

- PRAY
- READ Matthew 5:13-48

Theme of Matthew: “Behold your King is coming to you” (Zech.9:9; Mt.21:4-5)

Theme of the Beatitudes: Christ’s Portrait of His People (John Stott)

Theme of the Sermon on the Mount: Life Styles of the Rich and Famous

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR THIS EVENING:

- Review
- Lust and adultery (5:27-30)
- Divorce and adultery (5:31-32)
- Oaths (5:33-37)

NOTE: Six topics are covered in vv.21-47: anger, adultery, divorce, oaths, revenge, and love for one’s enemy. In all six of these areas, the world should be seeing our good works and glorifying our Father who is in heaven (5:16).

LUST AND ADULTERY (vv.27-30; Exodus 20:14; Deut.5:18; Job 31:1,7,9; Proverbs 6:25; Eph.2:3; 1 John 2:16; 1 Peter 2:11)

What beatitudes do verses 27-30 correspond with?

Adultery/lust and 1st Century Culture

“most Greek society rarely objected to sexual desire if it were not acted out toward other men’s wives... some Greek and more Jewish teachers did object to it ...Jesus actively condemned it as adultery of the heart, using the Septuagint’s language from the Tenth Commandment about coveting one’s neighbor’s wife (Mt 5:28; Ex 20:17) (Keener, *Dictionary of the later New Testament and its developments*).

Adultery/lust and Jewish Culture

Proverbs 5:20-21 (NIV)

Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife? 21 For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.

1 Timothy 2:9-10 (NIV)

I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her (v.28) –lust incorporates thoughts about non-spouses you would be ashamed to have painted and displayed on the church wall.

Adultery/lust and our Culture

How does Jesus’ teaching about adultery challenge our common experience of things?

Is the teaching of Jesus about looking and lusting impractical?

What practical ways can you suggest to help combat lust?

Did you know?

Taking a cold shower probably won't cure lust. Cold water increases the production of testosterone.

Does the teaching of Jesus forbid sexual desire within marriage? (cf. Song of Solomon)

- Augustine, the greatest of the Latin Church fathers, allowed that procreation was lawful, but insisted that the passions accompanying intercourse were always sinful...
- Jerome the Latin Bible translator declared in the fourth century, "Anyone who is too passionate a lover with his own wife is himself an adulterer."
- Gregory of Nyssa was sure that Adam and Eve had been made without sexual desire, and that had there been no Fall mankind would have reproduced by means of what Leland Ryken gravely calls "some harmless mode of vegetation" (taken from Packer, pp.260f.).
- "the Puritans never attacked sexual activity in itself, but they rarely praised its intrinsic value. Further, they so restricted sexual activity that, if the man in the pew believed the preachers, spontaneous, passionate, physical love would be almost impossible." (Daniel Doriani, "The Puritans, Sex, and Pleasure" *WTJ*, 53:1 Spring 1991)

By the looks of each one of you, you still have both your eyes and hands. Why? (vv.29-30) Is Jesus saying that we should amputate members of our bodies that cause us to lust?

Did you know?

The Council of Nicea (325 AD) forbade the mutilation of the body since men were literally making themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven.

What price are you willing to pay for righteousness?

What are the benefits of Jesus' teaching about lust?

DIVORCE & ADULTERY (vv.31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; cf. Deut.24:1-5)

Matthew 5:27-32 apply well to Herod Antipas.¹ "He desired Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, then divorced his own wife without sufficient grounds, and then married Herodias who had divorced her husband" (Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage* p.160).

¹ Herod Antipas (Herod the Tetrarch) - ruled from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. He was the youngest son of Herod the Great. In the NT he is always referred to as Herod and is the king who had John the Baptist arrested and executed (**Matt 14:3-12** = Mark 6:17-29; *Ant* 18.5.2), Jesus called him a fox (Luke 13:31,32), and Antipas mockingly questioned Jesus before His crucifixion (**Luke 23:6-12**).

