

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
10-25-23

Matthew 19

The Pharisees Attempt To Trap Jesus Regarding Divorce – Verses 1-2

¹ When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. ³ Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

19:1-3 John had been put in prison and killed at least in part for his public opinions on marriage and divorce, so the Pharisees hoped to trap Jesus, too. They were trying to trick Jesus by having him choose sides in a theological controversy. Two schools of thought represented two opposing views of divorce. One group supported divorce for almost any reason. The other believed that divorce could be allowed only for marital unfaithfulness. This conflict hinged on how each group interpreted Deuteronomy 24: 1-4. In his answer, however, Jesus focused on marriage rather than divorce. He pointed out that God intended marriage to be permanent and gave four reasons for the importance of marriage (19: 4-6).

Jesus’ First Answer To The Pharisees – Verses 4-6

⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female, ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

19: 4-6 Today, many homosexuals want to commit to “marry” with the blessing of the church. Reasons for homosexual feelings and desires are complex and serious. Christians should not trivialize the situation or flippantly condemn the homosexual person. But Jesus made God’s ideal very plain: At Creation he approved one kind of marriage bond, man to woman. These become one flesh— one before God. See Romans 1: 24-27 for further discussion. Where does that leave homosexual marriage? At best, it is a human invention without any biblical precedent. God created man and woman. Heterosexual monogamy is God’s plan for marriage— the best plan, the only one.

The Mosaic Controversy: Jesus’ Second Answer – Verses 7-9

⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?” ⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

19: 7-8 This law is found in Deuteronomy 24: 1-4. In Moses’ day, as well as in Jesus’ day, the practice of marriage fell far short of God’s intention. The same is true today. Jesus said that Moses gave this law only because of the people’s hard hearts— permanent marriage was God’s intention. But because sinful human nature made divorce inevitable, Moses instituted some laws to help its victims. These were civil laws designed especially to protect the women who, in that culture, were quite vulnerable when living alone. Because of Moses’ law, a man could no longer just throw his wife out— he had to write a formal letter of dismissal. This was a radical step toward civil rights, for it made men think twice

about divorce. God designed marriage to be indissoluble. Instead of looking for reasons to leave each other, husbands and wives should concentrate on how to stay together (19: 3-9).

The Disciples Ask About Marriage And Celibacy – Verses 10-12

¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”

19:10-12 Although divorce was relatively easy in Old Testament times (19: 7), it is not what God originally intended. Couples should decide against divorce from the start and build their marriage on mutual commitment. There are also many good reasons for not marrying, one being to have more time to work for God’s kingdom. Don’t assume that God wants everyone to marry. For many it may be better if they don’t. Be sure that you prayerfully seek God’s will before you make the lifelong commitment of marriage.

19:12 A “eunuch” is an emasculated male— a man with no testicles. Jesus’ point here is that some people have physical limitations that prevent their marrying, while others choose not to marry because, in their particular situation, they can serve God better as single people. Jesus was not teaching us to avoid marriage because it is inconvenient or takes away our freedom. That would be selfishness. A good reason to remain single is to use the time and freedom to serve God. Paul elaborates on this in 1 Corinthians 7.

The Little Children And Jesus – Verses 13-15

¹³ Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” ¹⁵ When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

19:13-15 The disciples must have forgotten what Jesus had said about children (18: 4-6). Jesus wanted little children to come to him because he loves them and because they have a guileless trust in God. All people need childlike faith in God. The receptiveness of little children was a great contrast to the stubbornness of the religious leaders, who let their education and sophistication stand in the way of the simple faith needed to believe in Jesus.

The Rich And The Kingdom Of God – Verses 16-17

¹⁶ Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” ¹⁷ “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

19: 16 To this man seeking assurance of eternal life, Jesus pointed out that salvation does not come from good deeds unaccompanied by love for God. The man needed a whole new starting point. Instead of adding another commandment to keep or good deed to perform, the young man needed to submit humbly to the lordship of Christ.

Jesus Tests The Man – Verses 18-20

¹⁸ “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹honor your father and mother, and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁰ “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

19:18-20 In response to the young man’s question about what good deed he needed to do in order to be assured of eternal life, Jesus told him to keep God’s Ten Commandments. Jesus then listed six of them, all referring to relationships with others. When the young man replied that he had kept the commandments, Jesus told him that he must do something more— sell everything and give the money to the poor. Jesus’ statement exposed the man’s weakness. In reality, his wealth was his god, his idol, and he would not give it up. Thus, he violated the first and greatest commandment (Exodus 20: 3; Matthew 22: 36-40).

Jesus Tests The Man’s Relationship To God – Verses 21-22

²¹ Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

19:21 When Jesus told this young man that he would “be perfect” if he gave everything he had to the poor, Jesus wasn’t speaking in the temporal, human sense. He was explaining how to be justified and made whole or complete in God’s sight.

19:21 Should all believers sell everything they own? No. We are responsible to care for our own needs and the needs of our families so as not to be a burden on others. We should, however, be willing to give up anything if God asks us to do so. This kind of attitude allows nothing to come between us and God and keeps us from using our God-given wealth selfishly. If you are relieved by the fact that Christ did not tell all his followers to sell all their possessions, then you may be too attached to what you have. We cannot love God with all our hearts and yet keep our money to ourselves. Loving him totally means using our money in ways that please him.

Riches As An Obstacle To The Kingdom – Verses 23-26

²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

19:24-26 Because it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, it appears impossible for a rich person to get into the kingdom of God. The disciples were astounded. They thought that if anyone could be saved, it would be the rich, whom their culture considered especially blessed by God. Jesus explained, however, that “with God all things are possible” (19: 26). Even rich people can enter the kingdom if God brings them in. Faith in Christ, not in self or riches, is what counts. On what are you counting for salvation?

Peter's Blunt Question: What Do We Get For Following You? – Verses 27-30

²⁷ Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

²⁸ Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife[Ⓜ] or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

19:27 In the Bible, God gives rewards to his people according to his justice. In the Old Testament, obedience often brought reward in this life (Deuteronomy 28), but obedience and immediate reward are not always linked. If they were, good people would always be rich, and suffering would always be a sign of sin. As believers, our reward is God's presence and power through his indwelling Holy Spirit. Later, in eternity, we will be rewarded for our faith and service. If material rewards in this life came to us for every faithful deed, we would be tempted to boast about our achievements and act out of wrong motivations.

19:29 Jesus assured the disciples that anyone who gives up something valuable for his sake will be repaid many times over in this life, although not necessarily in the same form. For example, a person may be rejected by his or her family for accepting Christ, but he or she will gain the larger family of believers.

19:30 Jesus turned the world's values upside down. Consider the most powerful or well-known people in our world— how many got where they are by being humble, self-effacing, and gentle? Not many! But in the life to come, the last will be first. Don't forfeit eternal rewards for temporary benefits. Be willing to make sacrifices now for greater rewards later. Be willing to accept human disapproval, while knowing that you have God's approval.