

Defining Relationships: 1. Marital relationships and the Kingdom of Heaven

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Preacher: William Philip

- [0 : 00] We're going to turn now to God's Word, so do, in your Bibles, turn to Matthew's Gospel and Matthew chapter 19. Now, Willie will be opening up the first 12 verses to us later in the service, but we're going to read almost the whole chapter.
- So Matthew 19, and beginning there at verse 1. Now, when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea, beyond the Jordan.
- And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?
- He answered, Why then did Moses command one to give certificate of divorce and to send her away?
- Jesus said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning, it was not so. And I say to you, Whoever divorces wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery.
- [1 : 51] The disciples said to him, If such is the case of a man with his wife, is it better not to marry? But Jesus said to them, Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it's been given.
- For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth. There are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men. And there are eunuchs who have been made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.
- Let the one who is able to receive this, receive it. Then the children were brought to him, That he might lay his hands on them and pray.
- The disciples rebuked the people. But Jesus said, Let the little children come to me, And do not hinder them, For to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them and went away.
- And behold, a man came up to him saying, Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why do you ask me about what is good?
- [2 : 58] There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments. He said to them, Which ones? And Jesus said, You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said to him, All these I have kept.
- What do I still lack? Jesus said to him, If you would be perfect, Go, sell what you possess, And give to the poor. And you will have treasure in heaven.
- And come, follow me. When the young man heard this, He went away sorrowful, For he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, Truly I say to you, Only with difficulty Will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again I tell you, It is easier for a camel To go through the eye of a needle Than for a rich person To enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples heard this, They were greatly astonished, Saying, Who then can be saved?

[4 : 07] But Jesus looked at them and said, With man, This is impossible. But with God, All things are possible. Then Peter said in reply, See, We have left everything and followed you.

What then will we have? Jesus said to them, Truly I say to you, In the new world, When the Son of Man will sit On his glorious throne, You who have followed me Will also sit on twelve thrones, Judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And everyone Who has left houses, Or brothers, Or sisters, Or father, Or mother, Or children, Or lands, For my name's sake, Will receive a hundredfold, And will inherit Eternal life.

Amen. May God bless to us His word this morning. Well do turn with me To Matthew's gospel, Chapter 19.

And after a break last month, We're back to a new section. Marked there, You see at verse one, When Jesus had finished These sayings, That is the teaching In chapter 18, All about How to live As his heavenly household Here on earth.

[5 : 30] And he begins now, Having finished that, Teaching this Final journey Southwards From Galilee To Jerusalem And to his coming death. And it's a momentous move In Matthew's gospel.

Remember Jesus' ministry Began right back In chapter 4 Announcing that his kingdom Was at hand, Commanding people everywhere To repent, To turn to God In obedient faith. And then he went everywhere Proclaiming, Teaching his kingdom In word and deed, Expounding the righteousness Of his kingdom In the Sermon on the Mount, Explaining the mission Of his kingdom To the disciples, Chapter 10.

Teaching them That his kingdom Had already begun But was not yet Consummated Until his coming again At the very last stage. Remember all the parables In chapter 13. And then we've seen Recently Jesus Gathering his new Community of the kingdom, His church Round about him As the people Where Heaven's rule Is seen in their lives On earth Even now.

People living On earth But for heaven. As chapter 18 Describes for us. And now We are going to see Jesus Pressing home His unique authority Over his kingdom.

Jesus Is the sole Lord Of all. And therefore It's personal Allegiance To him That is the only way Into his kingdom And the only way on In his kingdom.

[7 : 03] You only journey Into the kingdom Of heaven By journeying With Jesus The only way To glory Is his road There is no other And that's what's Depicted graphically By Matthew In these next chapters As the disciples Are journeying With Jesus To Jerusalem And so a prominent Theme all the way Through these chapters Is coming to Jesus And following Jesus Wherever he goes Verse 2 Look the crowds Followed him Verse 9 They are challenged To hear what Jesus Says And to receive it Verse 14 The children Come to Jesus They show the way Verse 21 The disciples Have followed Jesus And on it goes Chapter 20 The blind men Who are healed They follow Jesus Many others In chapter 21 Follow Jesus But where Do they follow Jesus To?

