

Mark 10:2-9 ² *Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"* ³ *"What did Moses command you?" he replied.* ⁴ *They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."* ⁵ *"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.* ⁶ *"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'* ⁷ *'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,* ⁸ *and the two will become one flesh.'* ⁹ *So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

Stand up for Marriage

- 1. Jesus defends marriage***
- 2. The Bible clearly defines marriage***
- 3. We are to honor God's gift***

By now we've all heard the rhetoric to the point of exhaustion. We have seen the commercials. We have received the mailings. We have read the editorials. Advocates for gay 'marriage' tug at your heart strings and claim that if two people love each other they should be able to marry. They urge you to follow the golden rule and treat others like you would want to be treated. They question your patriotism suggesting that it would be un-American to limit the right to marry. Some Christians even chime in and express their support saying the Bible really doesn't say this is wrong, and Jesus never would have spoke against such things.

This issue has been debated before our eyes so frequently these last few months that it can leave people not quite knowing what to do. It can leave a person confused about what is right and what is wrong. It can leave a person frustrated and angry. It can make us feel just so exhausted with the whole thing that maybe you just want the whole thing to go away. You might have grown so tired of the issue that you don't want to get involved at all - including not even voting on the amendment. And so what is a person to do.

My friends, we go to God's Word. As confusing as it has been, as exhausting as it has been, today we have the opportunity to see clearly what God's will for marriage is. Today, we hear a clear and concise definition of what marriage is from our Savior's own lips and from the pages of Scripture. And in his love and mercy God leads us to honor his gift of marriage.

In order to cut through the confusion and guide us in Christian living we gladly go to God's Word for answers. In our lesson for today the Pharisees were out to trap

Jesus and they used the issue of marriage for bait. ***“Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”*** Jesus saw through their sinister tactics and lovingly directed them to God’s Word with a question of his own, ***“What did Moses command you?”*** Jesus knew that they had already made their minds up about this issue and their answer proved it. ***“Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”*** Minds that were already made up were looking for a loophole, or even looking for a way to sneak their corrupted ideas into God’s holy will. And Jesus pointed out the real problem, the real issue, sin. ***“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,”***

“Your hearts were hard” Jesus replied. This phrase denotes stubbornness. This is a trait that as sinful human beings we ourselves know well. In our stubbornness we refuse to budge even when we should know better. In our stubbornness we refuse to listen until we get our way. As sinners we do that, we do that often. That is the case for you and me; that is the case for those around us.

The only reason that we are having a discussion and a vote about something that God has clearly defined is because of the hard hearts of sinful human beings. Hearts and consciences calloused by sin have cried out loud enough and often enough that they have gained a hearing and received a following. *‘Society has changed’* they say. *‘People have become more honest and open about themselves. This should not be spoken against, but celebrated. It should be accepted and tolerated by everyone.’* And so they tug at the heart strings; they question your love for others; they introduce doubt; all with the hope that many more will join their way of thinking. And these efforts have had a startling effect. Just think about how differently this issue was talked about just 10-15 years ago. And now even Christians have begun twisting and ignoring God’s Word of truth; with some even claiming that Jesus would certainly not have spoken out against gay ‘marriage’. After all Jesus message was one of tolerance and compassion and love and not hate. This is what some have claimed. This is what some have and will continue to argue because their minds are made up and their hearts are hard, even though this is clearly not what the Bible says.

And so what are we to do. When we are pressured by this hardhearted world, when seeds of doubt are planted, when our own faith is put to the test, we look to God’s Word for clarity. We are to look at God’s Word for the final and decisive say on such important matters. What does the Bible say about marriage? What does Jesus our Savior say about marriage?

In these words before us we receive clear and definitive answers about what marriage is and what marriage is not, from the lips of Jesus and from God’s Holy Word. The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus with the issue of divorce. But in his love for them, and out of his love and respect for the institution of marriage Jesus takes this opportunity not only to talk about divorce, but also used the opportunity to talk about God’s precious gift of marriage.

