

Luke 16:14-18

Integrity in Money Matters and Marriage

How important it is, that in this day in which we live as followers of the person of Jesus, where we seek daily to glorify him, where we prepare as his church for Christ's coming again, that we be anchored to the truth of God's word. And as we're making our journey through the gospel of Luke we're are learning precisely what that looks like in all aspects of life.

In the passage before us today we see Jesus zeroing in and challenging the integrity of the religious leaders, and us today, on 2 key areas today: *Money Matters and Marriage*.

Let's hear together today what the Lord wants to teach us.

(READ) ¹⁴The Pharisees, who loved money, **heard all this** and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵ He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.

¹⁶"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it. ¹⁷ It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. ¹⁸"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

To summarise and give the flow of thought for these verses, Jesus' message is: to glorify God is to keep the integrity of his word and is to obey God with *integrity*, across all parts of our lives; but namely in *Money Matters* and in our *Marriages*.

As I'm using the word it's important we define *Integrity*

1. Internal consistency and lack of corruption¹
2. Spiritual integrity = Honesty, faithfulness and truthfulness before God and others.

Here's a handful of verses to give some biblical context:

Proverbs 10:9 *Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.*

Psalms 78:72 *And David shepherded them with integrity of heart*

Psalms 41:12 *Because of my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.*

1 Chronicles 29:17 *I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity.*

It's this kind of *integrity* that Jesus wants us to live with as his disciples. Specifically, as it relates to today's text: Integrity in *Money Matters*, and in *Marriage*.

¹[integrity meaning - Search \(bing.com\)](#)

Integrity in Money Matters

If you've read the entire bible, or at very least the NT, you'll know Jesus, has a lot to say about money and generosity, not all, positive. How we approach money matters is a measure of our integrity. Because more often than not it is money that proves to be one of the greatest obstacles to faith in Christ, and is...

...why Jesus said (Mark 10:25) *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."*

Jesus' teaching on money is challenging and uncompromising, and many find it hard to hear. Why? Because the more people love money, the stronger their opposition² will be to Jesus' teaching about money.

Hence, the reaction of the Pharisees in V. 14....

¹⁴ *The Pharisees, **who loved money**, heard all this and **were sneering at Jesus**.*

Sneering = ridiculing him, mocking him, holding their nose up at what they'd just heard Jesus say in Vv. 1-13..."*Parable of the Shrewd Manager*"...

Their response was a measure of their *integrity* before God, exposing the *selfish value* of their hearts. They loved money!

So they "sneered", as Jesus confronted them, as he held up a mirror exposing their true hearts.

Luke 16:13 *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

You can't have both! The inference here, was because they loved money, they hated God. Their financial practices were out of step with the values of God's word; namely amassing riches, and holding back on generosity toward others.

E.g. Matt. 23:23 *"Woe to you...Pharisees...You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness."³*

In other words, easy to give 10% of your garden whilst neglecting the kinds of generosity Jesus ask of us⁴.

The application of this verse really hit home for Karyn and I when we visited the slums of Jakarta to visit our TF sponsor families. What smacked us in the face, was the way we approached giving. And what meant so little here, meant so much there. It changes your life to have a family serve you a fish and rice meal, insisting you eat, knowing they won't for the rest of that day.

² Or the greater the resistance will be

³ Deut. 15:7-8 *If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need.*

⁴ See Micah 6:8

Please folks, we're not the poster people for generosity. But it took that experience to help us see, what Jesus is challenging the Pharisees with, and that we needed to address the integrity of our money management.

The Pharisees sneered at Jesus. *What would our response to Jesus be, when challenged about handling of money matters?*

As he calls us to be generous, with what we have, what do our hearts *do*, when we give?⁵

Let's be reminded this morning that the issue is not money, or having money, small or large amounts. It's the love of money.

1 Tim. 6:10 *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager⁶ for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

We don't have to have a lot of money to take over and be the thing we love, and to be the root of all kinds of evil. When we can live free from the love of money, obstacles to growing in faith in Christ are removed, and the doors of generosity are opened.

One statement a number of folk have given me in the past is: *"I'd give more, if I had more" or, "I'd give if I had enough to give"*

Integrity with money has nothing to do with the size of our bank accounts. Integrity operates on the belief, it's all God's, and means whether it's 1, 10, 30, 90% we're giving, the amount is inconsequential to the attitude of our hearts.

What do our hearts *do*, when we give?