Where is his journey Taking him? Well ultimately The answer of course Is to the glory Of his kingdom That's what Jesus Announced way back In chapter 4 Verse 17 That was upon us But now he's Very explicit Look down to verse 28 Towards the end Of chapter 19 here In the new world He says His followers Will reign with him Literally In the regeneration That is of the Whole universe The new creation That's where Jesus' journey Is taking him And that too Is a great theme In these next chapters The journey From the creation To the new creation And that's where Jesus is calling His disciples To follow him To the new world But how is he To journey there?

Well he's already Made that plain Twice Like in chapter 16 Verse 21 And chapter 17 Verse 22 But here again A third time Look down to chapter 20 And verse 18 We're going to Jerusalem Says Jesus So that He will be delivered To death On a cross And then And only then Raised To his coming glory And as has Been something Jesus has made Equally clear That is the Journey That every single Disciple Has to share Chapter 16 Verse 24 Remember If anyone Would come After me That is to glory Let him Deny himself And take up His cross And follow me Losing life In this world For the true life Of the new world Whoever would Follow Jesus To the glory Of the new world Must likewise Turn their back On the glory

Of this world All its riches All its relationships And follow him That's what Real repentance means They must embrace With empty hands The glory of the new world That's what faith Means in practice You see Because you can't Have both You can't have Resurrection And rebirth To the new world Without Death to this world So when the chips Are down The real question For any would-be Follower of Jesus Christ Is this Which world Do you Really belong to And the answer To that question Will be revealed By examining Our relationships In this world And seeing What it is That really motivates Really characterizes Them And what is really At the center Of them Because that tells us What's really At the center Of our world To which world We belong Whether we're Really living In surrender To Christ's Authority

That of the Kingdom of heaven Or in fact Whether we are Just in life Asserting our Own autonomy Our own Independent Self-rule In other words Living a life Of deluded Idolatry Where our Real saviors Where our Real lords Are the things In this Present world And the Relationships That really Count Are with the People and With the things Of this world Not with God Through Jesus And not with The concerns Of the new World of Christ's Eternal kingdom And if it's If it's the Latter that's True If it's the Things of this World that Possess us Then it Doesn't matter How spiritual Our language Is We're not Really Worshipping God at All We're not Bying to Him We're not Subordinating All our Other Relationships To the Great Relationship With him Through Jesus Christ We're just Asserting Our own

[11 : 49] Autonomy And we're Just serving Idols Because we Think that Relationships With these Things Will Serve us And will Save us And it's As stark As that Jesus Puts it Many many Times As does The whole Bible It's God Or it's Idols Of this World And the Way we Think about Our Relationships In this World Is what Tells us About our True Relationship With the World To come And whether It is Strong And vital Whether it's Really there At all Or not In fact How we Respond In relation To even Even the Many good Gifts Of God That he Gives to us In this Life The way we Respond to These things Tells us The truth About our Relationship With the Lord Himself Whether we Do Really Know and Love and Serve him Or in Fact whether We are Just Actually

Serving Ourselves Deceiving Ourselves Because we Don't Really know Him at All Like the Young man That we'll See next Week down In verse 22 that We read Of who Was rich But who Went away From Jesus Sorrowful Because he Was possessed In heart Truly By his Possessions In this World See all Such Relationships To earthly Things Will either Be an Arena of Submission And surrender And worship To god And for God An arena For joyful Obedience And thanksgiving To him As the Giver Of every Good Gift Gift In other Words There'll Be an Arena of Worship True Worship To god Or They will Be An arena For self Serving For self Assertion For seeking Just our Own Satisfaction Our own Fulfillment An attitude Of just Taking and Using all These things These gifts Of god Just for Our own

