

The Sermon on the Mount
Class Notes
Session 9

Matthew 5.31-32 Divorce, Adultery and Remarriage. The natural follow up from lust and adultery. (One often follows from the other (?))

Deuteronomy 24.1-4

A certificate allowed divorce and a wife to remarry...The key phrase...“You are now free to marry another man” (Sometimes abbreviated, “You are now free”).

(v.32): Jesus provides one exception...For sexual immorality. In the time of Jesus, there were opinions given by the Rabbis... One school of the Pharisees (the school of Hillel) allowed divorce for any reason.

The other (the school of Shammai) allowed it only for “sexual immorality.” Marriage creates a bond of kinship that cannot be easily broken...Similar to children. Marriage (was/is) meant to image God’s relationship with His people.

Ephesians 5.29-31

Divorce then, like now, was considered a little thing by those in control.

This prohibition by Jesus is an antithesis to those who felt “righteous” according to the law even though people (women) were hurt.

Jesus demands a new way of looking at human relationships...A new heart that values the spouse.

Divorce... and Remarriage?? Jesus acknowledges that divorce was allowed by God because of human sin. (Hardness of heart)

Matthew 19.7-9...1 Corinthians 7.12-14

“...divorce is *never desirable*. Married people should always be seeking ways to improve and enhance relations with spouses rather than wondering how they can get out of the commitments they have made. Those who divorce and/or remarry on any grounds must admit failure, repent of the sins that led to the dissolution of their marriage, and vow to remain faithful to any subsequent relationships. A new marriage is not continuous adultery. At most, the first sex act with a new partner is what violates the previous relationship, but more likely Jesus is using the term “adultery” in a metaphorical sense to refer to the divorce itself.” (Craig Blomberg, *American Bible Commentary*).

Repentance runs through Matthew. In other words, scripture is clear that new beginnings are possible and desired...Because of the *new heart* transformed by the Holy Spirit!

Matthew 5.33-37 Recall: Jesus is summarizing teachings found in the law. He sets forth the ideal and “spirit” behind God’s commands.

Jesus now turns to “vows” and “oaths.” How would communication be for “Kingdom People”?

In the A.N.E., an oath invoked a deity’s witness that the individual was telling the truth.

(v.33): Here, Jesus is summarizing several Old Testament laws...*Exodus 20.7...Leviticus 19.12...Numbers 30.2...Deuteronomy 23.21-23*.

(vs.34-36): Jesus' command: No oaths at all! Fearing that they would defile God's name, many people would substitute other significant holy "places" to "swear by."

The understanding was that by swearing by an object other than God lessened their need to keep/fulfill the oath or vow.

However, Jesus points out that these other "places" were closely related to God (His "throne" "footstool," "city").

Even the hairs of the head belong to God and under His control!

(v.37): Jesus' direction...A simple "yes" or "no" is enough—if you are a trustworthy person.

This saying of Jesus seems to have been repeated in the early church...

...2 *Corinthians* 1.18-19...*James* 5.12.

Jesus strongly affirms this with His "anything more than this comes from evil..."

In other words, whether by swearing to God or by something "less" than God, with the intention to deceive, follows from only one source...Satan himself!

John 8.44.

The presupposition behind oaths is that there are two types of communication...

...One which Demands commitment (oaths).

...One which Expects commitment. (Statements without oaths).

Disciples should be committed to every statement. If so, there would be no need for oaths!

Oaths...like divorce...is a concession to our sinfulness/brokenness.

Going Forward: "Jesus tells His disciples not to take an oath at all, expressing a general rule of conduct for them. The bottom line for Jesus is truthfulness. When believers lie or exaggerate commitment, they are not letting their light shine. This rule applies especially when believers converse with fellow Christians. However, there may be times when Christians will be asked to take an oath in their earthly affairs or contacts with governing authorities. Out of loving consideration for this request, Christians may comply. Thanks be to God that He vowed to save us (cf Ti 1:2) and fulfilled that vow by His Son's life, death, and resurrection for our salvation." (*The Lutheran Study Bible*. (Concordia Publishing House).