Using Scripture Jesus would teach the Pharisees and all of us about marriage. Jesus makes it clear that marriage is to be between one man and one woman by quoting first from Genesis 1:27. ***“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female’.*** Jesus did speak about this issue and he made it clear that this is God’s natural order in his creation. Using Scripture Jesus defended marriage. God made them male and female, not male and male, not female and female; no he created them male and female. This was God’s intention at the beginning and this is to be the basis for our practice of marriage today. Jesus continues by quoting again from Genesis this time from chapter 2. ***7 ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.’*** God created them for each other. Male and female he created them to complement each other and to fit together. In love God designed and defined marriage. In his loving design he also laid out his plans for family - a father and a mother. In love for mankind and out of respect for the Holy Scriptures Jesus defends marriage. This is what God established in his care and concern for humanity. Marriage is to be a lifelong loving union between one man and one woman. Marriage is a close intimate union, where husband and wife are blessed with the gifts of companionship, sex, and the blessings of children and family as God sees fit. This was God’s plan that Jesus supported and described because this is what God’s Word clearly taught.

Jesus’ words are clear; they are concise. He does not speak on this issue at great length because his words indicate that this is a topic that Scripture teaches clearly and sufficiently. In his answer he quotes from Old Testament Scripture almost exclusively, adding his own words to put proper emphasis on what Scripture has already described. Jesus directs the Pharisees, and all people to Holy Scriptures. It is as if he were saying to us today, *“If you are seeking to define marriage look no further. If you wonder what is right and good as far as marriage, and sexuality, and for the family look no further than the Word of God.”* In Matthew’s account the Gospel writer includes the words of Jesus, *“Haven’t you read?”* It is clear what the Bible teaches; and therefore Jesus took this issue very seriously. Marriage is not something that is open to interpretation. Marriage is not something that people should redefine. It is not something that people should treat lightly or see as disposable. Marriage is to be honored. Marriage is something that we are to stand up for and defend. Voting yes on the marriage amendment is one way that we can honor God’s gift of marriage.

This election has brought to light a topic that has been often been neglected, misused, ignored, and taken for granted. We are all guilty of failing to honor marriage. God gave the gift of marriage to be a special gift for the crown of his creation and we have tarnished this gift terribly. Husbands, we have not loved our wives with a selfless love, but we have been selfish. Wives have not honored and respected their husbands, but have at times berated and belittled their husbands failing to give them the honor and respect that this union calls for. Young men and women have not honored marriage by not being pure and decent in their thoughts

and actions. Couples have moved in together before marriage. Marriages have been kicked to the curb in divorce in the name of convenience and happiness. Lying, cheating, fighting, being harsh and cruel with one another; and this daily list goes on and on. Rather than honoring marriage we have brought great dishonor to this precious gift. Rather than standing up for God's institution of marriage we have stood to the side and allowed marriage to be mocked and misused, neglected and negated.

But God in his great love for us sent his Son to save us from our sins. It is because of his great love for us that Christ is described as our perfect groom and we are his bride. Christ loved us so much that he gave himself up for us. We are broken people. We are easily confused and misled, and we also stubbornly refuse to listen to his voice; and yet for no other reason than his astonishing grace, Christ loves us. He loves us so much he gave himself up for us. And through his perfect life and innocent sacrifice he has cleansed us from our sins. By his death on the cross he paid for our sins against marriage and against his word. He has forgiven us for the times that we have stubbornly refused to listen. He has forgiven us for the times that in our weakness we have failed to act according to his will. All of our sins, all our sins of thought word and deed- even those sexual in nature - are forgiven; they are washed away. Christ loved you so much that he gave himself for you. He has taken us imperfect people and he has made us holy in his sight, worthy of forgiveness, worthy of eternal life, worthy to be his bride.

And now as our groom he loves us and cares for us. He gives us his Word and he bestows upon us, his bride, wondrous gifts. He gives us spiritual blessings, and eternal blessings, and in his love and his care for us he grants us blessings for our daily lives. God's institution of marriage is one of those blessing. It is one of his finest gifts he gives. Christ loves us and his love melts our hearts of stone and we gladly obey his commands. Christ has commanded that marriage should be honored by all. And therefore, out of love for Christ, and in obedience to his command we will stand up for marriage on Election Day. God has defined marriage to be the union between one man and one woman. Let us honor this blessed institution. Let us stand up for marriage.

But this of course is not just about one day, it is not just about one vote, but it is about how we live our lives. May the Lord lead us to honor marriage every day and in every way. May the Lord daily soften our hearts of stone and open up our ears so that we may listen to his Word and never grow tired of following our Savior's voice. Amen.