

## God Breaks, Then Heals Our Hearts

‡ For the two as one (vv.2-12)

⌘ For the children of His kingdom (vv.13-16)

In the name of Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom and Friend of children, dear childlike hearts:

One of the difficult things about modern Bible translations is the sometimes misleading headings. If you opened the New International Version (NIV) to this tenth chapter of Mark, the heading says, “Divorce.” Maybe that’s what Jesus’ enemies thought this was all about. And maybe that catches people’s attention. But divorce is something God actually says He hates. **“I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.** (Malachi 2:16 NIV) For God it’s always about grace and His fervent desire to bless us. Yes, God breaks our hearts at times, but always like a surgeon, cutting or breaking in order to heal. **God Breaks, Then Heals Our Hearts** to guard and bless the union of marriage that He designed for His glory and our good. First, He works...

⌘ For the two as one (vv.2-12)

The super-church people of Jesus’ day did not like what He said. They still don’t. God created man holy like Him, but very soon, while still in the Garden of Eden, our first parents rebelled. Now we sinners want what we want instead of the good God wants for His creatures. Today’s First Lesson from Genesis 2:18-24 records Adam’s ecstasy when he first laid eyes on Eve. God had broken Adam’s heart with loneliness, then healed him with the creation of Eve right from his side. In God’s holiness Adam could make Eve feel like the queen of his life. He rejoiced that his kindness and tenderhearted love to her was pleasing to God who made the woman as a special gift. To this day no man should say he’s God’s gift to women, but every woman can be radiant in the joy that she is God’s gift to man.

But what happened – not just in the Garden but out in the desert with Moses and the Israelites? And in our text why did these super-church Pharisees try to use divorce of all things to make Jesus look bad in front of the crowds? Doesn’t it remind you of what happens to God-fearing Christians in “politically correct” America today? You do what you want as God guides you with your vote. But understand that when God-fearing Christians are blasted by our media, the reason is very simple. Whoever defends God’s institution of marriage becomes a target. Christians who believe in the power of God’s Word never want to force their beliefs on others. But neither do we want to sit back while others force what God’s Word calls “perversion” on us and our society. When you hear a candidate being attacked for his or her faith, everyone who believes that the Bible is the Word of God should sit up and take notice. We are in the same crosshairs as Jesus when the self-righteous demanded divorce.

The Pharisees thought they had Him. You can almost hear their hearts skip a beat when Jesus asks, **“What did Moses command you?”** Were they sneering or just pasting a condescending smile on this rabbi from back country Nazareth in Galilee? **“Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”** Since Moses said it, they’re convinced that’s the way it’s supposed to be. But what they don’t realize is that Jesus is Moses’ Boss. As the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ was living in 1500 B.C. Now Jesus will tell what God was doing with that ancient prophet. **“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”** Christ’s honest love was meant to break their stubborn hearts in order that God might give them faithful union with Him and with each other.

Do church people still have stubborn hearts? Jesus' disciples did. Privately they asked about the advantage of this holy estate between one man and one woman for life. (See Matthew 19:10.) Jesus got even more pointed: ***“Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”***

Other Bible passages say a Christian is allowed to get a divorce if his spouse commits adultery (Matthew 19:9) or deserts the marriage (1 Corinthians 7:15). In both cases the believer is the innocent victim of unfaithfulness. Preachers who insist that the injured party must forgive and take them back are wrong. Our Lord, the Lover of our souls, the romantic, kind-hearted God who ***“created them male and female”*** wants us to protect this fragile, loving trust. God blesses His gift of sexual union with joy and companionship and children when He first **Breaks, Then Heals Our Hearts** to keep **the two as one**.

Nurturing the lifelong commitment of God's marriage design is key to loving relationships. Marriage and family counselor Gary Smalley is right on point: “A marriage needs security to grow and thrive....In all our research, a marriage supported by the bedrock of security can best stand up to the inevitable storms of life. Conversely, insecurity can do major damage, causing its entire structure to shake and crumble. Security is the assurance that someone is committed to love and value us for a lifetime. It's a constant awareness that whatever difficulties we face, we'll work to solve our problems together. Security means that we're fully committed to the truth, and make a decision to be open to correction....Every enduring marriage involves an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person.”<sup>1</sup>

#### ✦ **For the children of His kingdom (vv.13-16)**

Imperfect people? Just look at Jesus' disciples. How could they actually try to stop parents from bringing their children to Jesus? Same way some Christians still try today, saying things like, “Infants can't believe,” when Jesus says they do. (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42) One mother was angry at her Lutheran husband for having their second son baptized as a baby. She was determined that the older boy would not be baptized until he was “born again,” as she put it. For her “born again” was not “the Holy Spirit's washing of rebirth and renewal” (Titus 3:5), but some kind of religious experience requiring the nebulous “age of reason.” When I kept asking why she said this, when the Bible says that, she retorted, “You're proof-passaging!” To which my 6<sup>th</sup> grade son asked, “Dad, where are we supposed to get our teachings?”

Such people have it backwards. We adults need to become like little children with childlike faith. It's like the medallion of a collegiate on his dashboard: “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” When Jesus saw His disciples trying to keep the children away, He was indignant. He said to them, ***“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*** ***And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.***

People have many opinions, some political, some perverted, but whatever opposes God's Word needs to be broken, including our excuses for living together unmarried, being harsh with our wife or disrespectful to our husband, for committing adultery with our eyes or with our bodies. God says, ***“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.”*** (Isaiah 66:2) Or as David confessed after he repented of his adultery and murder: ***“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*** (Psalm 51:17) Jesus wants us to confess our sins, then accept His forgiveness for divorce, homosexuality, heterosexual sins, and all other sins as easily as you would take a tiny baby in your arms. Cuddle close in God's loving kindness and tender mercy. **The kingdom of God** is no heavier than that. And it's blessings of peace and joy are why God breaks our hearts to bring us home – redeemed, restored, forgiven. **God Breaks, Then Heals Our Hearts**. It's all about reconciliation with God and with each other for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Smalley, Gary. “Four Essential Elements Every Relationship Needs to Succeed and Grow,” from *Keys to Loving Relationships*, pp. 5f. Class handout at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN, 10/2006.