Needs Our own Wants Our own Desires And the Real truth About us Deep down Is revealed By our Defining Relationships Does our Relationship With the Lord Jesus Define all Our other Relationships In this World Or Is it Vice versa Is it The other Way around Are all Our Relationships In life Really Defined By the New World By the Kingdom Of Heaven And Therefore All of Them Submitted Surrendered To Jesus Christ As the Soul King And Lord Of that World Or is The real Truth That whatever Relationships We do Have with The new World Whatever Relationship We may Have with Christ's Kingdom Actually Is defined And Limited By Relationships That we Cherish Most In this World Therefore

Our Concern For Christ And His Kingdom Is Actually Subordinated To the Real King And the Real Lord Of This World The Great Idol Of I Myself Me And that's The heart Of the Question That Jesus Confronts Us With In Chapter 19 Here And we Have to Face it Painful As it May be Because Well as I've Said The journey To the New Creation Has only One Road Only One Jesus Is the Soul Lord Of All And so Only one Relationship Can be Supreme And utterly Central And utterly In control On that Road So Is He Supreme In your Life And in My Life Really That's The Question And Jesus Tests us All here You see By turning The spotlight

Onto our Attitudes To the Great Relationships That we Have in This World And forcing Us to Think about Our Attitudes To them First of All it's To marriage Relationships Here in Verses 1 to 12 The most Intimate And intensive Of all Human Relationships And then In verses 16 to 30 It's the Material Relationships Very Powerful Extensive Relationships That we All have With Possessions And in Between In verses 13 to 15 It's To our Attitudes To the Very Emotionally Laden Relationships Within Our Family And Particularly To our Spiritual Priorities For our Children And in Each Case Actually The Question Is The Same Is Our Attitude Just Of This World Or is It Of the New World Of Christ's Kingdom Do This World's Relationships Define And condition Relationships We'll have With Christ And his Kingdom Or Does Our Relationship With God Truly Drive And Condition All

[16 : 51] Our Natural Relationships In This World And In Our Lives Now Which Relationship Really Is The Defining Relationship Well We're Focusing Today On Verses 1 To 12 Where Jesus Forces People To Face Up To What Really Is The Defining Relationship In Their Life By Examining Their Attitude To Marriage The Sexual Relationship Now This Is A Very Complex Issue And I Know That For Some And Maybe For Some Here This Is A Very Painful Issue But If Jesus Really Is The Lord Of All Things Then We Must Listen To Him We We Must Hear What He Teaches Us Our Task Today Can't Be A Comprehensive Study On The Bible Teaching On Marriage And Divorce We Need Much More Time For That We Need To Look At Lots Of Other Scriptures And I Don't Want Us To Lose Jesus Purpose Here He's

Using As A Telling Example To Expose The Heart Attitudes Of His Listeners Just As He Does In Verses 6 To 30 With The Young Man There It's Material Relationships Under The Spotlight Here It's The Marriage Relationship So There's A lot More To Say Than I Can Say About This Whole Area This Morning But I Want To Focus On What Is Clearly The Big Issue For Jesus Here And What He Is Addressing And That Is The Question Of What Is Our Real Defining Relationship In life And This This Encounter With These Pharisees Was A Brutal Exposure Of The Truth For Many Very Devote Religious People For Many Church People We Might Put It And It's A Question And Answer Session With People Who Had Deceived Others And Also Deceived Themselves With Their Apparent Spiritual Devotion But Jesus Is Telling Them And Telling Us That They Can't Deceive God And

He Exposes Them For What They Really Are Their Thinking Is This World's Thinking It's The Thinking Of Rebellion Of Autonomy Of Self Rule It's Not A Surrender To The Authority Of God Out Of Love For God True Love For Him Like Peter Actually In Chapter 16 Remember Jesus Is Saying To Them They're Not Setting Their Minds On The Things Of God But On The Things Of Man Look At Verse Three They Come To Test Him That Is They Want To Trapped Him To Cause Trouble Is It Lawful To Divorce One's Wife For Any Cause For Any And Every Cause Well That Was The Prevailing View Of The Day Following The Liberal School Of Rabbis And No doubt They Hope That Jesus Would Make Himself Unpopular With The Majority By Siding Rather With The Minority Rabbis Who Had A Stricter View Maybe They Also Hope That Herod Would

