Marriage: a life-long covenant.**

Divorce was a hot issue in Jesus' day. There was a culture of divorce and remarriage. So when Jesus is asked about this (Matt 19:3-6) he takes us back to God's first intentions for marriage: a life-long covenant between a man and a woman. Marriage is a covenant where God is the witness and the one who joins the two parties together.

But what do you do if it all goes wrong?

#### **Divorce and the death of marriage**

In Luke 16:18 Jesus is effectively saying that divorce is a violation of the three-way covenant between husband and wife and God. And to divorce and then remarry someone else is adultery in the sight of God. But the New Testament gives two grounds for valid divorce: sexual immorality – that is all types of adultery (Matt 5:31-32; 19:9) - and abandonment (1 Cor 7:12-15).

But just because something is permissible is not the same as saying you have to do it. Rather, repentance and forgiveness and reconciliation and blood-bought restoration should always be our first option.

Does that mean that those who divorced and got remarried for other reasons are living in a perpetual state of adultery? No – Jesus calls it a marriage, and it would be further sin to go through a further divorce.

#### **Marriage and the death that really counts.**

There are a whole load of reasons why marriage has been designed by God for our good, but, in the end, marriage isn't really about us. It's about Christ's love for His people (Ephesians 5:31-2). Marriage is painting a picture of Christ's sacrificial costly love for his bride, his church. It's in the death of Jesus that we find cleansing and healing for all our past failures. And it's in his death and resurrection that we can find the grace and the power to change. The gospel, and Jesus' teaching on divorce, is not the chains chaining you to an unhappy marriage; it is the transforming power for changed hearts and hope-filled homes. Because Jesus died, your marriage doesn't have to.