Listen to how Jesus continued to challenge the Pharisees, as we think about our own response to Jesus

¹⁵ ...*"You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, **but God knows your hearts.**"*

Jesus is saying here, "you convince others (*justify yourselves*), that you're doing all the right things, giving the appearance of generosity, seeking human approval, when all the while you're neglecting generosity with your resources, and what God intends in the spirit of love for others"

Love the story that's told of a Jewish Rabbi who would walk through the streets dropping money behind him for the poor. He didn't want to see who picked it up because he wanted no credit for doing so. That he had plenty to share with those who didn't, was enough motivation.

God misses nothing. God knows who we are and what we have. He knows what we say, and what we encourage others to do, and, what we're prepared to do ourselves. He knows what we place value in.

⁵ That is measure of the spirit of generosity we have or don't and /or how willing we are to submit to Gods will in this area.

⁶ I stretch forth, mid: I hanker after, long for, am eager for, aspire to.

Making Jesus' next statement in v.15b particularly confronting:

What people **value highly** is **detestable** in God's sight.

...a foul odour like a stench to God, an abomination⁷

Jesus has in mind here, attraction to material things, and where our love and value on material things has a higher value than love for him and generosity to others. He says if that's what we value, it's a "foul odour".

Jesus' next statement in v.16 (look) looks disconnected, it's not.

¹⁶ "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it.

What does Jesus mean here?

People are falling over themselves to run into the kingdom. These people – Jesus pointing to the poor and sinful – it's hard and difficult for them, but they're giving up everything, giving from what they don't have, sacrificing, making a huge effort. *So while you're mocking me, and pushing your way out, those you're withholding generosity from, and looking down your noses at – are stampeding to get in!"*

Jesus is saying two things here – and it demonstrates how serious God takes Money and generosity

A spirit of stinginess can close the door to the kingdom of God – love one or other!

Whereas, aligning ourselves with God's heart on money matters and having a spirit of generosity is by comparison, forcing our way into the kingdom of heaven.

Here's a summary of how can we have integrity in Money Matters:

- a. Be clear in our minds that everything belongs to him...*start there*
- b. Align our attitudes and practices around money with the word of God...*study*
- c. Develop a regular habit of generous giving
 - i. Check the motivation of our hearts is for the glory of God
- d. God, knows our hearts. Integrity means the kingdom of God is important enough to us, that we are willing to push and strain and force, our way against worldliness, values of self and non-generosity, by valuing Christ, and God's word (all) above all else...
 - i. This is true of *Money Matters*, and *Marriage*.

⁷ Strong's Greek: 946. βδελύγμα (bdelugma) -- a detestable thing (biblehub.com)

Integrity In Marriage

Before Jesus talks about marriage and divorce, he makes an interesting statement in v.17....

17 It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

Here, Jesus is affirming every part of the word of God. Every inspired word, every vowel, every comma, every minutest detail given to men and woman inspired by God. Nothing drops out of Gods moral law, *as given by him*.

And the reason he is saying nothing drops out of it, is because the Religious leaders had taken what God had given them and changed it into something that more closely suited the lifestyle they wanted to live.

Their system was earning your way to heaven. Jesus' way is of mercy, grace and forgiveness.

The religious leaders see Jesus' ministry as an assault on the law – their law – when Jesus does no such thing. *Jesus fulfilled the law.*

Matt. 5:17 *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them*

Meaning through the person and work of Jesus, we see in its purest form what obedience to God and the values reflected in God's law really looks like. ⁸

Which brings us to v.18...

18 "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Jesus never intended for this to be an exhaustive teaching on the matter of marriage and divorce. These verses are one small part of a larger picture on the matter we will address more fully in the future⁹.

What he is saying, like Money matters, is that your approach to marriage doesn't line up with how God views it and with what God intends for marriage. They changed it into something that more closely suited the lifestyle they wanted to live.

I'll explain shortly why that is

Coming back to v.18 again. Jesus raises this matter with the Pharisees, because of their *low value* on marriage. Where God, places a *high value* on the vow of marriage.

⁸ Read Rom and Heb.

⁹ (Include study of Gen. 2 & 3; Matt. 5:31, 32 & 1 Cor. 7:14-16; Eph. 5).

We may think that the value of marriage has diminished and the rate of divorce increased through the centuries. Not true.

Same was true in Jesus' day. In fact, one commentator (Barclay) says "*there is no time in history when the marriage bond stood in greater peril of almost total destruction than in the days when Christianity first came into the world*"

So here we had the Jewish community, who historically held a high (Gods) view of marriage, along comes the influence of the Roman and Greek world, where there was little in the way of sexual faithfulness in a marriage. Men were free to do whatever and with whomever they pleased, yet women had few rights.