Hear About What Jesus Answers And That He Would Do To Jesus What He Done To John Remember When John Exposed Herod And Accused Him For His Adultery He Executed John Perhaps That's What They Were Hoping But You See For Jesus Obedience To God Is Never Just A Matter Of A Choice Between The Lax And The Libertine Or The Legalistic And The Narrow No Always Jesus Takes Us Right Back To First Principles To What Is God's Purpose In His Commands For Human Beings So Look At Verses Four To Six He Takes Them Right Back To The Creation To Genesis Chapter One And Two What Is Marriage For What Is This Creation Of God This Gift Of God To Humanity All About And Jesus Tells Us Plainly That The Sexual Union Of Marriage Is God's Gift For Humanity's Blessing But Ultimately

It Is For The Glory Of God Because It's In Man's Creation He Says As Male And Female And In The Unique One Flesh Sexual Union Of Male And Female That The True Image Of God And His Glory Is Display In This Created Order That's So Important For Us If That's Why When As Christians We We Criticize And We Must Criticize The Current Confusion And Corruption All Around Us Concerning Both Sexual Activity And Gender Fluidity So When We Do That We're Not Just Being Conservative Reactionaries Obsessed With Sex No No We're Dealing With A Fundamental Assault Not Only On The Very Nature Of Humanity In The Image Of God But Therefore It's Nothing Than A Demonic Assault On The Glory Of God Himself Do You See It's That Serious Nothing Could

[21 : 54] Be More Serious Than That But Back To Marriage Jesus Says Here That God Created Marriage So That The Human Race Might Both Reflect God's Glory In The World And Share God's Glory With The World So The Question Can Never Be Merely Reduced To Their Question What Kind Of Divorce Procedure Is Right Or Wrong But Jesus Totally Undermines The Whole Concept Of Divorce Here Verse Six What God Has Joined Together Let Not Man Separate Divorce Divorce Divorce Divorce Divorce In its Very Essence Is A Reversal Completely Of The Will Of God For Humanity It's A Destructive Rebellion That Flies In The Face Of God's Plan And Purpose For The World For Humans and that's why throughout the scripture we hear God saying again and again I hate divorce and we should hate it too shouldn't we for all the human misery it represents for the agony it represents in so many lives so many families indeed for the huge blight that it is on our modern society that's come from our growing disdain for the very institution of marriage the campaigns to destroy to undermine marriage

I hate divorce says the creator of the beauty of marriage and I hate divorce says the deeply wounded victim of divorce isn't that right yes of course there may be sometimes relief respite for some sadly necessary but does anyone with personal experience of divorce think it's a happy subject certainly no child divorces in it or rejoices in it I've never heard a former spouse talk to me about divorce with a smile on their face but divorce does exist in this fallen world and God knows that although he hates it and so he does deal with it in his law hence the Pharisees next question trying to trip Jesus up again verse 7 well what about Moses Moses commands divorce how do you explain that Jesus but you see again Jesus turns the tables right on them and exposes them even more starkly verse 8 there's no contradiction between the law of Moses and what Moses himself wrote from God in Genesis the explanation is what happened after Genesis 1 and 2 it's Genesis 3 the rebellion of man against God it's because of your hard hearts says Jesus and in the gospels that's a phrase that always means on Jesus lips rank unbelief and rebellion that's why there's marital breakdown but from the beginning Jesus says it was not so it's not God's creation it's your creation it's a curse that you've created for yourselves because you rejected God and you worshipped yourselves as the rulers of your own world

God made marriage and sex as a means to an end to bless the world and to glorify and to serve God but you made it an end in itself something to worship and serve you and something which you know serve and worship as an all-consuming God that's what Jesus is saying and doesn't that describe the world that we live in today?