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW VERSUS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

- ✓ Jesus applies the sixth command not merely to an outward act, but to inward anger and words we speak (5:21-26).
- ✓ Jesus applies the seventh commandment; you shall not commit adultery, not only to an outward and physical act, but to the inward thoughts and lusts (5:27-30).
- ✓ Divorce was a *permission* of the law and not a *commandment*. The scribes and Pharisees made this permission more permissive; so much that in some circles a man could divorce his wife for just about any reason (5:31-32)!
- ✓ The scribes and Pharisees had relaxed the commandment concerning the taking of oaths and they made many exceptions to our yes being yes and our no being no (5:33-37).
- ✓ The scribes and Pharisees had relaxed the command to love one's neighbor to the number of times we were to forgive them. They had relaxed the command to love one's neighbor to the exclusion of one's enemy. (5:43-47)
- ✓ In contrast to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus broadens the extent of the commandments (heart obedience and not only outward obedience) and He makes the permissions of the law less permissive (e.g. divorce).

NOTE: It is very important to keep in mind that divorce is a "permission" of the law. Divorce is not an ethical commandment!

Divorce and Roman Culture

- ✓ In Roman culture, divorce was allowed without any grounds and if adultery was not involved, there was no penalty.
- ✓ Divorce in wealthy Roman society (and Jewish?) was peaking in the first century. The highest the divorce rate (among Romans) was about 30%.

In NT times, marriage was a matter of mutual consent. When one or both partners no longer consented, the marriage could end. There was no ceremony required and a spouse didn't even have to inform the other. "Messalina, the wife of emperor Claudius, celebrated a wedding with her lover Silius. She had not sent Claudius a formal notice of divorce, so someone who heard about the wedding came to tell the emperor the news that he was divorced. This divorce-by-separation continued at least till Diocletian, who ruled in 294 C.E. that "even though a bill of repudiation was not delivered or known to the husband, the marriage is dissolved." All this changed when Constantine, in his first constitution in 331 C.E., ruled that divorce was legal only if one's spouse was guilty of serious crime" (Instone-Brewer *Divorce and Remarriage...* pp.73f.).

Divorce and Jewish Culture

- The rabbis (scribes and Pharisees) of Jesus' day all agreed that grounds for divorce could include: childlessness, material neglect, emotional neglect, and unfaithfulness.

"any couple who did not have children within ten years of marriage was expected to divorce" (Instone-Brewer 92).

- Another ruling was that a woman could be granted a divorce "if her husband took part in a smelly occupation, or if he had personal defects that made him repulsive to her" (Instone-Brewer 93).

A man could divorce his wife for adultery but a wife could not divorce her husband if he slept with another woman! Why?

- Some of the rabbi's of Jesus' day (the Hillelites) allowed for divorce for "any matter." The basis for this was Deuteronomy 24:1,
 - “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes **because he has found some indecenty in her**, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house,
- ✓ The Hebrew for “indecenty” is odd and is made up of two words. The Hebrew literally reads, “indecenty of a matter.” Thus, the Hillelites reasoned that if there was indecenty in any matter in the marriage, the husband could divorce; even if the wife burned a meal!
- ✓ By the 2nd century AD, some rabbis taught that if a man found a prettier woman he could divorce his wife and marry the one who found “favor in his eyes”!

Conservative estimates say that 40% of all marriages today will end in divorce before death parts people! (Kreider, Rose M. and Jason M. Fields, 2001. *Numbers, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: Fall 1996*. Current Population Reports, February 2002; available at www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p70-80.pdf)

Does Jesus allow for remarriage? (v.32)

Every Jewish divorce certificate (cf. Deut.24:1ff.) that has been found from 5th century B.C. until the time of Jesus contained the wording, “You are free to marry any man you wish.” (Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage...* pp.118ff.).

The biblical grounds for divorce:

Westminster Confession of Faith 24:6:

Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet, nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church, or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: (Matt. 19:8–9, 1 Cor. 7:15, Matt. 19:6) wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion in their own case. (Deut. 24:1–4)

FOR NEXT WEEK: REREAD MATTHEW 5

Does Jesus forbid swearing/oaths? (v.34)

What is the difference between an oath and a vow?

Is it wrong to resist all evil?

Does Jesus' teaching exclude self-defense wrong?