Being married was important within the Jewish community. The *integrity* of their marriages, a different story. It was within that 1st century Roman and Greek influenced culture that Jesus was teaching. And, that the Jewish community, namely the religious leaders, were compromised by. In that environment, men, held all the power. Particularly, when it came to marriage, then divorce.

This meant when the relationship turned sour, a wife could only divorce her husband, if he agreed to it. Didn't work both ways! A husband could divorce his wife at will, simply by writing a certificate of divorce¹⁰, giving it to his wife in front of two witnesses, and it was over.

But not only was there the influence of the Roman and Greek culture, in the time of Jesus there was a theological debate going on with Pharisees and T.O.L over two schools of thought.

One school was the teaching of Rabbi Shammai, the other...Hillel

Shammai was strict obedience to the law. *Indecency* (Deut. 24:1) was defined as sexual immorality or adultery and were the only legitimate grounds for divorce.

Hillel, by contrast was liberal. A man could accuse his wife of *indecency* if she burnt his dinner, used too much salt, chatted with other men, went out without a head covering, or spoke poorly to the parents.¹¹

A 3rd Rabbi followed these guys a few years later teaching that a man could accuse his wife of *indecency* if he found someone more attractive than her! All the power with the man!

You'll probably realise Hillel's liberal view of marriage was how the Pharisees and T.O.L lived and taught were teaching. *Far from Gods ideal!* I'm explaining all this, because on a matter like divorce it is vital see Jesus' teaching through 1st century eyes. This was so difficult for woman. No single parent allowance of any kind, let alone the community shame that accompanied being a divorced woman and prospects of re-marriage.

¹⁰ See Deut. 24:1

¹¹ From Barclay, Matthews Gospel, V. 1, 152

It is with all that background in view that Jesus offers these words... *Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the **man** who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

Notice it's the man *who commits adultery*. So in this instance adultery (*sexual relations with a woman not your wife*) hasn't taken place as the legitimate means for divorce. Adultery is the result of the man undermining the sacred institution of marriage, and underappreciating his wife as an equal partner in the marriage bond. Because he's done that, when he marries again he's in adultery.

Jesus is holding up the mirror saying, where is the integrity? You're concluding your marriages on a selfish whim – if your toast is burnt or you see someone better looking. Marriage, before God, has a much higher value than that.

A fuller teaching on this...**a brief pastoral response to this verse:**

Though the bible – in many respects – gives us a clear guideline on marriage and divorce, it is not clear on the 100's of different and complex scenarios that play out for families' day in and day out.

Acknowledge those in the room who have been through the pain of marriage breakdown and the painful journey of divorce. Acknowledge that every circumstance is different.

Though God has a strong position on marriage, Divorce is not an unforgiveable sin...

It is to this end that careful biblical interpretation is required for speaking into such matters. Care must be taken in our study of scripture, despite the complexity of circumstances, to give the best possible pastoral care and biblical guidance to people.

Sometimes though, when all has been said and done marriages fail. The most committed of followers of Jesus fail and fall. And when that happens for any of us, whether it's our marriages or whatever it is, we are there to offer love, grace, forgiveness and pastoral care.

This happens to be an area where Christians can tend to throw small rocks of judgment at others, when we ourselves have much larger rocks of sin in our own lives. We are all sinful. We all sin (Rom. 3:23).

Karyn and I have worked extensively with couples and have seen marriages break up simply because two people have given up on each other and remained permanently separated. Through to, infidelity and adultery in the marriage but who are to this day going as strong as anything.

Though we are people who live to the truth and integrity of God, and Gods word, we are also people who are in the business of caring for and loving others, and with Gods help seeing people and relationships reconciled.

Jesus' message is: restore godly *integrity to marriage* and make marriage matter enough that we:

- a. Are clear in our minds that Marriage is Gods idea
- b. Align our attitudes and practices around Marriage with Gods word...*study*
- c. Invest everything we need to into our Marriages and honouring each other (Men, particularly "*love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*")
- d. Check the motivation of our hearts (he sees) is for the glory of God (These (and more) will guard our marriages and give them godly integrity)

Conclusion

Jesus has gone to pains, holding up a 'mirror', to point out 2 keys areas where integrity is needed. God sees our hearts and knows what we value. What we want him to see with Money Matters and our Marriages is nothing he detests, ***but everything that gives him glory.***