sex is almost the universal God because self is the universal God in our world sin has totally reversed God's purpose for marriage and sex because sin has totally reversed man's view of his own purpose no longer is our chief end to glorify God but it's to glorify and satisfy ourselves and you see when that is the defining attitude in a sexual relationship well the results are all around us yes Jesus says to them it's this world's thinking it's your sinful hearts that causes all this that's why Moses' law was needed for the protection of the most vulnerable party in such divorce which of course then and mostly still today was of course the woman if you read the law that Jesus is quoting or they're quoting to Jesus here in Deuteronomy chapter 24 it's a law that provides for a woman who's been rejected by her husband so that she will not be exploited not passed around between heartless men as a chattel to be used by them as vulnerable women so often are still used by heartless and brutal men all over the world today it's because God knows your sinful hearts that he legislated to regulate divorce to mitigate the evil says Jesus but that's not God's plan for marriage it never has been divorce just must not be in your thinking it can't be without selfishness and sinfulness man must not destroy what God has created verse 9 is very clear unless the marriage bond is already ruptured by the intrusion of of sexual immorality into that sacred union where divorce doesn't break the bond but bears witness to an already severed bond and Jesus tells them very plainly divorce and remarriage will be adultery and that was a dagger to the heart for a law-abiding Pharisee to be held in breach of one of the ten commandments because they prided themselves in loving God's law but Jesus is showing them they didn't get it at all their whole focus is not on God's command for marriage for it to express the faithfulness of God's covenant love in their lives not their focus is all on divorce procedure how to satisfy their unfaithful selfish hearts

Jesus says marriage and sex are for serving and worshipping God because you love God above all things but man says marriage and sex is about serving and satisfying me because I love me above all things so they'd bent they'd twisted God's law so they could please themselves and yet at the same time justify themselves and feel good about themselves and of course that's that's still going on today isn't it even in the professing church in all sorts of ways but especially in this arena of sexual relationships twisting and redefining God's word to fit our desires so we can please ourselves and yet still justify ourselves to ourselves and to other people but Jesus exposes all that no it's not God's commands he says it's your sinful hearts that's not loving God it's just loving yourself you see the real defining relationship in your life he's saying is love of this world it's love of yourself it's not love of God it's not your relationship with his kingdom well it's very stark isn't it it's no wonder verse 10 that the disciples are a bit shell shocked better avoid marriage altogether then than to have to make such an absolute commitment to faithfulness they say but no

[30 : 14] Jesus says no no no I've just said marriage is God's good gift not to everyone yes there are exceptions verse 11 but look at that last line of verse 12 it is certainly to be received gladly as a gift to whom it is given healthy fruitful lifelong marriage is not impossible it's just a matter of having the right defining relationship in life look down to verses 25 and 26 because there's an exact parallel there the disciples have the same sort of reaction when he talks about rich people who then can be saved it's just like saying well who then can be successfully married the answer given by Jesus what's impossible with man alone is possible with God Jesus is talking all through these chapters not just about how things were created to be but how he is recreating the world for his kingdom what matters look at verse 12 what matters is living for the sake of the kingdom of heaven for the new world that he's creating and if that is the defining relationship in your life then all other relationships in this world will take proper shape including marriage which is for his kingdom and can be for God's glory marriage isn't just a selfless surrender of independence to your spouse for the sake of your relationship with them although it must be that of course for any marriage to work but first of all it's a surrender of both spouses to God for the sake of their relationship with him that's the defining relationship above all others for marriage as for everything else so marriage and sex is not about me and my satisfaction it's not about the assertion of my autonomy it's a submission to authority to God's authority to his direction about everything to do with marriage and sexuality out of reverence and love and worship to him it's not the worship of an idol of a relationship that promises satisfaction and fulfillment in this world no it's the worship of the one true God who alone can satisfy with the joy and blessing of the new world beginning now because we begin to share abundantly in those blessings if we allow

Jesus and his kingdom to define all the relationships in our lives here on earth you see get the defining relationship right live in joyful submission to Jesus Christ and his kingdom and you'll find you will find that a truly and happy and fulfilling and satisfying experience of relationship and marriage in this world is not just possible but it's profitable and it's wonderful for the glory of God and for the blessing of his people and for the enriching of the whole community that is God's purpose for the sexual relationship of marriage now it's true not everyone receives the gift of marriage Jesus says there are exceptions as verse 12 elaborates here and so not everyone look at verse 11 not everyone can receive literally it means can find room for or can cope with the demands of true marriage as Jesus has expanded in this saying that is verses 3 to 9 describing lifelong covenant fidelity in marriage but he says to those to whom it has been given they can and his followers remember back in chapter 13 verse 11

Jesus says to whom it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven using exactly the same phrase has been given his followers the ones who have been given this gift of marriage like everybody here who's a Christian and who's married like all of these couples who've just been married in this last month or two they have received a blessing that's not to be despised not to be misused and they've received a responsibility not to be avoided verse 12 let the one who is able to receive it receive it gladly joyfully with thanks to God see we Christians we are to surrender our marriage relationships in all its aspects to God and we're to allow our relationship to Christ and to his kingdom to be the defining relationship that will shape our married life in sexual union and we're to submit in every way to God's authority to God's direction for those unions as an expression of our love and our devotion to him in other words we're to worship

God always in our marriages those of us who are married whatever that takes how won't that understanding of marriage change our attitudes in all sorts of ways in times of friction times when you feel you're not getting what you want out of your marriage when you want to assert your wants your needs your feelings and Jesus is telling us to remember it's not about me it's not about my satisfaction my self fulfillment my self assertion it's not even just about my spouse and their fulfillment although of course it is that of course Ephesians 5 teaches us that very clearly but above all for both of us it's about God it's about his glory it's about his kingdom you see if you're a follower of Jesus if you're on the way to the new world and if

God has given you the gift of marriage then if you believe and if you trust in Jesus then you believe and you'll trust in your marriage you can receive this saying it is given to you just as the kingdom of heaven has been given to you of course that calls for faith doesn't it real faith not mere religion faith is a real surrender of your autonomy to Jesus it's a glad acceptance of his authority in all things and it calls for continual repentance doesn't it turning away from our natural hardness of heart to follow Jesus again every day not to follow our worldly desires to live holy for the sake of the new world for his kingdom not this world but it's a great encouragement for us might seem impossible to us as it seemed to be to these disciples it might seem impossible

[37 : 38] I suspect to some here listening this morning as they think about their marriage maybe some here think it's impossible even that their marriage could be saved let alone that it could glorify God as impossible perhaps as a camel going through the eye of the needle as Jesus says and of course his answer is true isn't it for men and women alone on their own it is impossible but not with God verse 26 what he says there is just as applicable to this first half of the chapter as it is to the second half with God all things are possible but it's just a matter of what is really the defining relationship or maybe it's both a real challenge and a real encouragement to some of us listen this morning I hope it is something to think about if you're in despair but of course not all are married and some

Christians as others will be unmarried for a long time or perhaps never married and so we must note Jesus' words here also in verse 12 marriage is not for all he says therefore clearly it's not for all Christians what he's saying is that strong lifelong fruitful covenant marriage is the normal pattern for his kingdom people on earth but not for all some are not able to bear the responsibility for it because it's not a gift that God has given to them and Jesus says there are those for various reasons who he calls here eunuchs now in Jesus' day singleness as we know it was virtually unknown nearly everybody was married often something really prevented it and so very probably Jesus himself because he himself was celibate and unmarried very probably

Jesus was scorned and called a eunuch as a term of abuse and it's very different today isn't it in our increasingly single society and it is that because partly because of our disregard for marriage and the persistent opposition to the institution of marriage singleness bears very little stigma if at all today but many Christians do find the issue of singleness very hard precisely because as Christians we do believe in marriage we do cherish marriage and so for those Christians who are not married it can be a very painful struggle to come to terms with so I'm very conscious of that and I want those of you who feel that struggle very keenly who are listening this morning I want you to see that the Lord Jesus has words of very great encouragement for you here words from one who himself was not given by

God the gift of earthly marriage now Jesus is not saying here that celibacy is a higher ideal than marriage in fact he is saying that it is a deprivation it is not to be given a gift of God that others are given and not all he says receive it and that's why not all can cope that's why not all can find room for the demands of Christian marriage some people Jesus says in verse 12 from their earliest life are just not made for a marriage relationship they've been so from birth he says whether it's due to physical issues psychological personality whatever it may be and that would include I think some who may have extreme and unconquerable homosexual desires but it's certainly not only those others he says have become unable through life experiences unable for normal married life they've been made eunuchs by men maybe it's been damaging experiences in life maybe illness a host of things sometimes it's just the passage of time time passes you become so set in your ways you just now couldn't cope with the upheaval that marriage will bring it is much easier to get married when you're young before that happens but whatever the reason

Jesus is saying if God hasn't given you the gift of marriage perhaps a gift you've longed for you are not to think he is being punitive he's not punishing you he's not denying your heart's desire it may well be says Jesus he's being protective of you because he loves you because he won't give you a burden that you cannot receive that you cannot cope with that you can't easily bear although maybe you don't see it that way or he's saying also it may be to enable you to be most productive in serving his kingdom here on earth as the apostle Paul recognized that he could be as our Lord himself was in his own life but whatever whatever whatever the reason God has ordered all of our lives for the sake of his kingdom and far far better a happy and joyful unmarried life lived for him and for his kingdom now and joyful entry into the glory of that new world where all of us will know a perfect lasting union with

[43 : 39] Christ forever far better than a damaging marriage in this life and a relationship that drags you away from that kingdom forever see those those who are unmarried just as those who are married also are to live by that defining relationship to live for the sake of Christ and his kingdom above all things to rejoice in others calling in marriage and to rejoice in your calling in singleness whether that's for a time or indeed whether that turns out to be for all of your life now I'm speaking as a married person and I know that that is a challenge and I know that that is for some very very hard and it may be a very difficult cross to bear but sometimes married life can be a very difficult cross to bear can't it for one partner or the other or both but you see all of us are called aren't we to live that way for the

Lord Jesus Christ bearing our cross and rejoicing also in our gifts that God gives to us I want to say one last thing because note that Jesus says there are also some who have deliberately made a choice of celibacy and singleness who have made themselves eunuchs he puts it for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and sometimes that might have been a very hard a very painful choice a desperately costly choice maybe having to give up a relationship which could have led otherwise to marriage perhaps because the loved one was not it turned out a believer or maybe just because that person didn't share your passion to serve Christ and so you knew that marriage to that person which could otherwise have happened would hinder your service to Christ in the way that he has called you and not to help it perhaps the Lord called you to a particular ministry and it just meant that marriage to that person which could otherwise have worked just would not work amid the pressure amid the strains of that particular calling or for some it will be that you have had to forego the sexual partnership of marriage because because of disordered sexual desires which you knew and know that faithfulness to Jesus means that you must be celibate all of these things are very hard but for whatever the reason if anyone has made that choice as Jesus says for the sake of the kingdom of heaven

I want you to look down long and hard at verse 29 here as we close I want you to go away this morning with these words impressed on your heart because that is the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ the promise of the king of glory the promise of the ruler of this world and the new world that is without end it's his promise to every one of you to every one of us who makes the defining relationship of their life the glory of his name and his kingdom look everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands any cherished relationship in this world left these things for my name's sake everyone who's done that will receive a hundred fold and will inherit eternal life there will never be loss for those whose love for the

Lord Jesus Christ defines every other relationship in this life never ever amen let's pray together oh almighty God who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men grant unto thy people that they may love the thing which thou commandest and desire that which thou dost promise that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found through Jesus Christ our Lord amen to